

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 2021

Attending: Jeffrey Gagnon, Chair (UCSD), Hector Rodriguez (UCB), Rebekka Andersen (UCD), Daniel Gross (UCI), Megan McEvoy (UCLA), Eileen Camfield (UCM), Jingsong Zhang (UCR), Phoebe Bronstein (UCSD), Brian Dolan (UCSF), Elisabeth Weber (UCSB), Tanner WouldGo (UCSC), Madeleine Sorapure (BOARS representative, UCSB), Jennifer Reifman (Graduate Student Representative, UCD), Maryam Amin (Undergraduate Student Representative, UCSD), Karen Gocsik (Director, Analytical Writing Program, UCSD), Jon Lang (AWPE Committee Chair), Julie Lind (AWPE Coordinator, Undergraduate Admissions), Laura Hardy (Associate Director, Undergraduate Admissions), Robert Horwitz (Vice Chair, Academic Senate), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst)

I. Consultation with the Academic Senate Office

- *Robert Horwitz, Vice Chair, Academic Senate*

Vice Chair Horwitz is co-chairing the recently established Mitigating COVID-19 Impacts Workgroup with former Senate Chair and current UCD Provost, Mary Croughan. The Workgroup will look at how to address research that suffered because faculty had to spend more time on service and teaching during the pandemic. In May, the Regents discussed the idea of cohort-based tuition, which would standardize tuition over a student's two or four years at UC, and the Board will make a decision about implementing this model in the near future.

The Senate surveyed faculty about their experience with the pandemic and remote instruction. Over 4k faculty responded to the survey, which included questions about the impact of the pandemic on their research, and this data will be valuable for countering misguided proposals from the Legislature or the Regents. Senate leadership joined the Committee on Educational Policy's recent meeting with representatives from Chegg, and there are serious concerns about students infringing on faculty intellectual property by posting course materials on this and similar websites, as well as the fact that these third-party websites facilitate academic dishonesty.

Discussion: A member asked about Vice Chair Horwitz's expectations for the relationship between UCOPE and the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) Task Force, and to clarify if UCOPE will implement the Task Force's recommendations. Vice Chair Horwitz indicated that UCOPE has lacked the capacity to study the ELWR, so Senate leadership decided to set up a Task Force under Academic Council to focus solely on providing a new, independent evaluation of the Writing Requirement. The Task Force's recommendations will go to Academic Council for consideration. The analyst reported that the co-chairs of the Task Force have agreed to check-in informally with UCOPE as the work moves forward, and mentioned that the UCM representative to UCOPE is also on the Task Force and can help keep the committee informed.

II. UCSD's Proposed Writing Placement Test

- *Karen Gocsik, Director, Analytical Writing Program, UCSD*

Karen Gocsik, the Director of UCSD's Analytical Writing Program (AWP), joined UCOPE to present the AWP's proposed Writing Placement Test. The committee will vote on UCSD's request for a waiver of Senate Regulation 636.C to allow the campus to use the WPT to satisfy the ELWR. Director Gocsik indicated that the WPT was used last year because the campus needed a way to place international

students but the WPT did not satisfy the ELWR. The AWP is asking that the WPT be approved for satisfying the Requirement in 2021-2022 so students do not also have to take the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) on campus in the fall. UCSD's domestic students will still take the AWPE in May but since this is not an option for international students, they will take the WPT in June and July. The WPT is a collaborative placement process similar to what UCD is utilizing. Students complete a five-part process that includes a survey about their Writing education, two 750-word written responses to short readings, a written reflection about their strengths and weaknesses, a survey about their general writing practices, and an opportunity to argue for the placement and courses they think are appropriate. Students have two hours to complete the written parts of the process with additional time for the surveys.

The Analytical Writing Program emphasizes to students that the WPT is not a pass/fail examination but a placement process. Students indicate which placement they feel is appropriate, but the faculty readers in the AWP will make the final determination about placement based on all of the information provided by the students. There are two possible placements: a single-term course or a two-term stretch course where students have the same instructor and cohort over two quarters. The stretch course has the same curriculum over two terms but it provides students more time to practice. UCSD is proposing that all international students will take the WPT but it is possible that the Test will also be given to domestic students who miss the systemwide AWPE.

Discussion: Before the pandemic, UCSD was exploring alternatives to administering the AWPE to international students on campus in September in order to get information about the number of international students needing placement sooner. Last year, few students questioned their placements and the AWP will continue tracking this important data point. The committee discussed the timeframe for the waiver and agreed it should be consistent with the waiver approved by Council in December for Fall 2021, Winter 2022 and Spring 2022. Chair Gagnon and the UCSD representative were recused from the vote.

Action: The committee voted to approve UCSD's request for a waiver. UCOPE will send a request to Council to approve this waiver.

III. Consent Calendar

Action: UCOPE's April 30, 2021 videoconference minutes were approved.

IV. Consultation with the Office of the President

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

The Saturday, May 22nd administration of the AWPE went smoothly and about 11k students were expected but only 8400 students took the Exam. Students who had conflicts on that Saturday were allowed to take the AWPE on Sunday the 23rd. Only a few students enrolling at one of the four campuses not using the AWPE ended up taking the Exam because of the efforts by Admissions to provide clear messaging. This second offering of the online AWPE was a significant improvement over last year's first online administration. Admissions worked to ensure the system had the capacity to meet the demand, and students were able log on much more easily than last year. The pass rate was 41.6%.

