

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2020

Attending: Darlene Francis, Chair (UCB), Jeffrey Gagnon, Vice Chair (UCSD), Brandi Catanese (UCB), Matthew Stratton (UCD), Daniel Gross (UCI), Jingsong Zhang (UCR), VyVy Young (UCSF), Betsy Brenner (UCSB), Tonya Ritola (UCSC), Madeleine Sorapure (UCSB BOARS representative), 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), Kum-Kum Bhavnani (Chair, Academic Senate), Brenda Abrams (Principal Policy Analyst)

I. Consultation with the Academic Senate Office

- *Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair, Academic Senate*

Chair Bhavnani noted that today is Juneteenth and it would be good for UC to recognize it as a holiday. The legislature passed a budget in early June that gave UC a 5% increase but the governor has said UC's budget will be cut. The legislature recommends cutting UC's budget only if federal funds are not forthcoming but the governor would like to cut the budget now and restore monies once the federal funds are provided. The tax revenue will be known in early August. There have been no formal discussions or guidance from UCOP about furloughs. The UCSD and UCI chancellors have indicated they have cash reserves to sustain their campuses through the crisis. Other campuses may switch their investments from the longer-term Total Return Investment Pool to the Short Term Investment Program. Council has discussed lessons learned from past crises and developed a set of budget principles, one of which may be that reserve funds should be consistent across the campuses. Chair Bhavnani noted that the Senate only has an advisory role on budgetary matters.

As a follow-up to last year's Presidential Task Force on Universitywide Policing, several Senate committees are developing additional recommendations about policing. One question is whether campus police should be armed. As a result of the recent national protests, Council has discussed racism and police brutality and will consider making a statement on defunding and demilitarizing the police. A Council task force on extending faculty diversity will focus on retention strategies. Chair Bhavnani mentioned that a survey on remote instruction has been sent to all faculty who are teaching this spring and the Senate was able to add similar questions to UC's Undergraduate Experience Survey. Plans to allow students to return to campus in the fall are fluid, but remote instruction will continue with limited in-person instruction. It is likely that dorm rooms will be limited to only one or two students and clusters of dorm rooms will be reserved for quarantining. Administrators are also debating how to bring faculty and staff back to campus as well as how testing for COVID-19 will be conducted. UCOP is not directing the planning because chancellors have a better understanding of the risks around their campuses.

The Standardized Testing Task Force's (STTF) report and recommendations went forward from Council to the president, and the Regents unanimously approved the president's recommendations in May. The tests will be optional for 2021, admissions will be test blind for applicants in 2024, and a UC developed test will be in place by 2025. Another recommendation is to conduct a feasibility study done over the summer to look at how to develop a new test in five years. Chair Bhavnani hopes that the Senate will play a major role in the feasibility study. There is concern that some Regents will campaign for UC to adopt the Smarter Balanced Assessment.

Discussion: Chair Francis noted that the STTF concluded it would take nine years to develop a new test, and given the current financial crisis, it is not clear how UC could fund what would be an expensive endeavor. It would also be challenging to develop a new test that will not face the same criticisms as current standardized tests.

II. Chair's Updates

Chair Francis reported on the most recent meeting of the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) which is comprised of the Senate leadership from the California Community Colleges (CCC) the California State University (CSU) system and UC. In addition to Chair Francis, UC is represented by the chairs of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools and the Committee on Educational Policy. The biggest concern for ICAS right now is the budget crisis. Chair Francis provided an update on recent changes to the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC), the guidelines that inform the transfer process from the CCCs to the CSU and UC systems.

Some of the changes are to the English communication subject area that includes composition, critical thinking, and oral communication, all of which require one course of three semesters or four quarters to satisfy transfer requirements. The expository essay required in a first semester course in English reading and written composition will have a minimum of 5k words instead of 6k to be more commensurate with the CCC's existing assignment structures. The course should also require a substantial amount of reading. Reading composition will be a prerequisite to the course on critical thinking in English composition. As the committee begins to revisit UC's Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), it helps to understand the expectations for students transferring to UC.

Changes have also been made to the mathematical concepts in quantitative reasoning subject area. Courses outside of math using statistics may be used to fulfill this requirement as long as intermediate algebra or the equivalent is a prerequisite. This change is designed to help prepare students to respond to information requiring quantitative analysis calculation and the ability to use and criticize quantitative arguments. More detailed information about these changes is available and members can let their campuses know about these changes. Chair Francis informed the committee that Institutional Research (IR) has been asked to analyze ACT English and Reading scores to determine if it would be an appropriate method of satisfying ELWR, in lieu of (or in addition to) the ACT English Language Arts (ELA) score for 2021-2022. Currently an ACT ELA score of 30 or higher satisfies the ELWR, but the calculation of this score requires that the students take the optional writing section of the ACT. But with UC's decision to drop the ACT's essay for admissions effective fall 2021, applicants will not be able to self-report the ACT ELA scores. This is another opportunity for UCOPE to revisit what is accepted to satisfy ELWR. The IR analysis should be completed for UCOPE this fall.

