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Assembly of the Academic Senate, Academic Council
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

July 29, 2005

M.R.C. GREENWOOD
PROVOST and SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT—ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Re: Proposed Cap on Entry-Level Writing Class Size

Dear M.R.C.,

At the end of its 2003-04 Session, the Academic Council considered a proposal from the University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) to cap the size of Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) classes. UCOPE recommended setting as a target 15 students per ELWR section, with a maximum of 20, which would bring the writing class size of all UC campuses in line with the national standard. At that time, the Academic Council felt more consideration of the effects of the proposed cap was needed, and asked the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) to collect information about specific resource implications and UCOPE to gather evidence on benefits of reduced ELWR class size.

At its July 27, 2005 meeting, the Academic Council reviewed and endorsed the committees completed reports. Their recommendations are informed by the results of the survey your office conducted that queried Undergraduate Deans on resource and other implications of reduced writing class size, and the reports are enclosed for your consideration. Briefly, though, UCOPE reiterates its proposal to cap writing class size at a maximum of 20 students, and maintains that the projected additional systemwide cost of \$270,000 is not prohibitive and should not present a barrier to instituting the reduction. The UCOPE report cites as several benefits of smaller classes: increased time for careful evaluation and student conferences – key components of effective writing classes; improved facilitation of in-class learning; and greater student retention. UCEP supports UCOPE's position, and recommends that achieving reduced levels be a high priority use for new funds from the state Compact and other sources. In addition, UCEP advises that data on the effectiveness of ELWR courses be collected in an ongoing effort, especially data that would indicate how well students perform as writers in other classes after they have taken the ELWR.

The Academic Council agrees with the committees' conclusion that because of the unique value of writing classes and the unusual demands of writing instruction, capping ELWR class size makes good pedagogical sense. We also join them in viewing the \$270,000 cost of achieving a 20-student-per-section limit as a reasonable amount in light of what may be gained in effectiveness and broad educational benefits. We understand that considerations such as adequate classroom space and possible negative impacts on other classes or programs remain legitimate concerns on the campuses, but we trust that with added funding from the state and careful prioritizing, these concerns can be allayed. Since the Entry Level Writing Requirement is a systemwide policy, the Academic Council thinks it appropriate that systemwide funds be provided to ensure that it functions optimally and on a par with the national teaching writing standards.

In closing, we want to thank you, and by extension the Undergraduate Deans, for providing useful, detailed information on resource implications and other possible impacts of the proposed reduction in ELWR class size. The Council hopes that this information can serve as a foundation for further assessment of the value and effectiveness of UC's required writing courses, and we look forward to your response to this proposal.

Best regards,



George Blumenthal, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Academic Council
María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director

Enclosures: 2

GB:bgf



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION (UCOPE)
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June 9, 2005

GEORGE BLUMENTHAL
Chair, Academic Council

RE: University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) Recommendation on Class Size for Writing Classes

Dear George,

In response to the Academic Council's August 12, 2004 request for data from UCOPE on the effectiveness of writing instruction vis-à-vis class size, UCOPE submits the attached report, *Bringing Writing Class Size in Line with National Standards*, unanimously approved by UCOPE at its April 22, 2005 meeting.

By way of background, UCOPE proposed in its May 21, 2004 letter to former Academic Council Chair Lawrence Pitts, that the class size for all UC Entry Level Writing Requirement (UC-ELWR) classes and classes designed to enable students to complete the UC-ELWR should be capped ideally at 15 students, but in practice at no more than 20. UCOPE's proposal was prompted by the committee's discovery that the cap on class size for UC-ELWR classes at all campuses except Berkeley and San Diego is out of line with the national standard of no more than 15 students for basic writing classes, and is also out of line with the caps on writing class size at our comparison institutions.

UCOPE maintains that although the University continues to face difficult and uncertain budget constraints, the Office of President's projected cost of \$270,000 for capping writing class size at 20 students is not too high to suggest that the more restrictive class size limit should be swiftly instituted across all campuses. The comparatively small amount of funds required to lower class size in UC-ELWR classes will go a long way towards ensuring high quality preparatory writing instruction and learning for the University's beginning writing population.

Respectfully,

Arvan Fluharty
Chair, UCOPE

Enclosures

cc: UCOPE
Executive Director Bertero-Barcelo

BRINGING WRITING CLASS SIZE IN THE UC SYSTEM IN LINE WITH NATIONAL STANDARDS

University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE)

May 2005

Introduction

As Table 1 shows, the cap on class size for writing classes on all campuses but Berkeley and San Diego is out of line with the national standard of no more than 15 for basic writing (our Entry Level Writing Requirement, formerly known as Subject A), and no more than 20 for regular first-year composition classes. (These caps evidently crept up as a result of past budget constraints.) The UC caps are also out of line with our comparison institutions, also shown in Table 1. Table 2 shows that in fact the UC caps put us more in line with many junior colleges rather than with research institutions.

