

## UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

## VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2020

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

**I. General Updates**

UCOPE leadership has met regularly to prepare for today's meeting. Chair Francis described the March Legislative Day held by the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates in Sacramento. The purpose of the Day is to build relationships with legislators, to hear their thoughts on higher education, and for the three segments (UC, California State University, and California Community College systems) to discuss their concerns and priorities. The joint UCOPE and Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) recommendation to temporarily modify the passing grade from a C to a C- or above, which is related to Senate Regulation (SR) 636, has been approved by Academic Council. UCEP is currently drafting guidance to campuses for extending flexibility around the Pass/No Pass grading option into summer session. UCOPE could discuss if there is a need to allow the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) to be satisfied with a Pass. The policy changes to allow for more flexibility and leniency for students are being considered quickly by Council because of the pandemic, and the analyst noted that Council is holding weekly videoconferences.

The Assembly of the Academic Senate endorsed Council's recommendation to approve the report of the Standardized Testing Task Force (STTF) and the proposal from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools to eliminate the SAT and ACT essay sections for admissions. The STTF's recommendations include analyzing whether the added value of the SAT and ACT still holds in five years. In May, the Regents will vote on the President's recommendation about using the tests.

**Discussion:** Coordinator Lind explained that many rising seniors next fall will have already taken the SAT or ACT as sophomores or juniors, and students with good scores are likely to voluntarily report them. Submitting scores will be optional, but will be encouraged as a way to fulfill the ELWR. Interim Associate Vice President Yoon-Wu reported that several spring test administrations have been cancelled and over a million students who possibly could have taken the tests will not have the opportunity. The testing agencies plan to add more administrations from September through December and may offer the tests online. Right now, it is unknown what these tests will look like or how valid the scores would be.

**II. Consent Calendar**

**Action:** The January 31, 2020 minutes were approved.

**III. Online Administration of the Systemwide Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE)**

AWPE Chair Lang reported that cancellation of the in-person administration of the AWPE prompted Undergraduate Admissions to immediately explore the possibility of offering the Exam online.

Admissions has partnered with the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative (ILTI) at the Office of the President to set up the online offering, which has three components. The first component entails real-time monitoring as students write their essays and using Artificial Intelligence to flag problematic behaviors. The proctors will then review recordings of the flagged incident before sending a report to UC about the exams needing further review. ProctorU is still trying to figure out whether it can handle 12k to 15k test takers. The proctoring vendor also needs to have the capacity to provide technical support to students.

Delivery of the exam, the second component, requires a learning management system (LMS) and options are Google or Canvas. Students will access the LMS to respond to the AWPE and the LMS will deliver the results to the vendor currently handling the scoring system, Maximus. Canvas may cost around \$10 per license and UCOP currently does not have enough licenses for the anticipated volume. Google would have no cost. The last component is scoring the essays, and it is not yet clear if Maximus can handle this process. Essays will presumably be saved as PDFs, but how to upload as many as 15k exams needs to be figured out. A number of questions and concerns remain to be resolved in the immediate future.

Director Hardy described some of the legal implications related to the accessibility and equity of an online test. UCOP's Office of General Counsel (OGC) was asked for guidance about equity for students without access to hardware (e.g. webcams) or the Internet. OGC is satisfied that the long-standing practice of permitting students to take the AWPE once on campus addresses equity and access concerns. The director outlined financial costs of the unanticipated shift from the in-person exam to an online administration. Coordinator Lind added that more students may request fee waivers which will decrease the revenue available to support campus' local administration of the AWPE. Admissions is fully committed to moving the online offering forward if UCOPE agrees and if the operational pieces coalesce. UCOPE is asked to decide if this first effort could be done without proctoring as a way to decrease costs.

An additional piece of the puzzle is the timing of the online administration. AWPE Chair Lang noted that, under normal circumstances, the transition to an online Exam would take at least a year to plan but a systemwide offering is needed in June. The online Exam needs to be offered while students still have access to laptops on loan from their high schools. It is also important for campuses to get the results by the end of June for placement purposes. Coordinator Lind indicated that Admissions will invite all domestic students who have not satisfied the ELWR by other means to take the online AWPE.