Discussion: A member asked how the changes to IGETC will be implemented so that the correct decisions about course articulation can be made. The analyst explained that Monica Lin, the Director of Academic Preparation and Relations with Schools and Colleges in Undergraduate Admissions at UCOP, works with the articulation officers at UC campuses. Interim Associate Vice President Yoon-Wu added that there is an annual articulation review process during which the officers will learn about the changes expected for the CCC courses. CCC students who transfer to UCB sometimes have trouble satisfying the campus's research writing requirement depending on the sequence of courses. Course articulation is not based on the specifics of how each CCC course is taught and a key goal is to make the transfer process as simple as possible for students. UCSC is having challenges with articulation related to the new academic literacy curriculum that has been implemented, which require completion of the reading course before students can take the writing course. UCSC students who transfer to a CCC are told they have not satisfied the CCC's prerequisites.

III. Consent Calendar

Action: The April 24, 2020 minutes were approved.

IV. June 10th Discussion with Writing Program Administrators/Faculty

Chair Francis and Vice Chair Gagnon described their June 10th discussion with about forty Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and instructors. The videoconference was a good opportunity to hear directly from the people most engaged with entry level writing at the campuses. Chair Francis believes all campuses are committed to maintaining the ELWR, including the four campuses planning to use their own placement tool instead of the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE). Some WPAs at the other five undergraduate campuses are concerned that any placement process that deviates from the AWPE will undermine the ELWR, but they will not insist upon all campuses using the Exam.

During the June 10th call, WPAs from UC Davis, Irvine, Santa Barbara, and Santa Cruz presented a joint statement on priorities and principles at this juncture. They want to reaffirm, fortify and update the ELWR. To do that, they believe that the ELWR needs to: 1) better align with UC's stance on standardized tests and placement validity; 2) ensure alignment with local contexts; 3) design placement processes and tools that reflect current research on equitable best practices in writing placement. They believe the best way to honor these priorities is to enable local control of writing placement, and that revising SR 636 in 2021 is needed to achieve and honor these priorities. UCSD's WPA expressed satisfaction with the AWPE, but is interested in the changes being made to placement at UCD, UCI and UCSB and suggested that student feedback about their experiences with the AWPE would be informative. The UCM WPAs indicated that the ELWR is important to their campus and the AWPE is a valuable entry point for their students. Without strong preparatory education there would be immense challenges for UCM students, because of all the campuses, Merced lacks the resources to do anything independently of the systemwide approach.

UCLA's representative worried that allowing students to opt out of the AWPE threatens the systemwide Requirement. The UCB WPA shared that UCB students do not report feeling stigmatized because of their placement in entry-level courses but instead appreciate the added support. Chair Francis read an email from UCB WPA Maggie Sokolik: "Writing of the type we expect at the University is not an innate skill, it's a learned one and the ability to write is not reflective of aptitude or intelligence. That the AWPE uncovers bias does not surprise me but to claim that this means it is a biased instrument is not the same thing. We are all aware of the systemic racism, under resourced high schools, and lack of access to Advanced Placement courses that can be reflected in students' experience with writing to me. The question is, since we want to measure a student's skill at a particular type of writing done at UC, what instruments will help students demonstrate satisfaction."

Chair Francis recommends that UCOPE think about the big picture and identify a path forward that acknowledges disparate perspectives of campuses without diminishing the utility and power of the ELWR. At a systemwide level, a discussion about what should inform the ELWR is needed. This discussion can be framed as what is the best way to help students but there is no agreement on what that looks like. A central question is how to maintain systemwide oversight of local placement. In light of the current budgetary concerns, Chair Francis asserted that the committee and interested stakeholders must fortify the ELWR as a way to safeguard the resources focused on preparatory education. Chair Francis proposed that UCOPE ask Council to establish a task force focused on revisiting Senate Regulation 636. Themes emerged from the discussion with the WPAs which will be used as a basis for the task force charge. UCOPE members are invited to weigh in on the task force and its charge.

Discussion: Vice Chair Gagnon would like to identify the common ground among the Writing Program faculty and to explore how UCOPE can help ensure that campuses meet the needs of students who are not well-served by the AWPE. The vice chair believes that the five campuses that are satisfied with the Exam (UCB, UCLA, UCM, UCR, and UCSD) are open to improving the AWPE and that there is interest in having a task force that brings together the writing expertise at the campuses. However, these campuses are concerned about the negative impact on their students if the systemwide AWPE is not available.

A member pointed out that the AWPE is not required in order to satisfy the ELWR and commented that it is unclear why using something other than the AWPE is a threat. Another member stated that the analytical reports on the Exam are not considered authoritative since they are still labeled as drafts. It was also noted that the analyses of the AWPE do not address the validity of the Exam. AWPE Chair Lang remarked that validity tests vary, so the type of test to be used should be clearly defined. AWPE Chair Lang also commented that research is shaped by Ideological presuppositions and, oftentimes, the research can simply serve to ratify those ideological presupposition. Chair Lang recommends being careful about how research questions are framed so that our own biases are clear, and noted that research should not stand alone as an independent good. The constitution of the AWPE Committee and how it interfaces with UCOPE should be discussed. Chair Francis noted that communication with relevant stakeholders at some campuses still appears to be lacking. The chair also indicated that it does not make sense to abandon the AWPE before any potential alternatives are available.

