Test Choice COVID Policy for fall 2021

(With Regard to Test Choice Exceptions)

In light of COVID implications to standardized testing availability that began in March 2020 and will continue through the foreseeable 2020 fall and 2021 spring test dates, Admissions requests a temporary moratorium on requiring scores for Homeschool students and students who apply from schools that do not offer course grades and GPA on transcripts.

According to College Board updates, inventory for August test dates was literally cut in half across the country from 400,000 seats to 200,000 seats. Students lucky enough to secure a spot, have been turned away on test dates due to over-prescription of available seats. As high schools have switched to virtual learning this fall, they have not been willing to serve as Saturday test sites. Social distancing in alternate sites has further limited seats.

The most selective universities across the country and in our own Commonwealth are suspending required standardized testing this year and opting instead for test optional policies *with few or no exceptions.*

UMW has been test optional since 2015 (minimum GPA of 3.5) and test choice in this most recent cycle with no minimum GPA. In this time, UMW has maintained some exceptions to test choice – for students applying as pre-nursing mostly to ensure fluid cohort progression through Germanna requirements, for home schooled students coming from non-traditional environments, and for students coming to UMW from schools that do not provide grades or a GPA.

In the past, we have maintained testing requirements of home schooled applicants because testing became the standardized measure to compare curricula and grading that was not standardized. Currently, many home school students have academic experiences outside of the home through consortia and even community or local college dual enrollment, providing external assessment and more commonly shared measures to evaluate for admission.

For the handful of students applying and ultimately enrolling from high schools that do not provide written grades on a transcript, we have been able to obtain grades and a GPA or means to calculate a GPA. We are able to use both for admission and scholarship purposes.

UMW has continued to enroll academically prepared students for the rigorous curriculum offered at UMW because we believe in and practice holistic review. I do not believe this change will negatively impact our ability to do this.

Given limited availability of seats for a standardized testing and the extreme measures students and families are taking to locate a viable seat, we request a moratorium on requiring standardized test for home school or students coming from non-graded high schools, specifically for the entering class of 2021 or for the extent COVID-19 impacts standardized test seat inventory. Nursing has specifically aligned with requirements of Germanna to be flexible, requiring scores from students with weighted cumulative GPAs lower than 3.5.

I would recommend the following edit to the academic catalog.

**Standardized Tests**

Students may opt to apply without providing a standardized test score as part of the packet of material for consideration for admission. *While COVID-19 impacts standardized testing access, UMW will lift exceptions to requirements for home schooled* applicants, candidates applying from schools that provide written evaluations rather than grades, and candidates for merit-based scholarships, (including the Washington and Alvey Scholarship). A*pplicants to the pre-nursing pathway with a cumulative GPA of less than 3.5 will be required to submit a minimum score.* If a student chooses to include scores, tests should be taken no later than January or February of the senior year of high school.