



KEAN

June 3, 2025

Executive Committee of Kean University Senate,

The Kean University Senate's Student Admissions and Retention Committee submits this letter regarding our work from this past year. In this time period, we focused on the formal policies and informal practices of graduate admissions across the university, particularly at the departmental level. This letter reflects a unified perspective and each of our committee members has helped construct, and has subsequently approved, this letter. Our letter summarizes our evaluation and recommends action per our review.

Throughout this past year, our committee aggregated the official policies and unofficial practices for admission into the graduate programs of our university. We only evaluated the policies and practices of those departments with active graduate programs. Per our review, graduate programs generally maintain low, non-competitive admissions standards. In many departments, all students who apply to the program and meet the minimum requirements of the university are admitted into programs. Oftentimes, students who do not meet the minimum criteria are afforded admission after a special review. In large part, these admissions policies and practices have carried from past, non-competitive precedents that have not been recently reevaluated.

As a committee, we met to discuss these findings. We made a concerted effort in our conversation to consider all options and compose a unified plan as a committee. In doing so, we have determined to recommend to the Kean University community, through the University Senate to the Office of Academic Affairs and the respective academic departments, the elevation of the graduate admissions policies and practices to better reflect an academic environment of exceptional professional development, research, and creative works.

Our recommendation serves a multitude of values that align with Kean University's ongoing progression as an institution of higher learning. First, our achievement of Carnegie's R2 designation obliges us to augment our graduate programs. While our current graduate professors and students remain an invaluable segment of our academic community, our programs do not reflect the rigor required of reputable universities with an excellent output of research and creative works. As well, committee members and fellow faculty have expressed discontent with the present state of our graduate programs. Wherein graduate programs are an integral part of our reputation as a university and as a collection of scholars, the elevation of our graduate program would be an invaluable advancement for our community as a whole. Moreover, many faculty have reported that students are also dissatisfied with the current state of their programs. Whereas students are looking to advance their academic and professional careers beyond their degrees at Kean University, it is paramount we enroll and graduate scholars who can excel in highly competitive environments. We do not believe we can achieve these goals with the present state of our graduate admissions policies and practices.

However, we recognize that elevating our graduate admissions processes across campus will bring challenges. First, we understand and support Kean University's urban mission, which fosters accessibility within a pluralistic environment. We strongly oppose abandoning this ethos. As well, we recognize that financial investments will be required for this elevation process,

including the possibilities of increased compensation for faculty, increased competitive assistantships for students, and additional administrative costs. We also understand that even amidst our transition to R2 with many students seeking to launch an academic career, many of our graduate students wish to advance their professional careers external to academia. With the different goals of our graduate students, we must ensure we are not ostracizing some students in preference of others. Despite these challenges and others that may arise, we are committed to advancing these goals and we are prepared to work in concert with the appropriate parties to ensure their calculated actualization.

As a committee, we wish to assist in advancing this mission. This letter serves first as a notice to the University Senate Executive Committee so that our recommendation can be advanced to the University Senate as a whole. From there, we wish to garner support from the Office of Academic Affairs in a manner that urges, but does not dictate, departments to act upon our recommendation. Finally, we hope to work with the pertinent academic departments over the next academic year to find ways to elevate their graduate admissions policies and practices.

Importantly, we do not support an environment where committees and offices dictate the academic freedom and integrity of individual departments. We are confident that each academic department, working in concert with the Office of Academic Affairs and other relevant administrative bodies, best knows how to structure competitive admissions policies and practices according to their specific fields of study. We do not intend to infringe upon these processes. However, we believe that such an elevation is best realized with a coordinated effort across campus so that departments can generate and collaborate in ways that collectively advance Kean University. As a committee, we are ready to foster these conversations and support the implementation and maintenance of the plans that departments and the university community devise.

In closing, with our letter, we are initiating this important conversation and action plan. We are prepared to launch the formal conversation across campus at the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic year. Please let us know if you would like any additional information to advance this initiative or how we might best move this plan forward.

Cordially,



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