

**UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION  
ENGLISH FOR MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (EMS) ADVISORY GROUP  
Meeting Minutes – April 5, 2013**

Present: Robin Scarcella (Chair- UCI), Margi Wald (UCB), Dana Ferris (UCD), Kathie Levin (UCI), Linda Jensen (UCLA), Kimberly Turner (UCR), Elizabeth Losh (UCSD), Jan Frodesen (UCSB), Robert Powell (Council Chair), George Gadda (Consultant), and Eric Zarate (Analyst)

**I. Welcome and Chair’s Announcements**

Chair Robin Scarcella welcome Kimberly Turner as the EMS representative from UCR for the next two years.

**II. Consent Calendar**

- Approval of the Agenda
- Approval of the Minutes from March 9, 2012

The chair noted that there were no formal minutes from the 2012 meeting, but that the 2012 Agenda stood as a record of the event.

***ACTION: The 2013 Agenda was approved and the 2012 Agenda accepted in lieu of minutes for that meeting.***

**III. Campus Updates**

The campuses shared news and information from their campuses in relation to ESL/EMS/ELL courses and practices. Much attention was given to the vast increase in international student enrollment at many sites. The campuses were largely unprepared for these students, who tested well in the language portion of their SATs, but demonstrated extreme deficiencies in English use and comprehension upon enrollment. The sudden need for coursework to help these students placed a heavy burden on the human and financial resources of the departments, which were already quite lean.

**III. International Students and Support Services**

Chair Scarcella reminded the committee that, following a discussion with UCOPE last April, the EMS Advisory Group would examine and discuss international students and their significant lack of proficiency in English. Last year, the Group had composed a letter to the Senate that contained a general list of curricular assessment needs for students; this letter was rejected by the Senate. The Chair stated that the Group could now revisit the letter and determine how it might be revised to include specific advice and plans for addressing this situation.

The Chair observed that many campuses are seeing tremendously increased numbers of international students from year to year. She asked if the campuses felt that they had the resources to serve the students adequately. Members agreed that the the students’ extremely low levels of English aural and oral capability place a considerable strain on campus personnel and resources, and typically result in the students’ failure to thrive at UC. Chair Scarcella asked for suggestions as to what specific services, assessments, curricula, and policies would be required, and if data existed that would substantiate this need.

The Chair noted that academic services for international students must include, at a minimum, sufficient numbers of adequate courses to build students’ language and academic literacy. However, doing so in the current climate of budget reductions and restrictions would be challenging.

The Advisory Group members noted that the lack of proficiency among international students is masked by their SAT scores, which meet UC requirements. These students “test out” of ELWR, but do not have writing skills that correlate with their test scores; they are not ready for college-level writing. Members noticed a

cultural emphasis on “getting in” to UC versus “getting through.” They cited high-stakes testing, with memorization of huge blocks of text for the SAT without knowledge or regard for what is needed after admission. AWPE is a UC-controlled testing method that could provide data to substantiate the need for student support and supplemental coursework.

The Group discussed the possibility of finding data to document the number of hours international students must commit to basic comprehension of their coursework. In some cases, students are listening to the podcast of a lecture four or five times just to get an understanding of what is being said. It was suggested that the data disaggregate student grades to distinguish between writing-intensive and non-writing-intensive classes, as well as between native and non-native speakers of English. The possibility of looking at dropout, academic probation, and dismissal rates as indicators of success was considered. It was noted that some TAs within UC are collecting information on international student aural performance for their dissertations, which may be helpful in the future, but is just starting at this time.

Some members expressed concern about international students shying away from EMS classes and services due to fear of stigmatization. Furthermore, the severe deficiencies in students’ reading, aural comprehension, and composition skills often lead them to avoid classes that are language or writing-intensive. Because of this, GPA is not always a reliable indicator of English proficiency with this population.

A question was raised as to the difficulty of serving students who enter with varying levels of ability. One member stated that there were, essentially, four branches of international students: those that come via UC extension, those who come from abroad, those with one or more years of high school in the US, and generation 1.5. It was suggested that outreach to high school and extension faculty regarding UC expectations might be helpful in raising the performance of some international populations.

The Group decided to update the 2012 letter to the Senate, including best practices, data, and materials that might be helpful in developing a comprehensive plan for identifying and addressing the academic needs of international students.

#### **V. Concerns about the SAT Score of 680 Satisfying the Entry-Level Writing Requirement**

This Item was addressed under Item IV.

#### **VI. Recruiting, Hiring, and Supporting Instructors and TAs**

Group members discussed their campuses’ approach to recruitment, hiring, and support of TAs. It was generally felt that there is a lack of understanding regarding the specialization and complexity needed provide high-quality English instruction to first generation and international students, and that TAs were often inadequately prepared to fulfill that role. Suggested strategies to help remedy this predicament included prerequisite courses in reading and composition in order to be eligible for TA positions and mandatory workshops related to EMS student performance. Mentoring, orientations, and professional development were also put forward, as well as a possible change in TA contract language that would specify that TAs must adhere to the department-set rubric for grading to be considered for rehire.

#### **VII. Assessment**

While some aggregate data regarding international student performance is available through Admissions and through OP, Group members expressed an interest in more targeted data regarding students with SAT scores of 680 or above and their performance in subsequent writing courses. Personal observation indicated that many of those students fail and/or drop out. AP scores are not a good indicator of ability, since international students do not take AP English tests, only tests in math and science. Similarly, there does not seem to be a correlation between international student performance and TOEFL scores. It was suggested that Group members check with their campus deans’ offices for data on international student performance. Some deans are already tracking the performance of this population for their own information.

**VIII. Transfer Report Implementation**

Advisory Group members reported on their efforts to move forward with the implementation of the Transfer Report approved by the Senate. Efforts to provide better support to transfer students and to smooth the articulation between the CCC and UC are critical, but have not always been successful to date. It might be appropriate for the EMS Advisory Group to follow up with the chair of UCOPE on this issue and offer to lend its expertise if needed.

**IX. New Business**

The Group discussed SB 520 – the online education legislative initiative – and noted that the Senate had already publicly responded to it. Members discussed the difficulties and pitfalls of online education and agreed to keep a careful watch on the progress of SB 520.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Attest: Robin Scarcella, Chair  
Prepared by Fredye Harms