The recommended standards for class size come from three national organizations: the National Council of Teachers of English (<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/class/107626.htm>), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (<http://www.ncte.org/groups/cccc/positions/107680.htm>), and the Association of Departments of English, an affiliate of the Modern Language Association ("ADE Guidelines for Class Size and Workload for College and University Teachers of English: A Statement of Policy," *ADE Bulletin* 113 [1996]: 56-57). The ADE guidelines further state, "good teachers want to teach as many students as they can teach well. But if teachers are forced to respond to the writing of more than sixty students weekly, they will necessarily oversimplify their responses."

Reasons for Recommended Caps

One reason for the class size and workload recommendations from all three national organizations is the nature of the work. Unlike many other courses in the university, where the goal is to have students understand a body of information, writing courses instead have the goal of improving a particular skill, that of reading, thinking, and writing critically. Such a class requires the teacher to work with students one-on-one in conferences as well as meet with them in class, and to go over multiple drafts of papers so that students can learn the skills of revision and editing. Table 3, compiled by Richard Haswell of Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, demonstrates the average time on course for a writing teacher.

The most comprehensive statement on the workload of the writing teacher was published in *College Composition and Communication* (the flagship journal in the field) after a year of study and discussion. It is worth quoting at length.

The most important factor [in determining workload] is the criticism of student writing. Each . . . teacher, therefore, must provide the opportunity for practice and the sympathetic guidance that inexperienced writers require.

In freshman classes, compositions may be assigned as frequently as once per week; but if the student is to benefit, his writing must be guided by the instructor's careful evaluation of the papers and by suggestions made in individual conferences.

Criticism, which takes place outside of class, consumes an impressive amount of time. A teacher of freshman composition can at best evaluate four or five themes an hour. If he has fifty students, he spends at least ten to twelve hours examining each set. . . .

Compounding the problem of evaluation is the cumulative effect of what might be called grading fatigue. . . . Because of grading fatigue, most . . . teachers cannot evaluate with maximum efficiency for more than an average of ten to twelve hours each week—the time required to grade a set of fifty freshman compositions or twenty-five to thirty [longer] papers from advanced students.

If a teacher is to guide an inexperienced writer satisfactorily, he cannot limit his effort to written comments and grades; he must frequently confer with his students. Since most conferences require at least twenty minutes, an instructor who spends a reasonable five or six hours per week seeing students can confer with only fifteen individuals each week.

It is essential, then, that the total number of students assigned to an instructor be sufficiently limited to permit him to supervise their development without exceeding an average of more than ten to twelve hours per week for grading and five to six hours per week for conferences.

It is also essential that the enrollment in each class be limited to a number that fosters the kind of instruction required for that particular course. The teaching of composition . . . can be done best, perhaps only, in classes small enough to permit discussion. (200-01).

Committee on Load of College Teachers of English. "The Workload of a College English Teacher," *College Composition and Communication* 17 (Oct., 1966): 200-202.

A second reason for the recommended caps on class size has to do with facilitating student learning. There is a wealth of research on class size at all levels, some of it difficult to interpret because of the difficulty of controlling variables. The most comprehensive review of the research on class size, conducted for the California Educational Research Cooperative by David Mitchell and his colleagues, concluded that "for all student populations, class size research, while difficult to synthesize, offers convincing evidence of an important link between lowered student/teacher ratios and higher achievement." (Mitchell, Douglas, Christie Carson, and Gary Badarak, *How Changing Class Size Affects Classrooms and Students*, California Educational Research Cooperative, University of California, Riverside, May 1989). A meta-analysis of studies on class size and student achievement in higher education concluded that in classes that focused on delivery of information, class size did not matter, but that in classes that emphasize critical thinking, problem-solving, and long-term attitude toward the subject, small classes are more successful; one study examining student responses to assignments

found that in small classes, students showed greater use of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—all of which are important to learning how to write academic prose—than in large classes (Fischer, C. G., and GE Grant, “Intellectual Levels in college Classrooms,” *Studies of College Teaching: Experimental Results, Theoretical Interpretations, and New Perspectives*, ed. C. L. Ellner and C. P. Barnes. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1983). Further, the research shows that students who are most able, those with low motivation, and those who are beginners in a subject matter, benefit the most from small classes. (Glass, Gene V., and M. L. Smith, “Metaanalysis of research on class size and achievement,” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 1 (1): 2-16, 1979).

Finally, there is evidence that smaller classes that promote student interaction have a positive effect on student retention. Some of the research suggests that such classes are particularly important for students from traditionally under-represented groups (Vincent Tinto, *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*, 2nd ed. U of Chicago Press, 1993).

Implications for Students Placed in Basic Writing (Entry Level Writing Requirement) in the UC

Students who are placed in Basic Writing by the Analytical Writing Placement Examination are not in need of remediation; they are simply beginners. A large portion of students in this category are EOP (Educational Opportunity Program) students who (unlike those who place immediately into freshman composition) have not had attended schools that offer Advanced Placement courses or have a high-powered preparatory curriculum. Many of these are students who are the first in their families to attend college. Retention of these students should be a primary consideration in discussion of optimal size for writing classes. UCOPE members understand the issue of financial constraints during budgetary times, and also the issue of limited resources even in good budget times. Nevertheless, if the UC system is to take into account the quality of undergraduate education, some resources do need to be dedicated to the course that is for half our first-year students the first course they take at the university. Other institutions have treated the issue of class size in first-year composition as a retention issue. Arizona State University, for example, is undergoing difficult budget times, and yet that institution recently lowered class size for all writing classes to 19 to indicate its commitment to a quality education for undergraduates.