It is important to think about the fundamental meaning of the ELWR given the upcoming changes to the use of standardized tests as well as the fact that the AWPE will not be utilized by all UC campuses. Essential questions to consider are what are the expectations for entry level writing and what instruments help students demonstrate this. SR 636.A states that students should “respond adequately to written material typical of reading assignments in freshman courses.” but this is not defined. A member noted that SR 636.A was last amended in 2004, so this regulation should be reviewed. Chair Francis stressed that the intent of this process is not to change SR 636.A in a way that would dictate what campuses assess. The point was also made that the placement processes planned by UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC should be validated along with the AWPE.

V. Campus Plans for Local Placement

During UCOPE’s April meeting, representatives from UCD’s Writing Program provided an overview of their placement process and the UCI, UCSC, and UCSB representatives have been invited to share their plans today. The UCI representative noted that Irvine’s divisional Senate approved the campus’s new placement process. UCI’s General Education learning outcomes for the lower division writing sequence fold in the ELWR, so the writing placement method should be aligned with these educational goals. This year, UCI’s WP will make a default placement based upon available test scores including SAT and ACT scores, and, for multilingual students, Test of English as a Foreign Language scores and grade point average. The goal is to have about 200 students use the collaborative placement process. Students will review their placement by responding to 20 survey questions designed to self-assess and report on their experiences with college level writing expectations. Next, students will upload a writing sample from high school, review the courses open to them, and write a 300 word argument for the course they want. Writing faculty will review this information, talk to the students, and decide on the placement. The faculty will receive training about making placements in equitable and fair ways. The UCI representative explained that students are demoralized about their writing and using a different placement mechanism will give them more control and a more positive attitude.

The UCSC representative believes that Santa Cruz’s writing curriculum makes the campus an outlier compared to the rest of the system and noted that the large number of multilingual students was factored into the design of their placement process. Each of UCSC’s ten residential colleges has its own intellectual or academic theme and students take an academic literacy course aligned with the theme of each college. The WP wanted the lower division writing and core requirements on campus to be vertically integrated so what students are learning is built upon in subsequent writing courses and this resulted in implementation of the new curriculum. UCSC aims to help students identify the level of support they think they need to be successful and to use multiple measures to determine placements. Students who satisfy the ELWR based on their score on the systemwide AWPE will not take the new survey. Students will take the 35-page survey with open-ended questions about their previous experience as well as their

writing skills, and the WP will send them a recommendation to review. Students who pick a course that is too advanced or not advanced enough will be advised and asked about their decision making process, but the decision will be up to the students. Students will be allowed to switch courses if they would like before the first week of instruction is completed.

UCSB has borrowed from the UCD, UCI and UCSC models and is trying to match the placement process to the UCSB student population. UCSB wants the placements to be equitable and accessible, to expose students to the courses and campus, and based on student preferences. Students will first take a survey asking about their prior reading and writing experiences and about which course they think would be the best fit. Students will respond to multiple choice questions about sample reading assignments and, based on their responses, they will be placed into one of two courses. If students disagree with their placement, there will be a review process to gather more information about what they think an appropriate placement would be, and students will be asked for a sample of their best academic writing to help inform the WP's decision. The WP faculty will read these materials and then decide on the final placement. It is not clear how many students will want to take advantage of this placement process since the second part will be labor intensive and time consuming.

Discussion: Vice Chair Gagnon thanked the UCD, UCI, UCSC, and UCSB representatives for the work that has been done in a short amount of time to design their placement mechanisms. One idea the committee might consider is adding a clause to SR 636 stating that campuses cannot outsource their entry level writing courses to CCCs. A member questioned if the alternative placement processes will provide the WPs with enough writing samples to assess and commented that students tend to overestimate their abilities so it will be important to look at outcomes.

VI. Debrief and Next Steps

Chair Francis thinks UCOPE may want to consider allowing UCD, UCI, UCSB, and UCSC to use their alternative processes a second year. Vice Chair Gagnon indicated that a second year will give the four campuses time to collect data on the processes being implemented. The analyst explained that a variance to SR 636.C for a second year would be approved by Council and it would be helpful if the four campuses also request approval from their divisional Councils. The analyst also reminded these campuses that Academic Council requested summaries of their plans for placement.

Chair Francis will prepare a proposal asking Council to establish the task force to examine the ELWR and members can send the chair ideas for the task force charge. The task force will most likely take a year to consider the systemwide Requirement but other logistical issues such as the number of meetings will need to be determined.

VII. New Business

There was no New Business.

VIII. Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Videoconference adjourned at: 2:35 PM

Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams

Attest: Darlene Francis