
**THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON
UNIVERSITY**

WASHINGTON, DC

Department of Educational Leadership
Graduate School of Education and Human Development

To: James Williams, Chair, GSEHD Ph.D. in Education Committee

From: Yas Nakib, Iris Rotberg, and Joshua Glazer- Education Policy program faculty

Date: March 21, 2020

Dear Jim,

We are writing on behalf of **Tzitz Morán-Carreño**, a student who has been accepted into our Ph.D. concentration as a transfer student from the Public Policy Ph.D. Program, where she completed 51 credits. We request that Tzitz be granted approval to transfer these credits as she works toward completing her degree in the Ph.D. Education Policy concentration. Tzitz has the full support of all of us in this request.

Tzitz is an exceptional student, and we believe this is an exceptional circumstance. She has completed all the course requirements for the Public Policy program. In doing so, she has worked closely with our program faculty, taken all of our required courses, and received an A in each. Her intellectual engagement, analytic skills, and dedication to the field have been outstanding, as has her commitment to applying these skills to address the challenges in strengthening the link between education and the economy in Mexico and other middle- and low-income countries.

Before enrolling in the Public Policy program, Tzitz received her bachelor's and master's degrees from elite universities in Mexico and France and has had extensive experience with the Inter-American Development Bank and other organizations and in projects in Latin America and beyond. Tzitz has also had considerable research experience and authored and co-authored a number of professional articles and reports and given conference presentations. Her experience and expertise are already well beyond most Ph.D. students.

What is also exceptional in Tzitz's case is the extent to which she has sacrificed to achieve her goals in the face of serious medical problems, surgery, and the loss of a house in a fire. She left her family and community in Mexico to pursue a Ph.D. at GW and struggled medically and financially while at the same time completing her coursework. The intellectual engagement in her studies were always a pleasure to her. The medical pressures, however, had accumulated and she turned in her comprehensive exam half an hour late because she was ill, which resulted in an automatic failure, even though her performance in the exam was considered the second

best among those taking it. Although she could have requested an accommodation under the circumstances, she felt uncomfortable doing so. Tzitzitzi did not pass the exam the second time because she “did not do a good job of documenting sources”.

Despite this experience, two of the three recommendations supporting her application to the Education Policy concentration were from key Public Policy faculty, both of whom gave her very strong recommendations. One noted in his recommendation: “I must stress that her failure of the comprehensive exam does not reflect her performance in the program, and I urge you to disregard that in considering admission.” Both reviewers said they would be pleased to continue to be involved in her Ph.D. and one added that he would be happy to work with her on her dissertation research in any way he could be of help. Her third recommendation, from her supervisor of five years at the Inter-American Development Bank, was one of the strongest recommendations we have ever received on behalf of any student.

It would clearly be a hardship for Tzitzitzi to have to take another two-to three- years of coursework—particularly in view of the superb level of accomplishment she has already attained both in rigorous academic programs and in professional experience. We understand she might have to take the Foundations courses required for the Ph.D. in our school, but she has met all other requirements and is more than ready to progress to the comprehensives and the dissertation. Any one of us in the program would feel privileged to chair her dissertation.

It was suggested that Tzitzitzi might want to consider an Ed.D. to facilitate the transfer of credits. This, however, would be an added hardship for her even beyond the two to-three years of additional time and financial burden. Tzitzitzi has already completed the coursework in a rigorous Ph.D. program. Whether a fair criterion or not, the Ph.D. is the most recognized research degree in Mexico, and internationally more generally, and the reality is Tzitzitzi would be disadvantaged in the job market without that degree.

Tzitzitzi’s situation is also exceptional because it comes during a pandemic that tests us all—and for our international students creates the added burden of closed borders and even greater uncertainty and isolation.

We are grateful to you and your committee’s consideration of this request, and happy to provide additional information as needed.