Table 1
Class Sizes for First-Year Composition (FYC) and Basic Writing
In the UC and in our Comparison Institutions

UC Campus	Regular FYC	Basic Writing (Entry Level Writing Requirement—Subject A)	ESL Writing
UC Berkeley	17	14	
UC Davis	25	30*	18* (ESL/EOP)
UC Irvine	23	23	15
UC Los Angeles	20	20	
UC Riverside	23	21	16
UC San Diego	Muir 15 Warren 14	20*	
UC Santa Barbara	25	25	
UC Santa Cruz	25	22	
UC Comparison Schools			
Harvard	15	10	
MIT	15-18		
Stanford	15		
SUNY Buffalo	24	24	
U of Illinois	22	16	
U of Michigan	18	18	
U of Virginia	18	15	
Yale	16		

*Taught at community college or by community college teachers

Table 2

**Class Size Caps for Regular First Year Composition
And Basic First Year Composition**

A hyphen means a range; e.g., "12-15" means the cap is from 12 to 15 students.

A slash means two different courses; e.g., "16/20 2nd semester" means the cap in the first semester course is 16 students and the cap in the second semester is 20 students.

	Regular FYC	Basic FYC
Allentown College	22	15
Arizona State University	19	19
Atlanta Christian College	24	12
Ball State University	25	18
Beloit University	16	
Black Hills State University	20	
Boston College	15	
Boston University, College of General Studies	12-15	
Brandeis University	17	10
Brigham Young University	20	
California State University Monterey Bay	22	
California State University Hayward	24	
California State University San Bernardino	24	15-18
California State University Stanislaus	15	
Capital University [Columbus, OH]	20	15
Christopher Newport University	22	
Clark University	16/20 2nd semester	
College of Southern Idaho	28	21
Community College of Denver		20-22
Dakota State University	30	
Drew University	20	15
Duke University	12	
Eastern Michigan University	25 /20 honors	
Eastern Oregon University	30	20

Eastern Washington University	24	20
Emerson College	17-18	
Eureka College	20/15 linked	
Flagler College [St. Augustine, FL]	20	
Gonzaga University	20	
Hannibal-La Grange College	20/20 2nd semester	15
Haverford College	15	
Heartland Community College	20	15
Hunter College		22
Huston-Tillotson College	20	15
Indiana University Purdue University Ft. Wayne	22	18
Indiana University South Bend	20	
Indiana University Southeast	23	20
James Madison Harrisburg	20	
Johns Hopkins University	15	10
Kansas State University	22	
Kettering University	20	
Lake Superior State University	25	20
Longwood College	22	
Louisiana State University	19	
Loyola College in Maryland	20	
Lynchberg College	19	
Mainland Community College [Texas City, TX]	22	
Mesa Community College	26/20 online	20-23
New York University	15	8
Miami University [Ohio]	22	
Missouri Western State College	25	20
Montclair State University	25	15
Montgomery College	25	
Montgomery College Germantown	25	

Montgomery College Rockville	20	
Montgomery College Takoma Park	20	
Moravian College	18	
Newbury College	20	
Niagara University	17	
Northern Kentucky University	24	20
Occidental College	15	
Ohio State University	28	15
Ohio University	20	
Oklahoma State University	25	15
Princeton University	12	
Purdue University West Lafayette	20/25 accelerated	
Sacred Heart University	20	
Salt Lake Community College	25	
San Juan College	20	15
Seton Hall	15-18	
Skidmore College	15	
Southern Connecticut State University	20	12
Southwest Texas State University	25	
St. Cloud State University	25	
State University of New York Stony Brook	25	15
Suffolk University [Boston]	25	
Tarleton State University	25	
Tennessee Tech University	25	15
Texas A&M University Commerce	25	22
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi	25	18
Texas Wesleyan University	20	
Truman College in Chicago	25	
University of Alabama	22	15
University of Arizona	25	

UC Berkeley	17	14
UC Davis	25	
UC Irvine	23	23, ESL 15
UCLA	20	20
UC Riverside	23	21, ESL 16
UC San Diego	Muir 15, Warren 14	
UC Santa Barbara	25	25
UC Santa Cruz	25	22
University of Nebraska at Omaha	15	
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill	19	19
University of Oklahoma	24	15
University of Rhode Island	22	
University of Rio Grande		22
University of Virginia	18	15
University of Washington	22	18
Washington State University	25	20
Wellesley College	15	
West Virginia University	22	12
Western Illinois University	22	
Western State College	24	
Whitworth College	20	
Xavier University of Louisiana	25	
Yeshiva University	17	

Table 3

Average Time-on-Course of a Writing Teacher

Richard H. Haswell

Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi

February 2005

All writing teachers know that a good-faith writing class requires unusual amounts of teacher work because it requires individual attention to students and careful response to student writing. By good-faith, I mean a course that focuses on analysis and argument, requires drafts and substantive revision of major writings, and sets individualized student work-in-progress as the primary text in the classroom.

