

**To: Seniors who are at all interested in graduate school**

**From: Suzanne Amador Kane**

**Re: GRE**

As you probably know, most graduate schools require the general GRE (English and math skills) and sometimes a subject GRE as well. Here, we'll only consider the General exam. Our best information from graduate admissions is that they want to see quite high percentile scores on the general GRE (the verbal score is in fact a good predictor of grad school performance) for at least some fields—you should ask professors in your intended area of study about this. Higher GRE scores could prove an asset in admissions and for some scholarships. Note that we're not arguing that GRE scores are good predictors of graduate school performance. You need to do well enough to get in, but don't treat them as an indication of your intellectual caliber! Either way, this is still a non-negotiable hoop you must jump through to get in!

You might think that this is a low bar, and that you are well-prepared if you have done well in your courses, but that's rarely the case. In fact, students nationwide routinely prepare and study in advance for these specific tests—you must too! (Search the web to see.) You have been taking tests in an entirely different format, not multiple choice, not time-pressured and not in a large, stuffy room with lots of other students, etc. *There is no question that all of you will benefit from time spent preparing for this test.*

The good news is that our students have been able to improve their scores significantly by taking full advantage of the informal GRE Prep Course that Walter Smith has developed over the years. These study methods have been extensively tested and refined. As a result, Haverford physics and actor major scores on the General GRE have increased substantially, at least for those students who follow the study schedule that the course entails. Importantly, they also (re)learned stuff, often better, along the way! Finally, we have a long record of our departmental alumni getting into excellent graduate programs (of all sorts) and excelling once they are there, and beyond—but this Prep Course helped get them there in almost every case!

Why? Standardized tests tend to reward rapid-fire problem-solving at least partly based on material you have grown rusty on. During the preparation course, we will review material that you once learned but have forgotten (or perhaps never mastered); we will focus this review, of course, on the topics most likely to appear on the GRE. You will practice working problems, but with an emphasis on improving your speed at problem solving.

### **General Information**

You can get information about the GRE from ETS's website <http://www.gre.org>. To go to graduate school in many subjects you need to take two versions of the GRE, the general test and the subject test. All grad-school bound students take the same general test while the subject test is in your major area. (You will need to check to see if your intended grad programs require a subject GRE, as this is highly variable from program to program.)

The general exams are taken in the format of a Computer-Based Test (CBT). The CBT is available throughout the year at a large number of centers located throughout the US. (There are two in the Philadelphia area. The web site gives other locations throughout the country.) The subject tests are paper based, similar to the SAT's and other standardized exams you have taken,

but the questions are harder, of course. Registration information for both the General GRE and the subject GREs can be found at the web site or in the GRE booklet

### **The General GRE**

You should study hard for the general; many graduate schools consider your scores on the quantitative and analytic portions to be just as important as your score on the subject GRE. In fact, there are many graduate schools that look harder at these scores than at the subject GRE scores, since there is such a differential in how international and US nationals prepare for the subject GRE.

It has been a very significant effort for us to prepare this course for you. **In return, you should put in a serious effort! I want each of you to commit to study for 45 minutes every day during the summer for the GRE.** If you can stick to this schedule, you should do well on the exam. If you don't study regularly through the summer, the effort you've put into your Haverford education may be partly discounted by the admissions committee at your grad school of choice.

One last reiteration in case you have not yet gotten the point: The unfortunate truth is that graduate schools weigh your GRE scores (quantitative, and analytic) as a significant part of your dossier for graduate school, along with your grades and your letters of recommendation. **By the end of your time at Haverford, you will have spent at least 1400 hours in your major classes here ( 10 hours per week, 14 weeks per semester, 10 major classes), and probably more. We are suggesting that you spend about 80 hours studying for the GREs (including both the general GRE and the subject GRE in your area, such as physics). You will only accomplish this by consistent effort throughout the summer.**