**Discussion:** Chair Francis asked members to discuss whether proctoring is needed, emphasizing that a lenient approach is desirable for this first online offering given the pandemic. The pressure students feel to cheat could be alleviated by extensive messaging that the AWPE is a diagnostic instrument and that it is in the students' best interests not to cheat. The AWPE is not a high-stakes exam but UC has not been in a situation where students would have access to the Internet while taking it. AWPE Chair Lang noted that the Advanced Placement exam in English Language and Literature has an open book policy. Plagiarism is possible but plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, could be employed although uploading and reviewing 15k essays would present another challenge.

A member pointed out that the online administration will compromise the security of the reading passage, and AWPE Chair Lang indicated that the passage could not be used again. International students will not be invited to the systemwide online AWPE because of the different time zones. The goal is to deliver the Exam synchronously to all students but it is not clear if this is feasible. It may be necessary to stagger the administration, with some students beginning at one time and another group beginning later. The majority of members voted to not have proctoring for this administration. AWPE Chair Lang advised that the number of students who pass the exam in June can be compared with past rates to see if there is an unusual increase that suggests students have cheated. AWPE Chair Lang pointed out that the pandemic disrupted the essay selection process for this year's Exam, therefore a passage used a couple of years ago

will be utilized. Chair Francis expressed appreciation for the work AWPE Chair Lang and Admissions have done to make an online administration possible.

#### **IV. Campus Administration of the AWPE**

Members are asked to report the campus plans for delivering the AWPE locally if there is no systemwide online Exam. Campuses will face significant challenges if they need to test all of their students.

**Discussion:** UCD will not administer the AWPE. UCB may administer the AWPE once students are on campus or place students into the ELWR satisfying courses by default. UCM lacks the necessary resources to offer the AWPE to all the students who may need it, so the systemwide AWPE is essential for the Writing Program. Lack of internet access is a potential problem for UCM students. UCSC will utilize an alternative placement instrument. UCLA is relying on the centralized administration of the AWPE and does not have a backup plan. UCR will try to use its Blackboard LMS and hire a proctoring service to administer the AWPE and grading will be handled as usual. UCI and UCSB both plan to replace the AWPE with their own tools. UCSD prefers that students take the systemwide AWPE, even if the online offering is in July, and will offer the AWPE on campus for international students in late September.

#### **V. The UC Council of Writing Program Administrators**

Chair Francis joined the annual meeting of the campus Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) held yesterday and heard about challenges related to cancelation of the systemwide AWPE. This is an informal group that UCOPE should hear from about updating SR 636, and the committee should consider how to establish a role for the WPAs. The WPAs' discussion made it clear that four campuses (UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC) are in a different place from the other five undergraduate campuses, and there is an interest in the alternative processes being considered. The heterogeneity across the campuses is important to keep in mind. Chair Francis reported that the primary focus for WPAs is on managing the immediate crisis but it is important to begin identifying strategies to address dissatisfaction with the AWPE while preserving the ELWR.

**Discussion:** The analyst commented that, if the Regents vote to eliminate use of the SAT and ACT for admissions, thought should be given to how the ELWR is currently defined. The UCI representative attended the WPA meeting and, while there are different ideas about how to fulfill the ELWR, there is consensus about the importance of the Requirement. Vice Chair Gagnon commented that some WPAs expressed the need to ensure that the ELWR is not unintentionally put on the table for administrators to eliminate. The campuses proposing alternatives to the AWPE should describe how their mechanisms will satisfy the ELWR. Many students need the AWPE and the threat that the Exam could go away is real. A member proposed that the WPAs could be organized into an ad hoc group or a formal subcommittee of UCOPE like the committee's English for Multilingual Students (EMS) Advisory Group. Chair Francis would like to use the committee's next meeting to think about the next steps with the WPAs.

