

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

WENESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2019

Attending: Darlene Francis, Chair (UCB), Jeffrey Gagnon, Vice Chair (UCSD), Brandi Catanese (UCB), Jingsong Zhang (UCR), Betsy Brenner (UCSB), Madeleine Sorapure (UCSB BOARS representative), Matthew Stratton (UCD), Daniel Gross (UCI), Jesus Sandoval-Hernandez (UCM), Han Mi Yoon-Wu (Interim Associate Vice President and Director of Undergraduate Admissions), Jon Lang (AWPE Committee Chair), Julie Lind (AWPE Coordinator, Undergraduate Admissions), Laura Hardy (Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst)

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Francis welcomed members to the videoconference and following introductions, UCOPE's charge was reviewed. The chair described a proposal to Council from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) to eliminate the essay sections of the SAT and ACT for admissions. UCOPE will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal when it is eventually issued for systemwide review.

The Regents are pressuring the Senate to expedite the work of the Standardized Testing Task Force (STTF) and Senate Chair Bhavnani and Vice Chair Gauvain have defended the process. The STTF is considering a various scenarios including no use of standardized tests, making the tests optional or UC's development of its own instrument. The STTF met with Admissions Directors last week and many of them expressed support for continued use of standardized tests, although their positions may change. How the test scores are used varies across the campuses and elimination of these tests would mean that high school grade point average would become even more important.

Discussion: Interim Associate Vice President Yoon-Wu explained that UC's nine undergraduate campuses are among the 12 universities in the nation still requiring optional essay sections of the SAT and ACT. The SAT Evidence Based Reading and Writing scores have been used to satisfy the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) following changes to the SAT in 2017. If the BOARS proposal is approved, about 2000 students who take the ACT to satisfy the ELWR would be impacted unless they take the SAT, or UC could determine if the ACT Reading and English scores could be used to satisfy the Requirement. This assumes that the STTF does not make more significant recommendations about use of standardized tests. Members may wish to give some thought to how students will satisfy the ELWR, including the possibility of more students taking the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE). The STTF will not have time to consider and offer feedback to UCOPE about the AWPE.

II. Concerns about the AWPE and the ELWR

All UCOPE members are familiar with the April memo from the various campus Vice Provosts and Deans for Undergraduate Education (VPDUEs) expressing concerns about the AWPE and ELWR. Chair Francis met with UCB's Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education (VCUE) and the Dean of Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies recently to discuss the April memo. The Dean, who was unaware of the April memo, stated that the AWPE, a systemwide writing placement exam designed by UC, is a good idea and that the AWPE serves UCB well for the assessment of writing ability and to determine the amount of writing support students need. UCB's VCUE explained that the VPDUEs at other campuses have concerns about the lack of data about the AWPE, about the Exam's validity and equity, and the continued need for the ELWR. The VPDUEs also question how UCOPE's administrative role overseeing ELWR satisfaction is balanced with honoring campus autonomy, culture and expertise. Rather than viewing the AWPE as a pass/fail situation, it could be considered in terms of the opportunities revealed for students who need more intensive writing support. The VCUE was pleased with the chair's proposed next steps.

The agenda packet includes about 20 years' worth of historical information about the AWPE and ELWR to provide context and help everyone gain a more complete understanding. The VPDUEs have asked for data on the AWPE and Chair Francis confirmed that UCOPE members should share Institutional Research's 2012 and 2017 analyses and the other historical documents with the administrators. Members should also communicate with their Writing Program Administrators about this matter. Chair Francis proposed that a UCOPE workgroup comprised of the committee's chair and vice chair, a representative of the AWPE Subcommittee, a representative of the Test Development Subcommittee, and a representative from the systemwide Committee on Affirmative Action, Diversity and Equity should focus on issues related to the AWPE, especially concerns about the Exam's validity and equity. This year, UCOPE will discuss the value of writing and reaffirm the importance of the ELWR in the context of current student demographics, and the practicality of continuing to maintain a UC wide standard.

Discussion: Chair Francis agreed that members can share the confidential agenda enclosures with relevant committees at the campuses but the reports are not intended for any external audiences. The analyst noted that Institutional Research at UCOP was asked in 2016 to replicate the 2012 analysis of the AWPE but the structure of the report may not provide the most useful data for the committee. Members should think about how future analyses should be framed to ensure the right questions are asked. UCOPE may want to identify next steps related to the 2017 analysis of the AWPE and suggestions in the 2015 Writing Program Administrators' (WPA) report. A member proposed that the workgroup should include research faculty with writing pedagogy expertise, noting that this expertise has been missing from UCOPE discussions over the years. It would be helpful for the workgroup to think about how use of a systemwide test dovetails with campus control over placement.

III. History of UC's Commitment to Writing & Establishment of the ELWR

The committee has been provided with documents dating back to 2001 with the goal of providing the important historical context related to the AWPE and ELWR.

Discussion: A member stated that the historical arguments in support of the AWPE are not reasons to continue using the Exam. It was also pointed out that the AWPE has not changed in 30 years.

IV. Plan for 2019-2020

The January meeting may include a discussion about UCD's project and what's happening on other campuses. It would be valuable to have quantitative data on students who take the AWPE. If the SAT/ACT are eliminated, more students would need to take the AWPE. The potential of divestment from preparatory education by administrators is a concern. UC's commitment to writing should be solidified. The UCB VCUE will communicate with the VPDUEs about the conversation with Chair Francis and UCOPE members should be engaged with their campus administrators and the WPAs.

Discussion: Members agreed that hearing what is happening at other campuses is valuable. A member proposed asking WPAs for their opinions about the AWPE during the annual WPA meeting, which will be an important recognition of this group. The committee should hear from experts with a variety of opinions. The goal is for divisional committees to meet with VPDUEs and WPAs in the next quarter/semester and for members to report back to UCOPE in April/June (with an additional May meeting possible if needed).

Videoconference adjourned at: 11:00 AM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Darlene Francis