

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2021

Attending: Jeffrey Gagnon, Vice Chair (UCSD), Hector Rodriguez (UCB), Rebekka Andersen (UCD), Daniel Gross (UCI), Megan McEvoy (UCLA), Eileen Camfield (UCM), Erin Goldman (UCM Alternate), Jingsong Zhang (UCR), Phoebe Bronstein (UCSD), Elisabeth Weber (UCSB), Tanner WouldGo (UCSC), Madeleine Sorapure (BOARS representative, UCSB), Jennifer Reifman (Graduate Student Representative, UCD), Maryam Amin (Undergraduate Student Representative, UCSD), Han Mi Yoon-Wu (Director, Undergraduate Admissions), Jon Lang (AWPE Committee Chair), Julie Lind (AWPE Coordinator, Undergraduate Admissions), Laura Hardy (Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions), Mary Gauvain (Chair, Academic Senate), Robert Horwitz (Vice Chair, Academic Senate), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst)

I. Consultation with Senate Leadership

- *Mary Gauvain, Chair, Academic Senate*
- *Robert Horwitz, Vice Chair, Academic Senate*

Chair Gauvain reported that the Regents discussed the Feasibility Study Working Group's report and President Drake outlined the next steps in the effort to identify alternatives to the SAT/ACT. UC is no longer entertaining the idea of developing our own exam for admissions. Instead, the plan is to explore the possible adaptation of the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) to see if it meets UC's goals. Academic Council sent the request to the systemwide Committee on Committees to identify and appoint members for the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) Task Force. Chair Gauvain is hopeful that this task force will be up and running soon, and UCOPE will be updated as this moves forward. The Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools has asked Council to establish a task force to look at the legislative action requiring K to 12 schools to have courses on ethnic studies, and this endeavor will involve subject matter experts to help inform the high schools about the classes that will count under that admissions requirement.

The Human Resources office at the Office of the President (UCOP) is being revamped and this is important since this unit manages benefits and pension, which are central to faculty recruitment and retention. The Senate is involved in discussions about the governor's recently released preliminary budget. There are ongoing discussions between President Drake and the State about the budget. Chair Gauvain explained that the budget includes cuts to UC as well as multiple line items that can be seen as micromanaging how UC uses its state funding. UC is very involved in the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine especially as it relates to plans for reopening campuses this fall.

Vice Chair Horwitz shared that the process for transferring from a California Community College (CCC) continues to be a topic of discussion and the committee might be interested listening to Chair Gauvain's November remarks to the Regents about the transfer process. The Regents tend to believe that online courses will allow UC to accommodate more transfer students, so the Senate is trying to make sure the Regents understand that online instruction is a complicated issue. The Senate will share the report from the Online Undergraduate Degree Task Force with the Regents to illustrate how seriously faculty view this matter. Much like the micromanagement by the State, the Senate is troubled by the Regents' infringement on matters under the purview of faculty.

II. Consent Calendar

Action: UCOPE's October 30, 2020 videoconference minutes were approved.

III. Consultation with the Office of the President

- *Han Mi, Executive Director, Undergraduate Admissions,*
- *Laura Hardy, Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions*
- *Julie Lind, AWPE Coordinator, Undergraduate Admissions*

Coordinator Lind reported that the systemwide Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) is scheduled for Saturday, May 22nd and will again be online. Admissions is waiting to receive Statements of Intent to Register (SIRs) so only students planning to enroll at UCB, UCLA, UCM, UCR, and UCSD are invited. The AWPE will occur later than usual due to the need to wait until the SIRs are submitted. It is estimated that 13k to 14k students will take the test but the modeling is based on fall 2020 data and the actual number will be influenced by a number of factors. California and out of state students who submit SIRs will be invited to take the AWPE in May, but the five campuses above will need to handle placement of international students locally. UCSD intends to use a new process for international students. Admissions will strive to get the AWPE scores to the campuses in time for summer orientation.

In the fall, the current operations vendor notified UCOP that it would exit its contract early because it is not making a profit. Additionally, the operations have become more difficult to manage since the vendor is now required to hire readers as employees instead of contractors, which increases program costs. Due to the cost, Admissions does not anticipate returning to an in-person administration of the AWPE. UCOP has negotiated another year with the current vendor and it would be hard to go out to bid for a new vendor while the scope of work is unclear. The AWPE systems were built about 10 years ago and are based on the administration of a paper exam. Long-term investment is needed in a new exam registration system tied to a payment system. In addition, a new way to do sample selection for an online exam needs to be identified. Coordinator Lind reported that the fee to take the AWPE was waived for 58% of students in 2020. Admissions is eager to see how many students take the AWPE in May in order to understand if the program is still financially self-supporting based on the fees.

