

TO THE ASSEMBLY OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE:

During the 2016-2017 Academic Year, the University Committee on Preparatory Education (UCOPE) met in person twice and once by videoconference and the UCOPE 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; 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:

Analysis of 2016 AWPE Data

This year, the committee submitted a request to Institutional Research (IR) for analysis of recent administrations of the AWPE. UCOPE voted unanimously on two occasions to send forward a request for data and analysis of the AWPE. The first vote took place at its January meeting, the second at its April meeting, where the vote focused on revisions to the initial assessment request. UCOPE held a third meeting this year, a video conference in July, at which it voted again unanimously to proceed with the analysis. The most recent IR analysis of the AWPE was conducted in 2011-2012, which took place at the same moment that enrollment of international students spikes at UC. Among its numerous conclusions, which were critical of the AWPE, the 2012 report argues that the AWPE privileges white, male students. This finding is but one factor motivating the oversight committee's request for further analysis. Among the other factors motivating the request for data are the lack of consistent tracking of reliability data from the administration of the AWPE over the past few decades and no validity analysis of its rubric on record. UCOPE's multiple requests, as the minutes document, were sent to the Academic Council for approval, before they were formally transmitted to IR in May. It is anticipated that IR's report will be completed in late August or early September.

AWPE Committee Chair and Chief Reader

In the fall, UCOP's Student Affairs initiated the process of finding a new Committee Chair and Chief Reader for the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) in consultation with UCOPE. Student Affairs prepared information about the job duties, requirements and position criteria and contacted over forty individuals including UC Writing Program Directors, members of the UC Council of Writing Programs, and past UCOPE and EMS Advisory Group chairs to solicit nominees for the position. Student Affairs also established the candidate review committee which included UCOPE's vice chair and Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Admissions, Stephen Handel. Finalists for the position were interviewed in December and Jonathan Lang (UCB) accepted the offer. Chair Designate Lang began a one apprenticeship under current AWPE Committee Chair Gadda and was introduced to UCOPE during the committee's January meeting. Chair Designate Lang will assume all of the Chair/Chief Reader responsibilities in January 2018.

Review and Selection of AWPE Essay Prompts

Under the leadership of consultant George Gadda, UCOPE members approved selected writing prompts to be used in the 2017 UC-AWPE administration, in accord with Senate Regulation 636B.1. This annual event involved UCOPE members evaluating excerpts from a variety of publications for which the AWPE

Committee has secured copyright permission. At the April meeting, under the guidance of AWPE Committee Chair Gadda samples of student exams were read and calibrated in advance of the May administration. Committee members ranked student essays according to a rubric established by the AWPE Committee in 1987. In January and April, Chair Gadda also gave the committee a detailed explanation of the AWPE process.

Julie Lind, AWPE Coordinator, Undergraduate Admissions, reported that the program continues to be financially stable although the program had extra expenses this year related to job shadowing by the AWPE Committee Chair/Chief Reader Designate and programming to improve accessibility of the website. The number of students selected for the exam increased this year in part because the new SAT will not be as a method of satisfying the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR). UC tested over 15k students on May 13th.

The Redesigned SAT and ACT Exams and the ELWR

During the January and April meetings, the committee discussed the newly redesigned SAT Exam, first administered in March 2016, and how it will satisfy the ELWR. The SAT no longer provides a writing score, but does provide an Evidence-Based Reading and Writing (EBRW) score and a separate SAT Essay score. The ACT no longer provides a Combined English/Writing score, but does provide an English Language Arts (ELA) score. Students were able to meet the ELWR by achieving a score of 30 or higher on the ACT ELA in the fall 2016 and fall 2017 admissions cycles. For the fall 2017 cycle, there was no threshold for meeting ELWR via the SAT, so students were not able to use this exam to meet the requirement.

In July, UCOPE received an analysis of the redesigned SAT and ACT exams prepared by Institutional Research at the Office of the President and the committee had a special videoconference that month to decide whether to set an SAT threshold going forward and whether to revise the ACT ELA threshold. The analysis used data from the fall 2017 freshman admissions cycle to compare SAT EBRW, SAT Essay, and ACT ELA scores to scores on UC's own AWPE. The analysis covered students who planned to enroll at UC as indicated by submitting a Statement of Intent to Register.

Based on the analysis, UCOPE voted in favor of 1) setting a threshold of 680 on SAT EBRW for meeting the ELWR for a pilot period until more data are available, defining the pilot period as the 2017-2018 admissions cycle, and stipulating that the pilot will include analysis and reporting of scores on the EBRW score, a separate SAT Essay score, and the AWPE scores.; 2) not using the SAT Essay score as a method for meeting the ELWR until more data are available; and 3) maintaining the current threshold of 30 for meeting the ELWR using ACT ELA. The pilot is effective beginning with new students enrolling in Fall 2018 (students applying to UC in November 2017) and until a new policy is adopted by the Academic Senate. UCOPE submitted [a memo reporting](#) its decisions to the Academic Council and this memo was subsequently transmitted to Undergraduate Admissions at OP.

AWPE Efficacy and Problems

In January, UCOPE agreed that it would be valuable for the committee to learn more about how placement works at UC and nationally and about different models. Four scholars in the field of writing studies, who are also UC Writing Program Administrators, were invited by Chair Queen to UCOPE's April meeting to discuss the efficacy of and problems with the AWPE. While the AWPE provides an idea about student readiness, members of this panel suggested that more effective placement processes tend to blend guided self-placement with actual evidence of students' writing that requires students to illicit factors said to be predictive of success. It was noted that an ongoing concern about the AWPE is related to its fairness and accuracy with regard to diverse students, especially UC's large and growing international student population.

Outcome data about the AWPE is needed to help inform the committee's thinking about how specific groups of students may be significantly disadvantaged by the exam. It was recommended that writing faculty across UC should be brought together to discuss what assessment and placement processes could be in place especially because there is expertise that is oriented around the culture of each campus. Based on the upcoming analysis of the AWPE, UCOPE may be able to begin identifying alternatives to the exam or ways to supplement it.

EMS Advisory Group

The campuses continue to actively manage issues related to the increased enrollment of students who are multilingual including international students as well as native students whose primary language is not English. During its meeting this year, the EMS Advisory Group discussed new and ongoing challenges related to placement, budget, and specific services/supports for this particular student population.

UCOPE Representation

UCOPE Chair Bradley Queen represented the committee at meetings of the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates.

Acknowledgements

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