Faculty Senate Resolutions
Transmittal Form

Title: Resolution on Clarifying Means to Demonstrate Equivalence of High School Diploma Credential

Sponsor: EPSA

Type: [ ] Resolution of Handbook Policy (signature required)
[X] Resolution of Non-Handbook Policy (signature required)
[ ] Resolution of Position (no signature required)

Date Passed: May 1, 2017
Date Response Due: June 30, 2017

Disposition of Resolution

Date of disposition: 5/4/17
[ ] Signed
[ ] Will not be signed (explanation attached)
[ ] Alternative date to be negotiated
[ ] Signature not required

Senate Office

[ ] Resolution logged in
[ ] Database updated
[ ] Handbook updated if applicable
[ ] Resolution filed
RESOLUTION ON CLARIFYING MEANS TO DEMONSTRATE EQUIVALENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA CREDENTIAL

Educational Policy & Student Affairs Committee
Faculty Senate
APPROVED May 1, 2017

Whereas the admission policies and practices on Ohio University's Athens and regional campuses advance a dual mission of excellence and access,

Whereas Ohio University offers a pathway to admission on all campuses through demonstration of high school equivalency via submission of the G.E.D., a commercial product jointly administered by the American Council on Education and Pearson VUE,

Whereas a recent proliferation in alternatives to the G.E.D. have emerged, including measures such as the Ohio Adult Diploma and other state-recognized proprietary exams,

Whereas current Catalog policy can be interpreted as ambiguous whether these instruments of high school equivalency are acceptable for admission consideration,

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate endorses the OHIO Undergraduate Catalog be amended as follows to clarify the various means by which a student can demonstrate high school equivalency:

You must have a high school diploma or successfully demonstrated attainment of a state-recognized high school equivalent and must have passed all sections of the applicable state assessments by the time you enter college.
MEMORANDUM

TO: Charles Buchanan, chair, Educational Policies and Student Affairs Committee
FROM: Candace J. Boeninger, Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management and Director of Undergraduate Admissions
DATE: March 28, 2017
RE: Proposal to clarify means to demonstrate equivalence of high school diploma credential

Overview

The admission policies and practices on Ohio University’s Athens and regional campuses advance a dual mission of excellence and access. While Athens campus programs exercise selective and limited admission through the holistic review of applicants, its admissions practices align with regional campus open admission policies in a steadfast commitment to the University’s access mission. OHIO currently offers a pathway to admission on all campuses through demonstration of high school equivalency via submission of the G.E.D., a commercial product jointly administered by the American Council on Education and Pearson VUE.

A recent proliferation in the variety of instruments available to demonstrate high school equivalency has challenged the G.E.D.’s monopoly in the market. Undergraduate Admissions hopes to engage the Educational Policies and Student Affairs Committee to broaden Catalog language related to acceptable instruments of high school equivalency.

Background

Though oftentimes referred to in generic terms, the G.E.D. is a trademarked, commercial exam owned within the Pearson brand. The proprietary exam has enjoyed almost exclusive market share in high school equivalency testing, including its role in serving as the instrument utilized in earning the State of Ohio’s adult diploma.

In recent years, alternatives to the G.E.D. have emerged. The Educational Testing Service (ETS) launched its G.E.D. competitor, the HISSET exam, in 2014 as a direct competitor to the G.E.D. Similarly, McGraw Hill introduced the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) as an additional instrument. Some states hold contracts utilizing one of these proprietary exams, while others recognize some combination of the instruments. Further, some states, such as California, offer their own proprietary exams.

As states decouple the process of demonstrating high school equivalency from the exclusive use of the G.E.D. exam, Ohio University has encountered applicants who otherwise would be admissible but who have completed one of the competing equivalency instruments. Within the state, the landscape is changing as well; in June 2016, Ohio House Bill 113 directed the Ohio Department of Education to revisit the state’s exclusive use of the G.E.D.

Additional developments at the state level in Ohio have further expanded opportunities for students to demonstrate completion of a secondary school education. Through the Ohio Adult Diploma, eligible students can earn a credential authorized by the state to be equivalent to a high school diploma; unlike a traditional
high school diploma that is issued by an authorized school district, the Ohio Department of Education issues this credential.

Impact

The Ohio Undergraduate Catalog codifies the opportunity for successful completion of a high school equivalent to serve as a component of a qualified applicant’s portfolio for admission:

“You must have a high school diploma or a GED diploma and must have passed all sections of the applicable state assessments by the time you plan to enter college.”

The phrase “GED diploma,” however, can be interpreted as ambiguous and unclear related to whether the Catalog is referring specifically to Pearson’s G.E.D., or whether “GED” is used as a common term meant to include any number of alternative high school equivalency instruments (e.g. ETS’ HiSET, McGraw Hill’s TASC exam, the Ohio Adult Diploma, etc).

Undergraduate Admissions completed preliminary consultation with its peers across the state, the Ohio Department of Higher Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. Through this benchmarking and research, we understand that the acceptance of the Ohio Adult Diploma is required through state policy, and determined the decision whether to accept successful completion of a high school equivalency via any number of instruments is at the institution’s discretion and will maintain alignment within state policy and Federal Student Aid guidelines.

Proposal

Undergraduate Admissions proposes a modification to the Ohio Undergraduate Catalog to clarify the various means by which a student can demonstrate high school equivalency.

Proposed language:

“You must have a high school diploma or successfully demonstrated attainment of a state-recognized high school equivalent and must have passed all sections of the applicable state assessments by the time you plan to enter college.”

This language, inclusive and not explicit in naming specific exams or instruments by intention, allows Undergraduate Admissions the discretion to be responsive to the evolving industry practices and varying means by which applicants present their candidacy for admission.