Respectfully,

Yas Nakib and colleagues-Education Policy program

From: Iris Rotberg irrotberg@gwu.edu

Subject: Following up

Date: Apr 22, 2020 at 6:07:32 PM

To: mjfeuer@gwu.edu

It was good talking to you, Michael. As we discussed, both Sharon and the Ph.D. Committee mentioned two considerations—lack of authority to make the decision and consistency. One point perhaps could have been presented more strongly in our initial memorandum: In the time of this pandemic, GSEHD and GW generally have repeatedly emphasized flexibility—in grades, in deadlines, and in working to address the individual challenges each of our students faces. In the case of our international students, this involves the added burden of closed borders and the sorrow of long-term separation from family and community. Under these circumstances, I believe that consistency becomes a far less compelling argument.

Thank you, Michael, for your consideration of this request.
And take good care,

Iris

Iris C. Rotberg, Ph.D.
Research Professor of Education Policy
Graduate School of Education and Human Development
The George Washington University
2134 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20052

irotberg@gwu.edu
202-994-2735 : office
240-676-5310 : cell

It was good talking to you, Michael. As we discussed, both Sharon and the Ph.D. Committee mentioned two considerations—lack of authority to make the decision and consistency. One point perhaps could have been presented more strongly in our initial memorandum: in the time of this pandemic, GSEHD and GW generally have repeatedly emphasized flexibility—in grades, in deadlines, and in working to address the individual challenges each of our students faces. In the case of our international students, this involves the added burden of closed borders and the sorrow of long-term separation from family and community. Under these circumstances, I believe that consistency becomes a far less compelling argument.

Thank you, Michael, for your consideration of this request. And take good care.

The C. Rottberg, Ph.D.
Research Professor of Education Policy
Graduate School of Education and Human Development
The George Washington University
310 4 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20052

From: Michael Feuer mjfeuer@email.gwu.edu

Subject: thanks and update

Date: Sep 9, 2020 at 10:45:57 AM

To: Y. Nakib nakib@gwu.edu, **Josh Glazer**
jglazer@email.gwu.edu, **Iris Rotberg**
irotberg@email.gwu.edu

Cc: Colin Green colgreen@gwu.edu, **Sharon**
Dannels sdannels@gwu.edu, **Jim Williams**
jhw@gwu.edu, **Jennifer Clayton**
claytonj@gwu.edu, **Elizabeth Grant**
elizabethgrant@email.gwu.edu

Good morning-

Just wanted to thank you for nudging me toward accepting Tzitzu as a transfer student and allowing (as an exception) to bring in all those credits she had already completed. We've got what I think is an interesting plan, and based on our first few meetings I'm anticipating a mutually very rewarding semester; at least I know I will learn! (Glad to share the syllabus if you're interested.)

By the way, this is a good example of not letting rigidities of process interfere with subtleties of substance. We are better off thanks to judicious flexibility, and your modeling of this capacity is invaluable to GSEHD, especially in these trying times (but actually should have much longer shelf-life). Let me know if other opportunities for creative "stretching" arise. I enjoy the cooperation and collaboration, especially when it advances the goals of our school and our opportunities for continued development.

I hope you are all taking care of health and sanity (I'm doing ok on the first one, so far).

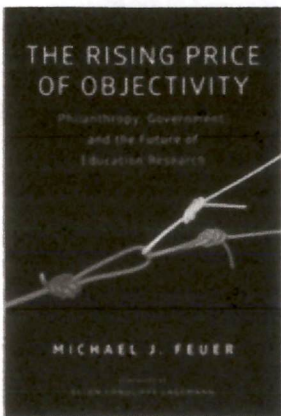
Best,

-- Michael



Michael J. Feuer, PhD
Dean and Professor
Graduate School of Education and Human
Development
The George Washington University
*Immediate Past President, The National Academy of
Education*
Nonresident Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
2134 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052
202-994-6161
202-413-8471 (cell)
mjfeuer@gwu.edu
Chief of Staff: Meg Holland, holland@gwu.edu
Host, EdFix <https://gsehd.gwu.edu/edfix-podcast>

"The great tragedy of science is the slaying of a beautiful hypothesis by an ugly fact." --Thomas Huxley, 1870



THIS MESSAGE MAY CONTAIN PRIVATE INFORMATION, SO PLEASE BE CAREFUL IN FORWARDING. IF YOU WERE BCC'D, PLEASE DO NOT FORWARD OR REPLY-TO-ALL. THANKS!