In numbers, what is the work required of a teacher in a typical first-year writing course? The following calculation of is for a first-year course of 25 students, with four substantial out-of-class essays, one required individual conference, and one end-of-the-semester portfolio of writings. It is the most conservative estimate.

A. Individual evaluation of four out-of-class papers (per student)		
	Each paper assignment, original commenting	20 minutes
	Each paper assignment, reading new drafts, grading	20 minutes
	<u>Total minutes per paper</u>	<u>40 minutes</u>
	<u>Total of four papers</u>	<u>160 minutes</u>
B. Other evaluation and diagnosis (per student)		
	In-class work (reading essays, quizzes, exercises, etc.)	30 minutes
	One required conference	15 minutes
	Portfolio: individual assistance and final evaluation	25 minutes
	<u>Total minutes per student</u>	<u>70 minutes</u>

C. Total evaluation time (25 students)		
	Summed evaluation per student (A + B)	230 minutes
	All students in the class (times 25)	5,750 minutes
	<u>Converted to hours</u>	<u>96 hours</u>
D. Other work for the course		
	Preparation time (two hours per one hour class)	90 hours
	Teaching time in class (3 hours a week, 15 weeks)	45 hours
	<u>Total per comp section</u>	<u>135 hours</u>
Summed hours devoted to course		
	Work with individual students (C)	96 hours
	Other work for the course (D)	135 hours
	<u>Total time-on-course</u>	<u>231 hours</u>

As I say, this total of 231 hours is a conservative figure. A more realistic estimation probably would add at least 20-30 hours. Two careful studies, where teachers kept track of their own time on course, arrive at considerably higher work time for first-year writing teachers with classes of 25 students: 281 hours (Yvonne Merrill, "Report on GAT workload: Spring 1994," Department of English, University of Arizona, 1994) and 312 hours (Greg Bowe, Florida International University, personal correspondence, 1999).

A standard 8-hour day of 15 weeks of 5 working days a week adds up to 600 hours. Even by the minimal count calculated here, with two writing courses, and with one third the preparation time allowed for the second course (30 minutes instead of 90), the total is 402 hours. With three writing courses, the teacher is already working overtime: 633 hours.

The calculation helps explain why the Conference on College Composition and Communication states that "No more than 20 students should be permitted in any writing class. Ideally classes should be limited to 15"

([Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing](#)). It also helps explain why, across the nation, first-year regular composition classes average 22-23 students—and generally ceilings are lower at private and more prestigious schools. For an inventory of the current class size of writing programs around the nation, see [Class Sizes for First-year Regular and Basic Writing Courses](#).



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
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July 7, 2005

GEORGE BLUMENTHAL, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: Proposed Cap on Entry-Level Writing Class Size

Dear George,

I am pleased to submit this letter from UCEP in support of UCOPE's proposal on writing class size. You will recall that last year, UCOPE proposed that entry-level writing requirement classes (ELWR) meet a target class size of fifteen students and a maximum of twenty students per section based on national and UC Comparison Institution standards. At the time, UCEP expressed general support for the proposal, but reserved judgment about a specific cap out of concern that the resources required for such a move might have negative or unintended consequences for other campus units. Subsequently, Academic Council asked UCEP to collect information about the specific resource implications of reduced class size in ELWR writing sections and UCOPE to gather evidence about its effectiveness and benefits. Because the resource data that we received deals with ELWR courses, we focus our remarks on those courses. However, many of these considerations are also relevant to first year composition classes.

In May, UCEP reviewed data drawn from a survey of campus undergraduate Vice Provosts estimating the resource implications, including the increased cost in dollars, of bringing campuses into compliance with national standards for the basic writing class. In general, UCEP members felt that the systemwide costs associated with capping the entry-level writing class size at 20 students—estimated by the UC Provost to be between \$251,888 and \$268,447—were not significant, when averaged over the system. And although the costs required for a 15-student cap—estimated to be between \$1,055,318 and \$1,200,534—were significantly higher, we also felt they were in the reasonable realm of possibility, especially as new funds become available through the Compact agreement. Because there is great variation in the proportion of students needing ELWR instruction from campus to campus, and because this is a systemwide requirement, it may be appropriate to provide systemwide support to aid in the movement to smaller ELWR class sizes.

UCEP also reviewed UCOPE's effectiveness study. The committee found strong evidence for a beneficial effect of smaller writing classes in the report, although some members would have been more impressed by additional quantitative evidence of effectiveness. While smaller class size has a positive educational effect on all fields and disciplines, we agree with UCOPE that writing instruction has unique pedagogical value due to the importance of the subject and the

nature of the instruction. Writing ability has a crucial impact on undergraduate education and subsequent student success, regardless of discipline or major, and as such is in a unique position as a systemwide competency requirement. Also, writing classes are unique in terms of the instructor time and effort necessary to give writing students individualized feedback. The evidence shows that class size matters more in courses like writing that develop skills, than in instruction that is more devoted to imparting information.

Other data in the Vice Provost's survey support the argument for the effectiveness of smaller class size. At UCSC, where the cap is 22, 80% of ELWR students passed the exam, while at Davis where the cap is 30, fewer than half of students passed. At UCI, the pass rate for the ESL and other higher risk students who sit in 15-student sections was similar to the rate for regular ELWR students in 20-student sections—an outcome members thought could be explained only by the individualized attention enjoyed by students in smaller sections.