#### **VI. Strategies to Manage the Impact of COVID-19**

The committee was asked to think about potential strategies to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on satisfaction of the ELWR. Some potential options include one-time waivers to components of SR 636 such as lowering the passing score threshold on approved tests, not requiring the divisions to offer the AWPE to matriculated students and extending the time period for ELWR satisfaction for matriculated students. UCOPE's recommendation to accept a grade of C- for ELWR-satisfying courses was approved by Academic Council on April 14, 2020 as a one-time waiver. The committee would need

to request that Council approve one-time waivers or exceptions to any other components of SR 636, and the approval process may not necessarily be expedited.

**Discussion:** UCR does not support lowering the passing scores threshold on the approved tests and it is not clear if the pandemic crisis is a reason to lower the standards. Many UCR students have not satisfied the ELWR with the SAT or ACT, and the AWPE is relied upon to place students into the right courses to support them. It would be reasonable to pursue a one-time waiver of SR 636.C to give a campus the option to use something other than the AWPE. Chair Francis explained that any campus that wants to use something other than the AWPE would send a request to UCOPE for consideration.

## **VII. Parameters for Campus Pilots of Alternatives to the AWPE**

Chair Francis indicated that UCOPE can expect that UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC will request one-time variances to SR 636.C, and the committee should discuss what information should be included in those requests. The campuses should explain why they are making this request now instead of waiting until it is known if the AWPE will be offered online. The request should describe the placement mechanism to be used and provide some sense of the budget to support the effort. The campuses should address how the placement mechanism will be consistent with the ELWR to help allay anxieties that the Requirement might be compromised.

**Discussion:** One question is how soon the requests need to be submitted because some details and information, such as the budget, may not be available immediately. Chair Francis recommends submitting the requests soon with as much information as possible about how the current emergency will be managed. It would be ideal to receive the requests within the next month so UCOPE has an opportunity to opine and then transmit the requests to Council. The timing is tricky and it would be challenging to incorporate input from UCOPE after campuses have already engaged in significant planning. UCD may be prepared to submit a request sooner than the other three campuses. UCSB's plan is similar to what UCD has designed which will be presented later today. Irvine's plan will be similar to UCD's and UCSB's when it comes to a placement mechanism, but UCI will use test scores and Grade Point Average to make default placements. Santa Cruz's approach will be in line with the other three campuses, and the campus may make placements based on test scores. It is hoped that Council can quickly approve the variance requests.

Vice Chair Gagnon asked if UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC have started thinking about collecting data or will data collection be figured out at some point in the future. The representatives for these campuses indicated that they plan to systematically collect data to assess if their processes are helping to place students as designed. UCSC is willing to provide a brief explanation of the data collection plan in its proposal. Chair Francis believes that, if the systemwide AWPE is offered online, UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC can still utilize their locally designed placement process for their students. It was noted that every campus always has to test some students who could not take the systemwide AWPE, but campuses will have to figure out how to test students if they are still restricted from campus because of the pandemic.

There is concern about students receiving conflicting messages from campuses and Admissions. Interim A.V.P. Yoon-Wu indicated that campuses will not know if students are interested in more than one UC campus, so the messaging from Admissions must go to all students who have submitted a Statement of Intent to Register to at least one campus. Chair Francis reiterated that messaging about the systemwide AWPE will go to all students. The UCI representative indicated that the four campuses planning to use different placement mechanisms do not want their students to take the systemwide AWPE. Interim A.V.P. Yoon-Wu clarified that students who are committed to a specific campus should follow the instructions from that campus. In light of the uncertainties about whether students will be returning to campus in the fall, UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC are planning for an online administration of their placement

mechanism. Based on Admission's effort to move the AWPE online, it is recommended that campuses figure out how they will handle accessibility and accommodation issues.

### **VIII. UCD's Pilot Placement Process**

- *Trish Serviss, Professor & Entry-Level Writing Director, UCD*
- *Dana Ferris, Professor & Director, University Writing Program, UCD*

The UCD University Writing Program's Director Dana Ferris and Entry-Level Writing Director Trish Serviss were welcomed to the meeting, and Karen Gocsik, Director of Analytical Writing Program at UCSD joined for the presentation. Director Ferris explained that two specific events shaped UCD's placement and curriculum: the EMS program's relocation from the Linguistics Department to the University Writing Program (UWP) in 2019 and in 2017, the Program began to bring its outsourced Entry-Level Writing course back in-house. Since 2014, the UWP has used the AWPE and Davis' own online English Language Placement Exam, and the UWP has designed an elaborate multiple pathways curriculum. The current placement practices are expensive for UCD and do not provide the precise information needed to make the appropriate placements. The UWP is trying to align its placement system to go with the curricular changes it has implemented.