Director Yoon-Wu indicated that about 30% of UC applicants have already self-reported their SAT/ACT scores, presumably because they achieved high scores. However, Admission cannot estimate how many students will be admitted, how many of those admitted will attend the five campuses using the AWPE, or how many will satisfy the ELWR with standardized test scores. Once the SIRs are received, Admissions will release the SAT/ACT scores to all nine undergraduate campuses but it may take some time to get everyone's scores. In 2020, about 50% of out of state residents and 20% to 25% of California students submitted test scores, and fewer California students took the SAT/ACT last year because the pandemic rules for testing sites were more restrictive in California than in other states.

Discussion: Advanced Placement (AP) scores from students' sophomore and junior years are generally self-reported in the application to UC, but scores from AP exams taken by seniors in May are too late to use for ELWR satisfaction. Coordinator Lind reiterated that invitations to take the AWPE will only be sent to students who have submitted SIRs to UCB, UCLA, UCM, UCR, and UCSD and the ELWR website will indicate that students planning to attend UCD, UCI, UCSB or UCSC should check with those campuses. The number of students who might submit an SIR to one campus but then decide to go to another campus is unknown and difficult to predict. Students probably have not increased the number of UC campuses to which they have applied but applications to other non-UC institutions that are test optional have likely increased. Since the yield projections are uncertain, campuses may take a conservative approach toward the number of admission offers they make, and then, depending on what their numbers look like, begin making offers from the waitlist. If students take the AWPE but

then enroll at UCD, UCI, UCSB, or UCSD, the representatives indicated that the AWPE scores will be honored. Coordinator Lind explained that Admissions does not issue refunds to students after they have taken the Exam.

Admissions is not planning to develop any new systems with the current vendor, Maximus, which has agreed that the contract will end following the 2022 administration of the AWPE. Admissions and the committee need clarity about the financial sustainability of this self-supporting program given that only five campuses are participating and fewer students are paying the fee. Chair Gagnon asked if there is anything specific UCOPE should think about in terms of planning for the Exam and finding a new vendor. Coordinator Lind explained that the Request for Proposal (RFP) process takes about 6 months, and it has been difficult in the past to fill this contract because this project is unique. Should UCOPE decide that a new vendor will be needed to administer the AWPE in spring 2023, the RFP needs to be issued by the end of 2021 so the contract can be finalized by fall 2022.

Chair Gagnon suggested that UCOPE begin thinking about an alternative to the AWPE, and one idea might be to adopt a new mechanism for systemwide use. UCM and other campuses may rely on a centralized placement process if local resources are limited. Along with the issue of centralized support, utilizing research-based placement mechanisms should be factored into decision-making. UCOPE should think about how the nine undergraduate campuses can work together to ensure they are supported. The analyst underscored that there is no centralized funding from the Office of the President for the AWPE, but there is history and experience with managing a systemwide exam.

As a result of the Feasibility Study report, Admissions is now working with Institutional Research on an analysis of the Smarter Balanced English Language Assessment. The analysis, which should be ready in time for UCOPE's April meeting, will look at the correlations between the current cutoff scores for ELWR satisfaction using the SAT/ACT. Director Yoon-Wu explained that the Senate will determine if the SBA will be used for admissions but UCOPE could decide to use the English Language Assessment (ELA) component for ELWR satisfaction. The SBA is offered to 11th graders in the spring (it was not administered in 2020 due to the pandemic), but UC has two cohorts of students with SBA scores. Chair Gagnon proposed that UCOPE discuss the ELA during its April meeting and the committee should hear from people familiar with this assessment to better understand how it might impact students in the placement process.

