

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION (UCOPE)
ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008**

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:

The University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) met two times during the 2007-08 academic year, and its English as a Second Language (ESL) advisory group met one time. Each group considered matters relevant to UCOPE's governing Senate Bylaw, SBL 192. According to SBL 192, UCOPE is to advise the President and appropriate agencies of the Academic Senate on matters related to preparatory education, including the language needs of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, to supervise the University of California Entry Level Writing Requirement (UC-ELWR), and to establish Universitywide standards for the University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination (UC-AWPE). This report summarizes the committee's activities and accomplishments from the 2007-08 year.

Administration and Budget of the University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination (UC-AWPE)

In prosecution of its charge, UCOPE regularly reviewed the implementation of the UC-AWPE via updates from its consultants. In particular, the committee continued to monitor how the vendor, Pearson Government Solutions, initiated improved administration processes. Despite the administrative changes, UC-AWPE continued to run a structural deficit, and UCOPE's consultants asked the committee's advice on possible ways to reduce the operating costs of UC-AWPE administration. Various options were considered, such as raising test fees, limiting the number of test-takers, and employing alternate administration mediums, such as online sittings. UCOPE submitted preliminary suggestions to its Office of the President consultants and awaits their analysis; this issue will be monitored closely in 2008-09.

Review and Selection of Essay Prompts for the 2008 University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination (UC-AWPE)

UCOPE also selected the essay prompt to be used in the 2008 UC-AWPE administration; the selection is an annual event and follows careful consideration of several possible sample passages and questions pertaining thereto. The potential prompts were introduced by UC-AWPE Committee Chair and UCOPE Consultant George Gadda.

Norming of the 2008 University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination (UC-AWPE)

UCOPE evaluated and ranked sample essays written in response to the selected UC-AWPE prompt; the pass/fail line was established and communicated to the UC-AWPE committee.

Revision of Senate Regulation 636

In the 2006-07 academic year, UCOPE presented to the Academic Council an amendment designed to simplify Senate Regulation (SR) 636, which governs the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR). At the time, specific standardized tests were listed

by name and certain subsections were found to be redundant. With the assistance of consultant George Gadda, 2006-07 Chair John Eggers led the drafting of an amended SR, which was subsequently endorsed by the committee.

UCOPE concurrently presented to the Academic Council an additional amendment to SR 636 which would “cap” ELWR class sizes at 20 students per section. This proposal followed significant research and analysis by previous UCOPEs, their consultants, and their analysts: Briefly, in June 2005, UCOPE submitted to the Academic Council a report entitled “Bringing Writing Class Size in Line with National Standards,” which the latter endorsed at its July 2005 meeting. The report was in response to the Academic Council’s August 2004 request for data from UCOPE on the efficacy of writing instruction vis-à-vis class size. The issue first arose when UCOPE proposed in May 2004 that the class size for all UC-ELWR classes, and classes designed to assist students to complete the UC-ELWR, should be capped ideally at 15 students, but in practice at no more than 20 students—a policy which would parallel both the national standard and practice at UC’s comparison institutions.

UCOPE posited that although the University faces uncertain budgetary constraints, the Office of the President’s projected costs for capping writing classes is not unduly burdensome. Still, the Provost’s Office, in spring 2006, indicated that the matter was one of “academic policy”, not just budget, and therefore was in the purview of the Senate. Consequently, the Academic Council asked UCOPE and the University Committee on Education Policy (UCEP) to present supporting data on the issue, including an amendment to codify the national standard at UC.

UCOPE submitted both proposed amendments to the Academic Council at the end of the 2006-07 academic year. Subsequently, the Council sent both proposals for systemwide review by each division and the Senate’s other standing committees. Based on the feedback received, the Council recommended to the Academic Assembly that the simplifying amendment be adopted but that the class-size cap amendment be tabled pending further academic quantification and a more generous state budgetary environment. In January 2008, the Assembly followed the Council’s advice and voted to amend SR 636 by adopting the proposed simplification but defeating the proposed class-size cap. UCOPE notes, however, that even though the class-size cap amendment failed, by bringing attention to the issue, UCOPE has succeeded in securing some voluntary campus reduction in ELWR class sizes.

UCOPE English as a Second Language (ESL) Advisory Group

The UCOPE ESL Advisory Group met once during the 2007-08 academic year, and ESL AG Chair Robin Scarcella (UCI) presented their Transfer Student Report to UCOPE. In it, ESL AG detailed its findings about the academic English preparation of students who transfer into UC from the California Community Colleges (CCC), as well as other, more general academic English concerns. The report recommended that each campus undertake an evaluative study through surveys or diagnostic testing as outlined in the report’s appendix and then take appropriate steps to redress any identified problems. The report also recommended closer collaboration between UC and CCC writing departments

to better coordinate preparation efforts. Finally, the report indicated that a comprehensive review of the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) should be undertaken to address needs not present when the agreement was originally inked. UCOPE suggested only minor modifications to the report and then submitted the amended version to the Academic Council for endorsement. At its July 2008 meeting, the Council endorsed the report and will submit it to the Provost's office for implementation. UCOPE and ESL AG will continue to watch closely progress in this area.

UCOPE Representation

UCOPE is represented on the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates (ICAS) by the UCOPE Chair, who is a regular ICAS member. The UCOPE Chair is also a member of the Analytical Writing Placement Examination Committee.

UCOPE Correspondence

In addition to the aforementioned Transfer Student Report, UCOPE communicated to the Academic Council its stance on several other issues of systemwide import, including:

- Freshman eligibility standards,
- Graduate student instructor policies,
- Proposed IGETC revisions,
- The report of the joint ad hoc committee on international education,
- The Regents' diversity reports,
- A proposed undergraduate mission statement, and
- Various Senate regulation and bylaw amendments.

Acknowledgements

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UCOPE would also like to send Coordinator Hargrove its warmest wishes on a happy retirement.

Respectfully submitted,

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