

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION  
ENGLISH FOR MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS (EMS) ADVISORY GROUP  
VIDEOCONFERENCE MINUTES

April 16, 2021

**Present:** Paul Beehler, Chair (UCR), Margi Wald (UCB), Kelly Crosby (UCD), Jerry Won Lee (UCI), Liz Galvin (UCLA), Anne Zanzucchi (UCM), Kimberly Turner (UCR), Holly Bauer (UCSD), Randall Rightmire (UCSB), Kimberly Helmer (UCSC), Jon Lang (AWPE Committee Chair/Chief Reader, UCB), Brenda Abrams (Policy Analyst)

## I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Beehler welcomed the members to the Advisory Group meeting and thanked them for submitting their campus reports in advance. Although this year has been complicated, the chair thinks the programs for multilingual students have successfully served the extraordinarily diverse student bodies across the system. The Advisory Group will reflect on what has worked in the past and think about how to build on the institutional success that UC has enjoyed over its 150-year history. The work the members do with the most vulnerable populations at UC is particularly valuable. English for multilingual students (EMS) is an essential bridge for those students who are courageous enough to attend UC seeking higher education while not necessarily having the same proficiency, background and security in the language that other students may enjoy. These students look to the Writing Programs (WPs) to help them make the successful transition to University classes and beyond, which represents the promise and optimism of public higher education in America.

Last spring's abrupt shift from in-person instruction to synchronous and asynchronous instruction in a remote environment, and this test of adaptability, was challenging and affected all parts of the EMS programs. Members are invited to comment on the movement to remote instruction today. Chair Beehler mentioned that UCR's large lecture classes will almost certainly be conducted over remote instruction this fall. Writing classes have a history and practice of including in-person timed writing, and one of the questions to be resolved is whether or not in-person timed writing will occur at the end of the quarter or if this work will still have to be done remotely. In addition, as a system UC has moved away from the SAT and ACT for admissions, and there are discussions about the role of the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE).

Academic Council has established a task force to assess the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), to which Chair Beehler and the UCI representative, Jerry Won Lee, have been appointed. All of these events have placed additional pressures on WPs, especially for the EMS programs and specifically around placement. The Advisory Group will discuss how these developments have impacted the EMS courses, how placement is being handled, and the successes and challenges of this year. Chair Beehler hopes that members can learn from each other's approaches and reflect on what works and what processes can be improved to better serve each campus's student population.

## II. Campus Reports

Berkeley: The enrollment data for 2020-21 is similar to last year's, possibly because students were not allowed to defer enrollment. Most international students opted to take the College Writing R1A course instead of the AWPE. UCB had three designated sections for multilingual student writers in the fall and two in the spring, but all of the classes had large numbers of multilingual students in

them. There is no EMS program but several individual classes are targeted toward multilingual students. In the past, many of the WP's students were from the International Study Program within the Sociology Department, but these students did not participate in the WP this academic year and the Department cut its funding to the WP. The WP did not have the funding to offer additional courses that had been developed, and the only courses that were funded this year were College Writing R1A and Reading Composition.

The Program relies on revenue from summer English Language Studies programs, but enrollment last summer was very low and is expected to be low again this summer. The WP's budget situation is tight, and it will get much worse if international students are not back on campus this year. The Student Learning Center in the International Student Program is expanding its language exchange programs, and has done an incredible job of keeping international students up to date about the pandemic and returning to campus. The WP wanted to update the portfolio assignment but put this on hold because of the move to remote instruction. Because the Program is severely understaffed, there are concerns about the ability to place students now that SAT/ACT have been eliminated. UCB will continue to use the AWPE or whatever systemwide placement mechanism the Committee on Preparatory Education decides upon.