The UWP developed a framework, approved by UCD's Senate, for a vertical curriculum so students who will go through the entire sequence from ELWR to first year Writing. Over the last three years, the average percentage of students who enter before satisfying the ELWR is 38%. Director Serviss explained that detailed information is required to make placements into one of the three potential pathways. Shared learning outcomes were created for all ELWR-satisfying courses. The UWP is conducting a pilot assessment comparing student learning outcomes in the different.

The next step has been to better align the placement process with the curriculum and create a tool that can reduce labor, costs and the back and forth for students. The UWP wanted to create opportunities for student agency and input, which is why it is called a collaborative placement process. The original plan was to launch the new process in the fall but the target is now spring because of the pandemic. The eight step process will be completed online using Qualtrics and Canvas from May to September in waves. Students will self-report test scores; complete a literacy survey; provide a writing sample; review information about the courses and write a 300 to 500 word essay arguing for a placement that makes sense to them; and, write a reflection about how they feel about their essay.

One goal is to generate multiple data points. Writing faculty will score the students' work and decide if the students' selected placement is correct based on the data available. The process for the pandemic, Writing 2020, will be simplified. The essay will only be 300 words and submitting a writing sample will be optional. UCD thinks its new process will be cost-neutral when compared to its costs for administering the AWPE. The UCD Senate approved this plan yesterday. The UWP placement process will be free to students, and students will have one week to start and finish the process and an additional week to challenge the decision made by faculty.

**Discussion:** The survey questions are based on the UWP's review of the research on Directed Self-Placement and are intended to gauge student preparedness in the context of the learning outcomes for the courses. The questions were designed with UCD's Center for Educational Effectiveness and Undergraduate Education. To ensure that students understand what they are being asked, each section has an introductory message that provides context and students will be able to click on a word to get the definition. The UWP will also pilot the process with existing undergraduate students who have already satisfied the ELWR. To help students understand the difference from high school writing, the Write Path starts by teaching them what college writing is, about the curriculum and about typical assignments in writing/writing intensive courses. One concern is that students will not be asked to write anything this

spring or summer, and Director Ferris indicated that the UWP faculty are stretched thin due to the pandemic, so the complete placement process is not feasible. The UWP will review and confirm the placements during the first week and make changes as needed.

If students enrolling at UCD, UCI, UCSB and UCSC do not take the systemwide AWPE, Admissions will need to assess the impact on the funds that support the five campuses which will use the AWPE at their campuses. Coordinator Lind noted that Assembly Bill 5 on Employment Status is likely to have a major impact on costs because readers and testing site staff will be treated as employees. Director Gocsik commented that designing placement around course objectives is important, but a conversation is also needed about what the threshold competencies for first year writing are, how the competencies can be defined and how any placement tools allow students to demonstrate threshold competencies or not. This endeavor will help establish if alternative placement processes as well as the AWPE are grounded in the competencies. Director Gocsik is worried that the ELWR is vulnerable and about the campuses that rely on the AWPE and lack the resources to do something different.

UCOPE members and guests are in agreement about the need to define the ELWR in a meaningful way. Additionally, it is reasonable for campuses to have flexibility, but Chair Francis posited that flexibility should not jeopardize the broader commitment to writing or the AWPE for the campuses where it is effective. There is also interest in learning from the campuses that explore alternative approaches to placement and working collaboratively on solutions. Vice Chair Gagnon appreciated today's discussion and the presentation from UD Davis, especially following the WPA meeting yesterday. Chair Francis thanked everyone for their participation and indicated that work will continue through the summer to identify next steps and continue the forward progress.

#### **IX. New Business**

There was no New Business,

#### **X. Executive Session**

There was no Executive Session.

Videoconference adjourned at: 2:33 PM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Darlene Francis