The Vice Provosts also expressed some concern that the costs and resources required for the proposed caps could have negative effects on upper division writing programs, other curricular areas, and classroom space. We share these concerns. In addition, a move to 15 or 20 cap would clearly have the biggest impact on campuses with the most ELWR students and with the largest current class sizes. However, if adjustments are made slowly and as campus budgets and classroom space increase, the impacts on other programs will be small.

UCEP recommends that campuses adhere to the standard of 15-20-students per class. As new resources become available from the Compact and other sources, reducing writing class sizes to the recommended levels should be a high priority use for the new funds. In addition, data should be collected at the campus and systemwide levels on an ongoing basis, focusing on the effectiveness of ELWR courses. Data on the success rate in ELWR courses and the number of times the course is taken to achieve success have some interest. However, the performance of students in later writing classes and classes in other subjects that include substantial writing is a more valid and relevant indicator. Campuses that do not wish to comply with the smaller class size standard should submit evidence that their ELWR writing program with larger caps is as effective as those that have the recommended class size.

Finally, the survey noted that some campuses separate certain categories of students-- e.g., higher risk and ESL students, into smaller class sections. Campuses not currently doing so should explore the possibility of a smaller cap for certain groups of students identified as needing extra attention.

Sincerely,



Joe Kiskis
Chair, UCEP

Enclosures

cc: UCEP members
Executive Director Bertero-Barceló



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT –
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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Oakland, California 94607-5200

April 27, 2005

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR BLUMENTHAL

Subject: Costs of Capping Size of Subject A Classes at 15 or 20

Dear George:

In response to your February 1, 2005 request for estimates of the costs and benefits that would be associated capping the size of Entry Level Writing courses (formerly known as Subject A) in 2005-06 at either 15 or 20 students, our staff have surveyed the Undergraduate Deans on the merits of this proposal. Attached are three spreadsheets showing the estimated cost of capping these course enrollments as well as a spreadsheet with campus reactions regarding the merits of this proposal.

The Bottom Line: The Deans estimate that it would cost the University ~ \$270,000 to cap Subject A at 20 students in 2005-06, and ~ \$1,200,000 to cap Subject A at 15 students, using the upper end of the estimates the campuses provided. This would fund ~49 additional sections of Subject A capped at 20 students, and ~194 additional sections capped at 15 students.

Current Caps: Currently, four campuses—Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, and San Diego—cap their Subject A classes at 20 or fewer students (Berkeley caps its classes at 14). Riverside caps its Subject A classes at 21, Santa Cruz at 22, Santa Barbara at 25, and Davis at 30. Thus, Davis, Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz would be affected if the cap were lowered to 20. But all the campuses except Berkeley would be affected if the cap were reduced to 15.

Campus Concerns: Not surprisingly, Davis, Riverside, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz were most concerned about the consequences of capping the size of Subject A, especially at 15 students. Davis and Santa Barbara projected that they would have difficulty finding enough qualified instructors to teach the additional classes. Finding adequate classroom space was a significant concern for six campuses—Davis, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz.

Zero Sum Costs: Four campuses—Davis, Los Angeles, Riverside, and Santa Barbara—were also concerned about the “zero sum” costs of this proposal. If they were required to reduce the size of their Subject A classes and no additional funds were provided, how would other parts of the undergraduate curriculum be affected? Davis felt it would be appropriate to compare class sizes in other areas of the curriculum, such as introductory calculus or foreign language, before determining which areas of the undergraduate curriculum needed additional resources. UCLA was concerned that if the Writing Programs budget had to absorb the additional costs, they might have to restrict the number of intermediate and advanced writing courses, which have already been greatly reduced

April 27, 2005

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in number by recent budget cuts. Santa Barbara was concerned that in an era of tight budget cuts, the additional costs associated with reducing the class size of Subject A might result in comparable

decreases in expenditures for other aspects of undergraduate education. Likewise, Riverside wrote that despite the pedagogic advantages of the proposal, reducing section size would place an even greater demand on faculty lines, thus reducing their capacity to invest in other university priorities.

Is it a Good Idea? For the most part, all of the campuses agree that students and instructors benefit from, and appreciate, smaller introductory writing classes. Berkeley believes that their Subject A class, which is capped at 14 or less, contributes to the low failure rate (~10-12%) of students in these sections. "Because class size is small, we are able to assign more essays and other writing projects than is typical in similar courses on other campuses. Because we have fewer students, we are able to comment at length on their writing, and to offer more one-to-one guidance in office hours. It's no surprise that our failure rate is low."

However, the evidence backing up assertions that students in smaller writing classes develop better writing skills more quickly than those in larger writing classes, and hence move along faster in their academic careers, is mostly anecdotal. Campuses do not conduct randomized clinical trials, putting some students in smaller writing classes and others in larger classes and observing the outcomes. As Irvine pointed out, "There appears to be little or no research on student outcomes to back up the suggested policies, especially at the postsecondary level. What little research there is on class size is based on K-12 experience and it rarely makes distinctions below 20 students per class."

