

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:

During the 2019-2020 Academic Year, the University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) held one in-person meeting and three videoconferences and UCOPE's English for Multilingual Students Advisory Group met once. Both groups considered matters in accordance with their duties as set forth in Senate Bylaw 192, which states that UCOPE shall advise the President on matters relating to preparatory and remedial education (including the language needs of students from diverse linguistic backgrounds); monitor and conduct periodic reviews and evaluations of preparatory and remedial education; supervise the University of California Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR); monitor the development and use of placement examinations in mathematics; and work with the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools to communicate these standards to all high schools and colleges in California.

A summary of the committee's activities and accomplishments follows below:

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the closure of all UC campuses and stay at home orders in mid-March. As a result of this abrupt upheaval, Undergraduate Admissions at UCOP quickly began to explore shifting the systemwide [Analytical Writing Placement Exam](#) (AWPE) from the usual in-person session in May to an online administration. Uncertainty about whether the systemwide Exam would be available online prompted UCOPE to submit a request to Academic Council for a [one-time waiver of Senate Regulation 636.C](#) to allow campuses to utilize an alternative placement mechanism and this request was endorsed. In an effort to support students, Council endorsed UCOPE's recommendation to allow the non-letter-grade option of Pass (or equivalent Pass/Fail grade option) in a division-approved course or program of study to fulfill the ELWR during the [spring](#) and [summer](#). Council also endorsed the recommendation to temporarily modify the passing requirement in Senate Regulation (SR) 636.C to [allow a C- grade or above](#) to satisfy the ELWR for the spring and summer.

With assistance from the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative at UCOP, Undergraduate Admissions was able to line up the technical components needed to administer the AWPE online. The development process proceeded very rapidly, compressing a yearlong project into a few weeks. Approximately 9k domestic U.S. students took advantage of the first-ever online administration of the systemwide Exam on June 20, which was not proctored. The exception to SR 636.C enabled the Writing programs at Davis, Irvine, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz to utilize locally designed placement processes for students enrolling at their campuses. UCOPE received overviews of these processes during the committee's April and June videoconferences.

REDEFINING THE ENTRY LEVEL WRITING REQUIREMENT

In May, the Board of Regents unanimously approved the suspension of the standardized test requirement (ACT/SAT) for all California freshman applicants until fall 2024. The Regents also approved the elimination of the SAT Essay/ACT Writing Test as a requirement for UC undergraduate admissions effective for fall 2021 admissions. These changes will impact how students are able to satisfy the ELWR before matriculation, which prompted UCOPE to consider the value of writing, the importance of the ELWR in the context of current student demographics, and the practicality of continuing to maintain a UC-wide standard. The committee is also interested in honoring campus autonomy, culture and expertise. Several steps were taken this year to begin a broad discussion about how the ELWR is defined and operationalized.

Chair Francis joined the informal yearly meeting of UC Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) in April to hear their perspectives about the ELWR and the AWPE. The WPA discussion made it clear that there is consensus about the importance of the Requirement but there are different ideas about how students should be able to fulfill it. Some WPAs are concerned that the ELWR could be eliminated by administrators. In June, Chair Francis and Vice Chair Gagnon convened forty Administrators and other Writing Program instructors to discuss how to engage with the campuses on updating or amending the existing senate regulations related to Entry Level Writing. UCOPE leadership also wanted to discuss the idea of threshold exams and/or competencies, and whether there is a collective understanding that the AWPE is a threshold exam.

During this videoconference, WPAs from UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC presented a joint statement on priorities and principles at this juncture. They wanted to reaffirm, fortify and update the ELWR. To do that, they believed that the ELWR needs to: 1) better align with UC's stance on standardized tests and placement validity; 2) ensure alignment with local contexts; 3) design placement processes and tools that reflect current research on equitable best practices in writing placement. They believed the best way to honor these priorities is to enable local control of writing placement, and that revising SR 636 in 2021 is needed to achieve and honor these priorities.

WPAs from UCB, UCR, UCM, UCLA and UCSD also affirmed their commitment to the ELWR expressed support for fortifying and updating the ELWR. However, these representatives also expressed support for the AWPE as a systemwide placement mechanism for their campuses, sharing that this placement tool is effectively placing students into the proper classes on their campuses. They want to maintain a systemwide approach to writing placement and communicated that they lack the resources to implement local placement of students on their respective campuses. The WPAs are interested in working with UCOPE to set up a working group/task force that could further clarify and strengthen the language around this requirement as it is written in SR 636. In August, UCOPE leadership met with current and incoming systemwide Senate leadership to discuss establishing a task force to examine the ELWR. Senate leadership agreed that UCOPE should submit a proposal for a task force to Academic Council in the fall.

EMS ADVISORY GROUP

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was the focus of the April meeting of the English for Multilingual Students Advisory Group. In addition to the standard reports about issues related to enrollment numbers, placement and budget, the Advisory Group discussed how the transition to remote instruction is impacting the work with international and multilingual students.

OTHER ISSUES AND ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

In response to requests for formal comments from the Academic Council, UCOPE submitted views on the following:

- Systemwide Review of the Report of the Academic Council's Standardized Testing Task Force

UCOPE REPRESENTATION

UCOPE Chair Francis represented the committee at meetings of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates and on the Standardized Testing Task Force.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Institutional Research and Academic Planning. The committee also thanks the numerous faculty members who, as alternates, kindly represented their respective campuses at UCOPE meetings this year.

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