

Proposal to Revise Admissions Criteria IU School of Education (IUPUI)

Background

According to our current admissions policy, the Counseling and Counselor Program in the IU School of Education (IUPUI) requires GRE scores for students applying to our master's degree program. In addition, our admissions committee reviews undergraduate and graduate transcripts, a statement of purpose, and letters of recommendation.

Proposal

We propose to eliminate the GRE as an admission criterion and focus our admissions decisions on criteria we believe are more effective predictors of success in our program. Our faculty have found that better indicators of potential for success include: (1) undergraduate and graduate transcripts, (2) strong recommendations from employers and past professors, (3) past work-related experiences, and (4) demonstrated ability to effectively describe one's professional goals, and contributions of past professional experiences in written and verbal forms. To ascertain the former, we will review a writing sample (prompt and rubric below) for all students. We will also require an interview (detailed below) for those (undergraduate or graduate GPA below 3.4) or situations when the candidate's written responses or performance during interviews raise concerns. Uses of these criteria are described below.

Rationale

The Counseling and Counselor Education faculty in the IU School of Education (IUPUI) propose changes in the criteria for admission to our Master of Science program on the Indianapolis campus only. This decision results from an examination of our application requirements and discussion of application materials which signal a good fit and potential for success in our master's programs. During this discussion the faculty concluded that the GRE score is the least helpful piece of information in admissions decisions. Further, we have found that the GRE requirement presents an additional barrier to applicants, particularly applicants of color, with strengths and experiences that would enrich our programs. ETS and the College Board still persist in creating standardized tests that do not have cultural equivalence, despite decades of criticisms. We believe that we should not support institutions when we conclude that they have not adequately addressed the well-founded criticisms. In addition to the admission requirements already in place and those proposed (e.g., a more detailed analysis of a writing sample, personal interviews), we already have other procedures to monitor (and, if necessary, stem) the progress of our admitted students. For example, we have an annual meeting to review all students, and in the vast majority of cases, the students we select to discuss --- those who have encountered some sort of trouble or challenge ---- are chosen not because of academic concerns, as much as they are selected for issues related to emotional or cultural adjustment.

Information: We have not found the GRE score particularly useful in determining who will be successful in the program. While the GRE provides little information regarding these concerns, these could be identified in an interview and a writing prompt.

Costs to Students: The GRE costs \$160 and also demands some investment for preparation materials and study. We know from the literature that admissions requirements like the GRE presents additional barriers for students of color and low-income students. Feedback from applicants and our colleagues in the field suggest that the costs and time associated with taking the GRE may dissuade some applicants from applying to our program. Given the limited information yielded by the GRE, the potential to lose teachers and others with experiences and backgrounds that will enrich our program and the pool of potential administrators is a particular concern.

Review of written response and interview

Our master's program engages students in critical analyses of professional counseling theories, research, practice strategies, and professional issues. This work demands the abilities to reflect and respond in written and oral form.

Writing Sample: As a screening device, the writing sample will be examined to determine whether the applicants possess the necessary skills to complete our coursework. Our prompt and associated rubric to evaluate written expression is attached.

Interview: As above, the interview will allow us to learn more about applicants' understanding of the field and ability to discuss their aspirations, motivations for becoming counselors, and human relations experiences in an organized and sophisticated manner. The interviews would also permit us to learn more about the experiences the applicants have gained from working in schools. Due to time and logistical constraints, interviews will be required only for applicants raising concerns about their prior academic achievement, experiences, or motivations for becoming counselors based on information contained in the other application materials.

Writing Prompt: Statement of Purpose

The Counselor and Counselor Education Program in the IU School of Education (IUPUI) prepares school counselors to be transformational agents, fostering equity, justice, and valuing of diversity. Transformational school counselors challenge barriers to educational opportunity relating to poverty, gender, (dis)ability, race, ethnicity and home language, among others. In preparation for this work, our students engage in ongoing discussions and critical analyses of school organization, application of counseling theories and research to urban, and roles and responsibilities of counselors as change agents and advocates in urban schools. This work demands the abilities to reflect and respond in written and oral form.

So that we can assess interest and commitment to engaging with our faculty and fellow students in these efforts, we ask all candidates provide a statement of purpose for entering this program. This statement should clearly introduce you, describe your educational and professional goals, and relate these to your educational, work and life experiences. The statement should be no more than three double-spaced pages (12 point type, one-half inch right and left margins, one inch top and bottom margins).

Criteria for Statement of Purpose	Points allotted
Substance and Insight (40 pts.)	
<i>Introduction:</i> Statement provides appropriate and sufficient detail regarding candidate.	
<i>Disposition:</i> Based on the information provided, the candidate's expressed beliefs, values, attitudes, etc. are consistent with the program mission and commitments.	
<i>Goals:</i> The candidate's stated educational and professional objectives reflect an appropriate trajectory aligned with the program mission.	
<i>Experiences:</i> The educational, professional and life experiences presented are rich and will enrich the program.	
<i>Reflection:</i> Candidate's discussion of beliefs, goals and experiences demonstrate an ability to reflect deeply and offer insights.	
Comments:	
Argumentation and Articulation (40 pts.)	
<i>Logical flow:</i> The ideas are introduced in a logical flow, with strong transitions to signal shifts in argument and connections among ideas and points;	
<i>Phrasing and Structure:</i> The statement uses to good effect phrasing and structure to cue the reader.	
<i>Elegant expression:</i> As a whole, the statement provides for ease of reading and interpretation through logical organization and avoidance of awkward and/or ambiguous phrasing and overly complex sentence construction.	
Comments:	
Attention to Detail (20 pts)	
<i>Instructions:</i> Follows prompt instructions in terms of content, length, etc.	
<i>Proofreading:</i> Free of spelling, grammatical and/or typographical errors	
Comments:	
Overall Comments:	
Total	