WHEREAS, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) has been shown to be a discriminatory and ineffective examination for selecting qualified graduate students, as shown in Appendix 1; and

WHEREAS, the GRE shrinks Virginia Tech’s talent pool for graduate students and perpetuates the marginalization of many graduate students who may not have access to the test for any number of reasons; and

WHEREAS, the GRE, as an expensive exam costing in excess of $205 and an additional $27 for each individual university to which scores are sent, creates an undue financial burden on many qualified, aspiring graduate students with little to no benefit in most cases; and

WHEREAS, this financial exclusion is particularly of note for international students, who often have exorbitantly expensive GRE testing facilities or lack access to the test altogether; and

WHEREAS, furthermore, the GRE privileges English language skills and so potential candidates who are non-native English speakers are further discriminated against by the test. These discriminatory elements go against Virginia Tech’s global commitment as a land-grant institution and thus the GRE represents a threat to the institution’s values; and

WHEREAS, several peer institutions, such as Virginia State University, have removed the GRE altogether and many more individual programs across the country and within Virginia Tech (see
Appendix 2) have already recognized these problems and have elected to not require the GRE; and

WHEREAS, the graduate school of Virginia Tech does not require the GRE for its application process and as such there are no legal or institutional policy barriers to removing its requirement; and

WHEREAS, we worry that any attempt to preserve the GRE as an “optional” form of evaluation will de facto continue its role in the evaluation process and by extension lead to the discrimination we highlighted above, so we encourage the complete removal of the test in the admissions process rather than making it optional; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the use of the GRE or GRE subject test will be removed from the graduate admissions process across Virginia Tech by the time people begin applying for admission for academic year 2023-2024. The Graduate School will be responsible for maintaining compliance with this policy and in extremely rare exceptions where a department requires the use of a GRE subject specific test and can demonstrate sufficient equity procedures to offset its discriminatory tendencies, the graduate school will maintain an opt-in process for departments to utilize the GRE as an admissions metric (see Appendix 3).
Appendix 1: Article demonstrating evidence in support of the resolution

There has been a wealth of research on how standardized tests in general and the GRE specifically are discriminatory towards traditionally marginalized students. Below we submit one such article that demonstrates this fact for consideration because it is emblematic of the research as a whole. Additionally, it provides a nice, quick review of the literature on the topic.

Link: https://www.nature.com/articles/nj7504-303a

Citation: Miller, C., Stassun, K. A test that fails. Nature 510, 303–304 (2014). https://doi.org/10.1038/nj7504-303a

Appendix 2: list of graduate programs and their GRE requirements

Link: https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/covid-faqs/120420-updated-gre-list.pdf

Appendix 3: Process for submitting justification for rare use of GRE in screening potential graduate students

The process for submitting justification for the GRE in rare exceptions will be decided by the Director of Admissions for the Graduate School in conjunction with their Northern Virginia counterpart. They will develop a form that departments can fill out as well as the criterion by
which the GRE is an acceptable entry document. The Commission on Graduate and Professional Studies and Policies (CGPSP) will work under the director to develop these documents and procedures as well as establish best practices. The goal of this process is to develop best practices for departments to justify their use of the test if they choose to use it and to make the university norm not requiring the GRE and instead taking a more holistic approach to graduate admissions.

These guidelines should be developed by academic year 2022-2023 and implemented prior to the start of academic year 2023-2024. This resolution should be treated as the first step in reevaluating the graduate admissions process for its racial, class, gender, and disability politics to make it as inclusive and just as possible. Further, we should begin to examine undergraduate admissions processes and the discriminatory nature of other standardized admissions tests, such as the SAT, to become a more equitable institution.