

On July 21, 2019 the AAPT Board of Directors approved the following statement, from the AAPT Committee on Diversity in Physics (CoDP), regarding the use of the GRE in admissions to graduate physics programs.

### **Statement on the Use of the GRE in Admissions to Graduate Physics Programs**

The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and the Physics Subject Exam (GRE-P) are required by Graduate Admissions Committees in many Physics Departments as part of the application process. However, research indicates that these exams are poor predictors of graduate program completion. More troubling are findings that show the use of these exams is detrimental to women and minorities. GRE scores correlate with race and gender, leading to the claim that "...the GRE is a better indicator of sex and skin color than of ability and ultimate success."<sup>[1,2]</sup> This is exacerbated when institutions use GRE results as cutoff scores<sup>[1,3]</sup>, a practice that goes against the suggested policies of ETS, the creators of the GRE<sup>[4]</sup>. Publication of desirable, recommended, or average scores can lead to applicants' self-selection based upon a metric that does not predict graduate school success. Finally, as the cost of the exam and the reporting of results places a financial burden upon potential students, "not required, but possibly beneficial" models of score reporting impact different populations unevenly.

Due to these concerns, the American Astronomical Society passed a resolution addressing the use of the GRE, with a number of recommendations<sup>[5]</sup>. Many Astronomy and some Physics programs have moved away from requiring and/or using the GRE in the admissions process<sup>[6]</sup>. The NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) has also dropped the GRE from its application<sup>[7]</sup>.

The AAPT strongly recommends that Graduate Admissions Committees of Physics Departments eliminate the use of the GRE in the admission process, and examine other practices that may impact the diversity of their incoming student cohorts<sup>[1,3,8]</sup>. Additionally, AAPT encourages sections and individual members to advocate for this reform at their local institutions.

1. Miller, C., Zwickl, B., Posselt, J., Silvestrini, R. & Hodapp, T. (2019). Typical physics Ph.D. admissions criteria limit access to underrepresented groups but fail to predict doctoral completion, *Science Advances* 5, EAAT7550 <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/1/eaat7550>
2. Miller, C. & Stassun, K.G. (2014). A test that fails: A standard test for admission to graduate school misses potential winners, *Nature Careers* 510, 303
3. Chari, D & Potvin G. (2019). Admissions practices in terminal master's degree-granting physics departments: A comparative analysis, *Phys. Rev. Phys. Educ. Res.* 15, 010104 <https://journals.aps.org/prper/abstract/10.1103/PhysRevPhysEducRes.15.010104>

4. [https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre\\_guide.pdf](https://www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_guide.pdf)
5. <https://aas.org/governance/society-resolutions#GRE>
6. For a list of programs sorted by policy,  
see <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19UhYToXOPZkZ3CM469ru3Uwk4584CmzZyAVVwQJJcyc/edit#gid=0>
7. <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2018/nsf18108/nsf18108.jsp>
8. Final Report of the 2018 AAS Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion in  
Astronomy Graduate  
Education [https://aas.org/files/aas\\_diversity\\_and\\_inclusion\\_task\\_force\\_final\\_re  
port.pdf](https://aas.org/files/aas_diversity_and_inclusion_task_force_final_report.pdf)