So while the campuses in principle support the idea of reducing class size in introductory writing classes, they (especially those with large enrollments in Subject A) have reservations about the costs and benefits of this proposal, especially in relation to other undergraduate programs. They also have concerns about finding enough qualified instructors to teach the additional classes and enough small classrooms. While an infusion of additional resources would alleviate some of these concerns, a shortage of small classrooms would continue to remain a problem, especially if Subject A were capped at 15.

Sincerely,



M.R.C. Greenwood
Provost and Senior Vice President
Academic Affairs

Enclosures

cc: Associate Vice President Galligani
Acting Assistant Vice President Guerra
Academic Council
Joseph Kiskis, UCEP Chair
Arvan Fluharty, UCOPE Chair
Michael LaBriola, UCEP Analyst
Michelle Ruskofsky, UCOPE Analyst

Estimated Costs of Capping Entry Level Writing Courses (Subject A) at 15 Students per Section
2005-06 Projections

	Structure of Subject A Classes	Number of students expected in Subject A in 2005-06	No. of sections of Subject A needed in 2005-06 to meet demand, given current scheduling practices	Current caps for Subject A	Additional sections needed to cap Subject A at 15	Additional cost of capping Subject A at 15 <u>Low</u> <u>High</u>	
Berkeley	Berkeley does not teach a separate Subject A class. Rather, it combines Subject A instruction with Reading and Composition Part A in one intensive, accelerated 6-unit course.	650	46	14	0	\$ -	\$ -
Davis	Sacramento City College faculty teach Davis' Subject A course.	1,500	76 sections (50 for regular students, 26 for EOP/ESL students)	30 (18 for EOP/ESL students)	52	\$ 216,307	\$ 216,307
Irvine*	Irvine has five different courses that include instruction satisfying the former Subject A requirement. None of these classes is devoted entirely to preparatory writing instruction.	1,344	81	20 (15 for students most at risk based on verbal SAT scores and ESL status)	15	\$ 122,000	\$ 122,000
Los Angeles	UCLA teaches Subject A (English 2) using experienced campus lecturers.	450	23	20	6	\$ 57,000	\$ 57,000
Riverside		2,558	126	21	45	\$ 256,800	\$ 256,800

**Estimated Costs of Capping Entry Level Writing Courses (Subject A) at 15 Students per Section
2005-06 Projections**

	Structure of Subject A Classes	Number of students expected in Subject A in 2005-06	No. of sections of Subject A needed in 2005-06 to meet demand, given current scheduling practices	Current caps for Subject A	Additional sections needed to cap Subject A at 15	Additional cost of capping Subject A at 15 <u>Low</u> <u>High</u>	
San Diego	UCSD contracts the instruction of its Subject A/ESL courses to a local community college. Data provided here are for both Subject A and ESL classes.	1,320	78	20 (15 for ESL)	20	\$ 65,000	\$ 75,000
Santa Barbara		1,250	~50	25	34	\$ 193,211	\$ 237,367
Santa Cruz	UCSC places all freshmen in a basic 5-unit college writing seminar. Students who have not satisfied the Entrance Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) upon entrance (30-40% of the entering class) are placed in special "Subject A" sections of the college writing seminar, which are supplemented with tutoring resources. Students in those sections sit for the ELWR exam before the end of the term; those who fail (~20%) are subsequently places into Writing 20 (or 21) until they pass.	1,424	71 (65 5-unit courses, and 6 3-unit courses)	22	22	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000

SYSTEMWIDE TOTALS:	10,496			194	\$ 1,055,318	\$ 1,200,534
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*Estimates for Irvine include \$22,000 in projected administrative costs.

Estimated Costs of Capping Entry Level Writing Courses (Subject A) at 20 Students per Section
2005-06 Projections

	Structure of Subject A Classes	Number of students expected in Subject A in 2005-06	No. of sections of Subject A needed in 2005 06 to meet demand, given current scheduling practices	Current caps for Subject A	Additional sections needed to cap Subject A at 20	Additional cost of capping Subject A at 20 <u>Low</u> <u>High</u>	
Berkeley	Berkeley does not teach a separate Subject A class. Rather, it combines Subject A instruction with Reading and Composition Part A in one intensive, accelerated 6-unit course.	650	46	14	0	\$ -	\$ -
Davis	Sacramento City College faculty teach Davis' Subject A course.	1,500	76 sections (50 for regular students, 26 for EOP/ESL students)	30 (18 for EOP/ESL students)	23	\$ 98,434	\$ 98,434
Irvine	Irvine has five different courses that include instruction satisfying the former Subject A requirement. None of these classes is devoted entirely to preparatory writing instruction.	1,344	81	20 (15 for students most at risk based on verbal SAT scores and ESL status)	1	\$ 7,000	\$ 7,000
Los Angeles	UCLA teaches Subject A (English 2) using experienced campus lecturers.	450	23	20	0	\$ -	\$ -
Riverside		2,558	126	21	6	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000

Estimated Costs of Capping Entry Level Writing Courses (Subject A) at 20 Students per Section
2005-06 Projections