IV. Consultation with the AWPE Committee Chair/Chief Reader

- *Jon Lang, AWPE Committee Chair/Chief Reader*

AWPE Chair Lang indicated that it will be challenging to find readers to score up to 14k exams especially since they have to be hired as employees. The required background checks are invasive, but UCOP was able to limit them by agreeing to hire only UC faculty. Since readers from the CCCs and elsewhere cannot be hired, Chair Lang hopes that more UC faculty will agree to participate. Chair Lang explained the usual process of identifying a passage to use for the AWPE, securing the copyright, determining the exams that will pass, and selecting the exams to be used for training purposes. In January 2020, UCOPE approved a passage which was not used in April because of pandemic and, instead, a previously approved passage that had training materials was used. This year an existing exam will be used again due to the pandemic.

Chair Lang reported that UCOPE needs to make a decision about the 2022 AWPE. If a new passage is preferred, the pre-testing process will begin this summer so pre-tests can be administered to freshman in the fall and UCOPE in January will decide on the passage to use. The pre-test process will also require funding and right now it is unclear what the budget will be, and there is also

uncertainty about whether the faculty involved in pre-testing will be able to convene in person. The alternative is to use the passage selected in January 2020, which would not require pre-testing but will involve securing the copyright for electronic administration and creating training materials.

Discussion: Chair Lang was asked about the status of proposed changes to the AWPE described in UCOPE's April 2018 minutes. Chair Lang explained that the committee's concerns about equity and inclusion led the AWPE Committee to send a passage to UCOPE that was appropriate for UC's diverse student population. However, since the pre-testing process moves slowly, it will take time to include a more inclusive set of passages to the pool. Chair Lang also pointed out that a subsequent UCOPE discussion about updating the Exam specifications did not result in any decisions, and UCOPE is responsible for making any changes to the scoring guide. A member asserted that the committee should make reinventing the AWPE an action item.

In previous years, accommodating students with disabilities by allowing them to type their responses to the AWPE may have resulted in unintentional bias by readers, whereas the online administration of the Exam is more equitable because all test takers have the same conditions. Coordinator Lind shared that the number of requests for accommodations dropped dramatically with the online Exam because students with disabilities already had the software or other tools they needed. The requests Admissions received to extend the time limit were easy to manage. The Coordinator explained that extending the time limit for the in-person administration required significant back and forth with the test site supervisor, so the online Exam was a big improvement for students and for the overall operation.

Information about the revenue from this May's Exam will not be available until UCOPE's June meeting. If UCOPE decides in June that a new passage should be found, there will be less time than usual for the test development, fairness review and pre-testing. On the other hand, if UCOPE agrees to use the passage approved in January 2020, preparing for the spring 2022 administration will not require as many steps or as much time. UCOPE will revisit this discussion in April and postpone making a decision until then.

V. Updates on UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC Alternative Placement Processes and Plan for Future Reports

Chair Gagnon apologized to the UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC representatives for not being clear following the October meeting about reporting on their projects to the committee. Instead of any reporting today, the committee should discuss the data to be collected for the future.

Discussion: AWPE Chair Lang mentioned that UCSD's Writing Program Director Karen Gocsik has initiated a longitudinal study of student writing after completion of ELWR-satisfying courses. It is important to look at the construct validity to determine how well the placement mechanism used aligns with a campus's curricula. UCSC has a standard way of conducting equity analysis but is unclear if the other campuses have the funding and capacity to do a similar analysis. Another suggestion is to include qualitative data that might involve focus groups with students and a review of the writing done in the placement process. The local context is important because the campuses offer different courses and have different learning outcomes. It would be interesting to look at whether the placement mechanism makes a difference in the students' sense of their agency as writers.

UCOPE should keep in mind that the alternative placement processes used last spring were stopgap measures because of the pandemic crisis, and campuses may be considering revisions to the mechanisms. The most valid data on the processes will probably be available in 2023 and the campuses can compare the data from the first and second years. A UCM task force on writing would be like

information about the cost of the processes used at UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC. UCD and UCSC reallocated resources and faculty time to make their processes work.

In the short term, the four campus will have data about how many students went through the process, student demographics, faculty involvement, and how many students challenged their placement. UCSC may have preliminary data in June about student satisfaction with the placement mechanism. Members agreed that the four campuses should determine what data will be most useful to them and may be able to decide upon a core set of shared assumptions that leads to a common plan for data collection and reporting. The representatives from the four campuses will discuss data collection and reporting with their Writing programs. The committee agreed to have further discussions in April and June about the information members would like to receive.

VI. New Business

There was no New Business.

VII. Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Videoconference adjourned at: 11:15 AM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Jeff Gagnon