

**Graduate School of Public Health
Educational Policies and Curriculum Committee
Meeting Minutes | November 1, 2018**

Present: Jessica Burke, Mary Derkach, Ying Ding, Patricia Documet, Julia Driessen, Eleanor Feingold, David Finegold, Nancy Glynn, Summer Haston, Kimmy Rehak, Emily Russell, and John Shaffer.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30pm by Dr. Patricia Documet, chair.

New Course: BIOST 2053: *Constrained Statistical Inference with Applications* | Shyamal Peddada

Dr. Peddada submitted an application for a new course intended for master's-level Biostatistics students, however, anyone with a working knowledge of R and/or distribution theory would be eligible to take this course. The course will focus on how to conduct efficient inferences exploiting underlying constraints.

ACTION: The committee recommended formal approval of the course. However, they asked that Dr. Peddada submit a revised application form with clearer specifications as to how a "working knowledge of the programming language R" will be measured and that he be mindful that the prerequisites might dissuade students from disciplines other than Biostatistics from joining the course.

GRE requirement discussion re: recruitment and admissions | Patricia Documet & Cindy Bryce

The committee continued its discussion on what impact the GREs has on the diversity of the student body. Dr. Cindy Bryce presented admissions demographics on female, international, and under-represented minority (URM) applicants for the past five years of admissions, which show around a 25% increase in the last two years. Cindy also presented demographics from this 2018 admissions cycle that broke down the number of matriculated students and those who either withdrew or declined broken down by category, noting that there might be some overlap in the categories, which include: URMs, those with military service (or eligible dependents), economically disadvantaged, first generation college graduates, and geographically from an isolated rural or small town. From these numbers, it shows that accepted applicants from the economically disadvantaged (76%), first generation college graduate (71%), and URM (69%) categories had the highest percentage of applicants who were accepted but did not matriculate. The conversation turned to ways to get those students to matriculate at Pitt Public Health.

Dr. Nancy Glynn asked if there was data on the number of applicants from Pennsylvania who did not accept admission offers. Cindy said they would look into that question. Nancy suggested that accepted applicants were not matriculating due to financial aid issues, as Pitt Public Health relies on the University's Office of Financial Aid to disseminate financial aid information to incoming students. The impression was that OFA is more concerned with undergraduate students. Accepted Pitt Public Health students are not getting financial aid information and answers to inquiries, which was possibly causing applicants to choose to matriculate at other schools. Sometimes, applicants have said that nobody responds to their emails or do so late. The conversation turned to the possibility of Pitt Public Health should offer scholarships to students to diversify the student body. Dr. John Shaffer asked if there was a desire to increase the student body to which the committee agreed.

The GRE can be a deterrent due the cost and the stress that it causes. While the test is a requirement for Pitt Public Health, departments can set the percentage cut offs. In order to address the cost issue, the possibility of funding a post- baccalaureate slot was suggested as an option to help attract potential students.

Cindy raised an argument for keeping the GRE as an admission requirement because it is an eligibility criteria for the Dean's Public Health Scholarship. It was also mentioned that the GRE is a good indicator of whether international students will succeed in the programs at the school.

While other exams are also considered in place of the GRE for certain programs and all departments use holistic admissions procedures, the latter might be not widely known and/or apparent from the Web site. Dr. Patricia Documet suggested adding a statement that stated these efforts on the Web.

ACTION: No action needed. However, the committee intends to look at the 3+2 program department expectations in relation to the GRE requirement. We will likely vote on the GRE issue in December or January.

Updates from October 2018 meeting re: university testing policy and short term courses | Kimberly Rehak

There does not seem to be a university-wide midterm and final exam make-up policy. According to the University Testing Center, make up exams were permitted for medical or family emergencies.

A mapping of Pitt Public Health's 5- or 8- week classes for each term was included in the meeting documents as an FYI.

ACTION:

Approval of October Minutes | All

Provided that a typo in the first section of the minutes will be fixed (add "will" after "The class" at the beginning of the last sentence), the committee approved the October meeting minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:03pm.