	Structure of Subject A Classes	Number of students expected in Subject A in 2005-06	No. of sections of Subject A needed in 2005 06 to meet demand, given current scheduling practices	Current caps for Subject A	Additional sections needed to cap Subject A at 20	Additional cost of capping Subject A at 20 <u>Low</u> <u>High</u>	
San Diego	UCSD contracts the instruction of its Subject A / ESL courses to a local community college. Data provided here are for both Subject A and ESL classes.	1,320	78	20 (15 for ESL)	0	\$ -	\$ -
Santa Barbara		1,250	~50	25	13	\$ 72,454	\$ 89,013
Santa Cruz	UCSC places all freshmen in a basic 5-unit college writing seminar. Students who have not satisfied the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) upon entrance (30-40% of the entering class) are placed in special "Subject A" sections of the college writing seminar, which are supplemented with tutoring resources. Students in those sections sit for the ELWR exam before the end of the term; those who fail (~20%) are subsequently placed in Writing 20 (or 21) until they pass.	1,424	71 (65 5-unit courses, and 6 3-unit courses)	22	6	\$ 39,000	\$ 39,000

SYSTEMWIDE TOTALS:		10,496			49	\$ 251,888	\$ 268,447
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Additional Challenges Associated with Capping Subject A at 15 or 20 Students
2005-06 Projections

	Would hiring additional instructors be an issue?	Would finding additional classrooms be an issue?	Other Cost Concerns
Berkeley			
Davis	Yes; the campus projects that they would need to implement incentives to assist the Sacramento Community College District to recruit the additional qualified instructors that would be needed.	Yes. The campus does not have enough classrooms.	
Irvine			An assistant Course Director would be needed for fall quarter (when most Subject A courses generally occur) to accommodate the additional workload; cost estimated at \$17,000 (plus benefits). Additional administrative costs related to scheduling and administering additional sections are estimated at \$5,000 (plus benefits).
Los Angeles		Classroom space is a campus-wide concern; small classrooms are very scarce.	
Riverside		Yes, classroom space is currently at its limit. The addition of 45 sections that meet three times a week, plus a discussion group meeting, would stress an already limited number of classrooms.	
San Diego		Supplying 15-20 additional small classrooms three times a week would be a struggle, given UCSD's current shortage of classroom space.	

**Additional Challenges Associated with Capping Subject A at 15 or 20 Students
2005-06 Projections**

	Would hiring additional instructors be an issue?	Would finding additional classrooms be an issue?	Other Cost Concerns
Santa Barbara	<p>Finding and hiring additional instructors, even assuming the necessary budget, would not necessarily be easy, given housing costs in the Santa Barbara area and other demographics. The campus thinks they could accomplish it given enough lead time, but a last minute mandate to reduce class size would pose a very serious recruitment hurdle.</p>	<p>Adding 13, and especially 34, more sections of Subject A would put a strain on an already difficult room scheduling process. However, the Dean of UG Studies has received a very cautious assurance that the rooms could be found, but it clearly would be a serious challenge if the campus were to reduce enrollment to 15 per section.</p>	<p>The salary and benefits costs associated with Subject A rise almost every year as a consequence of various factors, including the lecturer's union contract. Whatever costs have been estimated in this spreadsheet, one should assume some increase in the following years.</p>
Santa Cruz		<p>Yes. Classroom resources would be strained.</p>	<p>Tutorial support, currently underfunded but in need of restoration. Also, possible "rental" costs for additional classrooms.</p>

Other Campus Concerns about Capping Subject A at 15 or 20 Students

<p>Berkeley</p>	<p>Berkeley believes that the enrollment cap of 14 is the key to the success of its introductory Reading and Composition course. Because of this small class size, UCB feels it is able to make very swift progress with its students. The campus is also convinced that the 14-student cap helps them conserve resources in the long run because the number of students who fail the course and thus have to repeat is extremely low. When the UC Council of Writing Programs has its annual meeting, campuses share information on such things as failure rate for their courses. The failure rate for Berkeley's sections is 10-12%. As far as Berkeley knows, there are no UC-systemwide published data on this, but they believe that their failure rate is generally lower than that at other UC campuses. They attribute their lower failure rate to their small classes, which allows them to assign more essays and other writing projects than is typical in similar courses on other campuses. And because they have fewer students, they are able to comment at length on students' writing, and to offer more one-to-one guidance in office hours.</p>
<p>Davis</p>	<p>Based on the materials provided, the research shows that students benefit from smaller class sizes in writing courses. If true, then capping Subject A at 15 or 20 students might result in fewer students repeating the course and thus completing the requirement earlier. This might also assist with efforts to improve time-to-degree. However, the additional costs associated with the proposal would be significant.</p> <p>In addition, the campus questioned the appropriateness of only comparing UC class sizes to other institutions with regard to English composition. They believe it would be appropriate to also compare class sizes in other areas of the curriculum, such as introductory calculus or foreign language, before determining which areas of the curriculum need additional resources. What, they asked, does the research indicate about smaller class sizes in these other areas?</p>
<p>Irvine</p>	<p>In response to the UCEP/UCOPE proposal, Irvine surveyed the literature on class size, and came to the conclusion that the national standards set by the Association of Departments of English and the National Council of Teachers are not based on a body of research that has proven valid or reliable. What little research they found on class size was based on K-12 experience and it rarely made distinctions below 20 students per class. In particular, Irvine was not able to locate any class size research related to writing in higher education. It's possible they overlooked some important studies, but they believe it is very likely that research on this question is very limited.</p> <p>Irvine believes that the argument about the benefits of small classes from instructor workload may be valid, together with its claim for better student learning outcomes, but they do not know. While there may be fewer repetitions of Subject A on the Irvine campus, is this because they provide Subject A instruction typically in settings under 20 students, or because of something else?</p> <p>For example, a few years ago, in 2000-01, Irvine did a focused study of their program that places students most at risk based on verbal SAT scores and ESL status in sections of 15 that are supplemented with additional tutorials. The study did not involve a matched comparison group, since all students with very low Subject A scores were required to enroll in WR 39A/Plus rather than WR 39A. The study did suggest, however, that students benefit from the WR 39A/Plus program, for they completed the course at the same success rate as students in the regular WR 39A course (90%).</p>

