

MSU waiving GMAT/GRE requirements for summer and fall graduate school applicants

Press Release

Due to testing limitations related to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, Mississippi State is temporarily waiving GMAT and GRE testing requirements for students applying to the university's graduate programs.

"Mississippi State University is very sensitive to the stress both our current and prospective students may be experiencing during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Peter Ryan, MSU associate provost for academic affairs and interim dean of the Graduate School. "In an effort to reduce the stress level, our Graduate School, in coordination with the academic colleges, has made the decision to waive the GRE and GMAT test score requirements for summer 2020 and fall 2020 applicants."

All other requirements will still need to be met for admission into a student's graduate program. For students coming to MSU from countries where English is not the first language, the Test of English as a Foreign

Language, or TOEFL, still will be required. Educational Testing Service (ETS) has announced that it soon will introduce a secure TOEFL in-home testing solution. More information will be provided by ETS and the MSU Graduate School as the in-home test is launched.

The GMAT and GRE waivers apply to all of MSU's over 200 on-campus and online graduate programs.

"In addition to supporting our current graduate students, our Graduate School—along with faculty and staff across campus—is working to support prospective students as they navigate the admissions and enrollment process during this unique time," said MSU Provost and Executive Vice President David Shaw. "We hope the waiver of these testing requirements will provide one less thing for prospective students to worry about. Our faculty and staff look forward to welcoming students as they begin new academic programs this summer and fall."



Mississippi State is temporarily waiving GMAT and GRE testing requirements for students applying to the university's graduate programs.

(Photo by Russ Houston)

Former Philadelphia court clerk found guilty of embezzlement

Press Release

On Tuesday, March 24, State Auditor Shad White announced former Philadelphia municipal court clerk Karen Refre has been convicted of embezzlement in Neshoba County Circuit Court.

The case was prosecuted by District Attorney Stephen S. Kilgore in Judge Mark Duncan's court chambers. The sentencing was recorded last week on Friday.

Refre was arrested by Special Agents from the State Auditor's office in August 2019 after being indicted. She used her position to manipulate accounting software and embezzle over \$11,000 from the city during a two-year period.

Judge Duncan sentenced Refre to spend two years in prison and five years in a probation program under the supervision of the Department of Corrections.

The Auditor's office has already recovered the entire amount of Refre's demand letter by filing a claim against her surety bond, and she must also personally reimburse her surety bond company as part of the sentencing order.

"Another successful investigation concluded, another guilty plea," said Auditor White. "I'm thankful for the work of our investigators and for the work of prosecutors, who obtained prison time as a part of this guilty plea. We will continue to forge partnerships around the state and work to bring cases to a successful conclusion, just as we have done here."

Suspected fraud can be reported to the Auditor's office online any time by clicking the red button at www.osa.ms.gov or via telephone during normal business hours at 1-(800)-321-1275.

*Holmes County

(Continued from page 1.) measures. It is vitally important that we all do what we can right now to help slow the spread of this virus."

Preventive measures Mississippians can take include the following:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, especially after coughing or sneezing, blowing your nose,

and using the bathroom. Effective handwashing takes about 20 seconds, and includes cleaning under fingernails, between fingers, and washing the back of hands as well as the front.

- Stay home if you are sick and avoid close contact with anyone who is ill.

- Cover your coughs and sneezes. When possible, cough, sneeze or blow your

nose into a tissue, and throw the tissue away.

- If you are sick, especially with shortness of breath, severe cough, fever or severe chest pain, call a doctor or healthcare provider for instructions on being safely examined.

- Avoid all social gatherings or where 10 people or more would come into close contact.

- Practice social distancing: stay at least six feet apart from others in a group.

For more information on prevention measures and the latest guidance, download the free MS Ready mobile app or visit www.HealthyMS.com/covid-19. Follow MSDH by email and social media at www.HealthyMS.com/connect.

Mississippi businesses shift production during pandemic

Associated Press

As the nation hunkers down and people shelter in place amid the coronavirus pandemic, several Mississippi businesses have stayed open, switching gears to make much-needed products.

A jeans company is making face guards, a coffeehouse is making loaves of bread and distilleries are making hand sanitizer. They're hoping to keep their employees working as they help fellow Mississippians battle the outbreak.

"Americans roll up their sleeves. Mississippians roll up their sleeves," Josh West, CEO of Blue Delta Jeans, said at the company's manufacturing plant in Shannon, where the production of custom jeans has been retooled for mask-making. "We've dealt with disasters before, nothing like this, but it's just kind of ingrained, especially in the manufacturing community."

Ten seamstresses, wearing gloves and masks, sat behind sewing machines stitching together sheets of fabric and elastic bands to create a face guard. Three layers of white fabric provide enough protection to keep elements from leaving or entering a person's mouth and nose.

The first batch will be going to Memphis, Tennessee, for distribution by the local government. Masks will then be sent to the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

"We don't want to be the distribution point. The government agencies know where they need to go," West said. "We just want to ship our bulk to them and let them distribute the face guards to people."

West estimates a single seamstress can produce about 42 face guards in an hour. With many of his employees ready for the challenge, he has set a goal to make up to 10,000 masks daily.

"(Being able to work) means a lot to me," said Sarah Richey, an aide at Blue Delta Jeans who is a widow and has her son and granddaughter living under her roof. "I'm just glad that we work for a company that has found us something else to do. It makes you feel proud."



In this Thursday, March 26, 2020 photo, Madi Moore, a baker at Strange Brew Coffeehouse, mixes ingredients while making rainbow bread in Tupelo Miss. The coffeehouse has added to its production of coffee and pastries by making fresh loaves of bread made from scratch to help with the demand of empty shelves at the groceries stores during the coronavirus outbreak.

(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)



In this Thursday, March 26, 2020 photo, Taylor Anderson, front, and a team of seamstresses at Blue Delta Jeans, sew together face guards at the jeans manufacturing site in Shannon, Miss. The company has shifted its operation from making custom jeans to help with the demand of face masks to combat the coronavirus outbreak.

(AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

The U.S. Department of Labor reported that 3.28 million unemployment claims were filed in the week that ended March 21.

"I'm so grateful to be considered an essential employee," said Laura Hallmark, the head baker at Strange Brew Coffeehouse in Tupelo. "I'm grateful to be working at an essential establishment that is providing food for our community. I'm grateful because my husband is out of work right now, so I'm the breadwinner."

Strange Brew Coffeehouse has 75 employees at three locations in northern Mississippi and is adding up to six more workers. Each location is making up to 50 loaves of

fresh homemade bread per day.

"I know it's exciting that we are hiring this week, which is a word that you don't hear too much around the city right now," Strange Brew Coffeehouse owner Katelyn Reed said moments before interviewing potential employees. "Even in times like this, being able to bring on extra hands to be able to meet the demand is really important, and I'm really proud of that."

At the Tupelo location, customers don't have to leave their car because they're able to pick up on the drive-thru window at the building that was once a gas station.

Customer Maggie Reeder,

an occupational therapist in Tupelo, rolled by the drive-thru and bought a loaf of fresh bread while picking up coffee with her friend Kylie Waldrop.

"In the store it's been really hard to find like toilet paper, bread, milk, eggs," Reeder said.

Lazy Magnolia Brewery in Kiln and Cathead Distillery in Jackson are now producing alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

"That's pretty much the heart of small business," Reeder said. "It's doing whatever you can to keep as many people employed as long as you can. We were lucky to find a way that also serves the community."