Davis: The offerings have not changed, but electives were not taught because the Program could not find instructors comfortable with teaching synchronous or asynchronous Oral English classes and UCD's Global Study Program had no students due to visa issues. The sheltered pre-ELWR courses, a multilingual sheltered ELWR-fulfilling course and three graduate courses were offered. In 2019-2020, 12% of students placed into the beginning course and 37% to 45% placed into the middle course, but this year more students were in the beginning course and fewer placed in the higher-level courses. The placement mechanism used this year is campus and context specific and curriculum and outcomes grounded. The process involved a Writing placement survey which went live in March. The English Language Placement Exam was eliminated, so there is no placement mechanism specifically for international students any longer, and the same new mechanism is used to place all students. The survey is being offered to thousands of students, and about 450 students completed the new process this year.

The pass rates declined this year, particularly in the fall, and the pass rate for students in the introductory course in 2019 was 95%, and the rate decreased to 89%. The Program expected students to perform better in winter, but students in the introductory courses who needed the most support were still struggling. In the fall, UCD had a "Quarter in the Cloud" initiative to highlight the needs of first year international students, but a debriefing with faculty suggested the focus was on the security of the tests given in the large lecture classes rather than on the pedagogy. There is a steady need for courses for multilingual graduate students who need to satisfy the first year English requirement. The Program had internal course releases for WP faculty so they could provide support with remote instruction to one another, and a Senate faculty member and a lecturer offered drop-in office hours, support, and videos. The biggest development was reforming the placement process, which involved a team of ten people. The EMS program is participating in more campus committees. The analyst mentioned that UCD will offer an online Punjabi course that is funded with a grant from the Innovative Learning Technology Initiative at UCOP along with contributions from the local Punjabi community.

Irvine: The Academic English Program no longer exists as a result of merging with the Humanities Language Learning Program. This was done in part to move past the negative connotations with the "English as a Second Language" label which focuses on deficiencies in English, but also in an effort to draw a clear distinction between what the EMS Program offers and what is offered through the

Division of Continuing Education. The Program implemented curricular changes in new courses for international graduate students. The Thesis and Dissertation Writing and Writing for Scholarly Publication courses are taught by highly qualified and experienced instructors. This year the Program piloted a new course, Introduction to Graduate Writing, which has also been successful. The graduate speaking courses were rebranded to Oral Communication to eliminate the ESL label.

Prior to 2020, about 1200 international students enrolled each year, and in fall 2020 this decreased by 140 students, but there is concern about what will happen this coming fall. Although the campus received a record 18k applications from international students, UCI is being very selective with admissions this year and only 37.5% were admitted. This selectivity may mean that higher performing students may be lost to campuses like UCLA and UCB. The program normally serves about 3600 students but this dropped to 2800 enrollments in the Academic English courses, and this may have been because the Program did not have a comprehensive way to identify and place multilingual students when the AWPE was canceled. The campus had to adopt an ad hoc placement system that was imperfect, utilizing scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Students who did not have these scores took a placement exam on the Canvas learning management system (LMS) that was created quickly. This process was successful overall, but the Program did not have a way to identify domestic students who needed additional language support. It was also noted that the campus is not renewing its license with Respondus, which was used last year, and Turnitin does not work with the Canvas quiz interface. There are concerns about workload and budget given that 3k to 4k incoming first year students who have not fulfilled the ELWR will need to be placed. The Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning has committed \$30k to cover reimbursing readers and administrative overhead, but a sustainable, long-term funding model for UCI's local placement exam needs to be secured.

Los Angeles: The enrollment numbers have been declining but the decrease was more extreme this year, with only 28 undergraduate students enrolled in the EMS sequence. This may have been due to deferrals. The Program's biggest challenge has been finding ways to support multilingual students outside of designated EMS classes. The number of multilingual and international students at UCLA has not declined, but the proportion of them who satisfy the ELWR with standardized tests or AWPE scores continues to increase, although this may change now that the SAT/ACT are not required for admission. The Program would like to enhance the curriculum and course design, but since each lecturer has almost complete autonomy over what they teach and how they teach it, it could be difficult to persuade them to change their practices. The Undergraduate Writing Center provides multilingual students with additional support. The Program no longer has the funding to offer any required EMS classes in the summer. Several instructors at the top of the pay scale retired last year and the administration has not been eager to provide any FTE to replace them. The WP is very understaffed, and would not be able to summon the resources to manage placements without the AWPE.