Other Campus Concerns about Capping Subject A at 15 or 20 Students

<p>Irvine (con't)</p>	<p>But, the campus asks, what level of achievement would these at-risk students have registered without the infusion of additional resources? They speculate with some conviction that the students would have been less successful. But what part of their success was due to smaller class size? What part was due to the additional hours of instructional lab, the highly trained staff specializing in TESOL, the implementation of a strict policy on "corrective feedback," new materials developed specially for this group of writers, and the like?</p>
<p>Los Angeles</p>	<p>Teachers and students certainly appreciate small classes. First-year students in general, and especially those who are held for Subject A, need an instructor who can engage with their work closely, regularly, and productively. Perhaps 15 students would be an ideal number for a Subject A course. That said, UCLA believes that it accomplishes a great deal with the caps for Subject A at 20 as they are now. UCLA's English 2 (its Subject A course) is a strenuous course for both students and teachers. However, UCLA feels that the slight benefit of a 15 (as opposed to 20) class cap for this course has to be considered in relation to broader curricular losses that may result. If the additional funds needed to cap Subject A were taken out of UCLA's Writing Programs budget, for example, UCLA undergraduates would as a whole suffer by the change. UCLA's intermediate and advanced writing courses have already been greatly reduced in number by the recent budget cuts and any further emphasis on the first-year program would further restrict their ability to offer other lower- and upper-division writing courses. The campus believes that lowering the class size of English 2 to 15 would only be positive if additional supplemental funds were provided.</p>
<p>Riverside</p>	<p>Riverside appreciated the opportunity to offer a few general comments about the UCEP/UCOPE proposal. As indicated in Chair Blumenthal's transmittal letter, the proposal acknowledged the likelihood of additional costs, but anticipated compensatory savings since fewer students would need to repeat Subject A courses. However, UCR has recently experienced a large increase in the proportion of students satisfying the Entry Level Writing Requirement with a single quarter of post-matriculation instruction. In Fall 2004, their first experience following the elimination of a stand-alone exit exam, 78% of UCR freshmen held for Subject A satisfied the requirement, nearly doubling previous rates. While the campus does not yet have data about how these students succeeded in the subsequent curriculum, they believe that this large increase in first-time pass rates makes it less likely that further significant increases could be achieved if the proposal were implemented, and certainly not at a level that would balance the substantial additional costs that would be entailed.</p> <p>Although communication skills, including writing, are among the most important priorities in Riverside's curriculum, it is essential for the campus to achieve a wise balance in the allocation of scarce university resources. UCR already devotes a significant number of unfilled faculty lines to fund entry-level writing instruction to an annual enrollment of 2,558 students. Despite its pedagogic advantages, reducing section size in Subject A would place an even greater demand on faculty lines, thus reducing UCR's capacity to invest in other university priorities.</p>

Other Campus Concerns about Capping Subject A at 15 or 20 Students

<p align="center">San Diego</p>	<p>Because the UCEP/UCOPE proposal reflects current practice on the UCSD campus, it would probably not have a major impact on UCSD's delivery of ESL and Subject A.</p>
<p align="center">Santa Barbara</p>	<p>Is it a good idea, asked Santa Barbara? It is probably true that the quality of instruction in writing benefits from smaller classes. These are classes with extensive and intensive one-on-one interactions between students and instructors. The additional attention and feedback provided by an instructor in a class of 15 versus 25 would be beneficial for the students. Reducing class size is something that UCSB supports in principle. However, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies does not currently have the money in the college budget to support the additional sections of Subject A required by any reduction in class size. UCSB believes that in an era of tight budgets there is a possibility that the additional costs associated with Subject A class size reduction might result in comparable decreases in expenditures for other aspects of undergraduate education. Thus they would like careful thought given to that possible consequence. They would also like further consideration given to other promising pedagogical approaches that might improve the quality of writing instruction.</p>
<p align="center">Santa Cruz</p>	<p>Given their model, UCSC does not anticipate that any of the costs associated with reducing the class size of Subject A would be offset by any savings, though they hope it would be rewarded by greater effectiveness in achieving educational outcomes.</p>