Associate Director Hardy explained that the unexpected pivot to the online exam last year resulted in a loss of \$250k due to expenditures for the in-person administration that could not be recouped.

Admissions hoped that any losses this year would be minimal, but because of lower turnout, it is expected that \$60K to \$70k will be lost, and at least another \$16k will be lost if UCOP provides funds to the five campuses planning to use the local AWPE. A clearer financial picture will be available later in the summer, but there has definitely been a loss in revenue due to the reduced number of test-takers. Certain costs exist regardless of how many students taking the Exam, and decreased volume does not reduce these costs. While reader costs are volume dependent, system maintenance and program staff costs remain the same. Admissions will not have the \$10k needed for test development this summer for the May 2022 AWPE unless additional funding is provided, which is unlikely to happen.

Given concerns about the program losing money, if the AWPE is offered in May 2022 the only option is to use a previous Exam prompt for which training materials exist. Reusing a previous passage to eliminate the need for test development is one way to reduce costs, but this step alone will still leave the program with a deficit unless the test-taker volume increases. In addition, if any of the five campuses participating in the systemwide AWPE are thinking about not participating next year, from a financial perspective it is difficult to imagine how UCOP can continue to run the program without extensively overhauling how it is managed. Admissions would have to closely examine the operational and vendor costs to determine if any of this work can be done in-house at UCOP or be eliminated.

Discussion: In addition to UCOPE's concerns about the academic aspects of the AWPE, the financial issues are connected and also require the committee's attention. Admissions would like to know by the end of this summer if any campuses are considering not participating in the May 2022 systemwide AWPE. The AWPE was designed to be a self-supporting program and this has worked well for decades with nine campuses participating. However, with only five campuses participating at this point, the reduced number of students is a challenge and makes it very difficult for the program to break even. It is difficult to say what needs to happen to improve the program revenue. Last year, many students who took the AWPE did not pay the fee, and the registration and payment systems are not currently tied together.

UCSD and UCM usually have the second and third highest number of test takers, so a decision by either of these campuses to not to participate in the systemwide AWPE would have a significant negative impact. The revenue may have declined last year as a result of UCSD's international students not taking the AWPE. The five campuses using the systemwide AWPE will need to be notified that UCOP may be unable to reimburse them for administering the Exam locally. There have been other periods when the amount of funds campuses were reimbursed decreased or when they were not reimbursed. It was noted that the fee waiver rate for AWPE test-takers is around 50%.

Members asked how the four campuses using their own placement processes instead of the AWPE are funding their projects and if they have to be self-supporting or receive funding from their administrations. At UCI, it cost approximately \$30k to run the assessment which included paying the readers, and the staff support was built in. UCD's budget to run the local AWPE was essentially reallocated to support the new local process. For UCSC, the cost for the second year of the project was \$14k and the Writing Program had an allocation from the campus administration of up to \$18k in summer so these funds were simply reallocated. It is believed that UCD and UCSB also likely reallocated funding from their administrations for the local AWPE to fund the alternative processes.

AWPE Chair Lang indicated that, since there is no funding available for test development, if the AWPE is offered in 2022 a passage previously approved by UCOPE for which training materials

already exist will be utilized. Chair Gagnon thanked Coordinator Lind, Associate Director Hardy and AWPE Chair Lang for their participation this year, for the information they provide to UCOPE, and for everything they do behind the scenes.

V. Writing Placement Principles and Values

Chair Gagnon explained that UCOPE has not discussed the principles and values for Writing placement in the recent past. Although the financial picture for the AWPE is bleak, the committee should attempt to identify the values shared across the campuses. The goal is to develop a document that UCOPE can build upon next year. The idea for this discussion was inspired by a task force at UCM, and the UCM representative shared that the task force quickly identified a list of values but noted that there was not unanimity regarding how to operationalize them. The committee was divided into breakout rooms to think about the core values and principles that should inform Writing placement in the UC system in the future.

Discussion: Members reported the major themes from their group discussions. The values identified by the first group included: authentic placement reflecting the campus curriculum; equity; self-efficacy and agency; and trusting students to make their own decisions. The second group's input included: helping students to not dread writing; assessment that is in sync with what faculty want students to learn; placement grounded in the latest research; the need for systemwide oversight and a way to value writing as a system; and not cutting budgets by outsourcing writing. The values identified by the third group included: ensuring academic integrity; a focus on finding the best possible fit for each student; and giving each campus flexibility while sharing common ground and collaborating across the system.

The committee discussed the need to change the narrative around the Entry Level Writing Requirement. UC as a system is reckoning with what rigor means and how this concept privileges certain types of students over others. Some of the questions to grapple with are what UC faculty value about writing and why is writing important, There needs to be an understanding, as a system, that teaching writing is the responsibility of all UC faculty. The conditions under which students are assessed should help them show their best selves as writers and create conditions under which students produce their best writing. Members agreed that students have the right to be evaluated on their best writing.

Chair Gagnon compiled the committee's feedback into one document, and it was suggested that he continue editing the input before sharing it with the members. Members can ask their divisional committees to comment on the draft set of principles and values. The analyst noted that the final document could be disseminated to faculty and the administration through Academic Council.

Chair Gagnon thanked everyone for their service on UCOPE and the members acknowledge the chair's work this year.

Videoconference adjourned at: 12:18 pm

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Jeff Gagnon