

Date: December 14, 2015

To: Deans, Department and Group Chairs, Graduate Advisers, Chairs of Graduate Admission Committees, Equity Advisers, Graduate Student Affairs Officers

From: Na'ilah Nasir, Vice Chancellor of Equity and Inclusion;
Fiona M. Doyle, Dean of the Graduate Division

Re: **Comprehensive Evaluation of Applicants for Graduate Admission and Fellowship Nominations, and the Role of GRE Scores**

Please share this memo with all faculty and staff involved in your graduate admissions and fellowships nominations processes.

As a new admissions cycle begins, we commend those departments that have updated their graduate admissions procedures in the direction of a **comprehensive review approach**. Such an approach avoids over-reliance on GRE scores, especially in the preliminary stages of assessment, in determining a candidate's potential for successful graduate studies.

Comprehensive approaches infer an applicant's potential for success from more reliable indicators such as the applicant's general academic record and record of special achievement, letters of recommendation, statement of purpose and writing samples, research experience and drive to succeed, and personal circumstances and goals.

More than a decade ago, **the Graduate Council of the Academic Senate discontinued requiring the use of GRE scores** in assessing applications for graduate admission, in favor of allowing departments to determine the appropriate weight in using GRE scores. This accords with a number of studies, including assessments conducted by several of our own departments, that note the limitations of using GRE scores as predictors, either positive or negative, of student success in graduate degree programs.

Attached for your reference is an **Annotated Bibliography** on "The GRE and its Predictive Validity for Graduate Student Success," prepared by the Graduate Diversity Program.

The GRE Board itself endorses comprehensive review: "Test scores should always be used along with other sources of information such as course grades, letters of recommendation, personal statements, samples of academic work or professional experience."

Note that GRE scores are not required for nominations to the University-wide Fellowships Competition. The Graduate Division does not encourage reference to GRE scores in fellowship nomination letters.

Departments still using GRE scores as a prominent criterion in graduate admissions are encouraged to move toward comprehensive approaches to evaluation, especially in the preliminary selection and de-selection of applicants. We invite those departments presently unable to implement comprehensive evaluation to consider de-emphasizing GRE scores in favor of a relatively comprehensive review in those cases in which the applicant's scores clearly contrast with other aspects of the academic profile considered for preliminary review.

Experience strongly suggests that more comprehensive approaches to reviewing graduate applications bolster sound admissions standards and help Berkeley to recruit and retain a more diverse and predictably successful graduate student body, in turn sustaining our national and international reputation for academic excellence and diversity. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way as you discuss and implement admissions criteria for the coming cycle.