Merced: The campus primarily has students from California and very few international undergraduate students, and about 30% of graduate students are international. The student population includes equally high percentages (around 70%) of First Generation and multilingual students. On average, there are 15 international students in the EMS program. Last year, about 60% of UCM students took the AWPE and only 6% passed, and with changes to admissions and the use of SAT/ACT, the numbers are expected to shift in the coming year. The campus has some infrastructure for multilingual students that is emergent. The English Language Institute has a variety of programs for undergraduate and graduate students and the Institute is growing and having more contact across the campus. The campus recently added the University Writing Center in partnership with Student Affairs, and it has created more opportunities for multilingual writers

to participate in workshops. In the past year, the WP has utilized Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion grants to support a speaker series about multilingualism, and this work has involved building more faculty community. Another grant funds work on Writing about Writing, so the WP has been looking at freshman Composition and opportunities to have experiences that might help shape curriculum development. The Program has had courses designated for students with multilingual experiences, and the representative would like to learn about the course designs or types of curriculum that are most valued by the other EMS programs.

Riverside: The Program has two classes designed for multilingual students, which are followed by English 4 and then English 1a. The Writing 2 class is for multilingual students whose placement exams show a number of difficulties with communication, and along with Writing 1, gives these students extra support. These courses aim to help those students catch up with their cohorts and progress at a faster rate by giving them more contact and opportunities to practice their verbal and writing skills. The Basic Writing 3 class has students at different levels and is often taken more than once. Enrollment numbers for fall 2020 were similar to previous years but more students placed into the ELWR fulfilling class compared to Basic Writing 3, and the pass rate was similar to that in previous years. The number of international students is consistently around 100 and they are mostly from China, and the Program has noticed that most of the F1 visa students place into the basic writing classes.

The EMS Program continues to work on the transition to online instruction, utilizing resources on UCWriting.org, and the fall orientation focused on strategies for building community in the online environment as well as for bolstering student engagement. The representative also works one on one with instructors having technological challenges. The data shows that the time to graduation for students who took Basic Writing 3 was similar to that of students who started in English 1. Studies on Basic Writing 1 and 2 have found that students who began in those courses with lower overall skills have rates of success similar to the students who started in Basic Writing 3. If international students have visa limitations, some sections will need to be taught online, so the instructors have to be prepared for any challenges related to this. The Program will transition from Blackboard to the Canvas LMS, which may make some instructors unhappy.

San Diego: The ELWR fulfilling classes were offered for full baccalaureate credit beginning in fall 2020. All of the Writing classes were synchronous remote classes this year and continued to be capped at 15 students. The Program added several upper division Writing classes which were delayed due to the pandemic. The Writing for the Professions class will be part of the PATH Summer Academy for incoming transfer students in the Arts and Humanities, and this class has enabled the AWP program to expand and offer lecturers more summer positions. Offering courses in Summer Bridge has been important for the Program. In 2020, 525 students were placed in the upper level course and 676 in the lower level, which was a small increase, and instructors were hired at the last minute to teach part time.

The pass rates in fall 2020 were higher than in past years and this might have been because students took it more seriously since it would be counted in their grade point average. However, the pass rate in winter was significantly lower than usual, likely due to students being burned out especially since they were repeating the course for the second time. The administration has publicly stated that classes will be in-person this fall, but UCSD might consider having some remote sections for students who cannot travel to campus because of visa issues. The International Student Programs Office will figure out which classes will be remote, and the Program will need to get approval for any courses it wants to permanently offer online. The campus is committed to keeping international students at 18% of the student population for the coming year. In past years, students

admitted from the wait list tended to have lower scores and tended to be more likely to need the ELWR-satisfying courses.

Santa Barbara: The designated program for multilingual students is in the Linguistics Department and it includes both graduate and undergraduate students. Enrollments for graduate students are stable but undergraduate student enrollment fluctuates. The campus is lenient in terms of allowing students to defer enrollment and has also been lenient about allowing students to use the Pass/No Pass grading option. The ELWR-satisfying course is just for multilingual writers and there is a sequence of three additional courses before that. Most students place into the first two courses in the sequence, so they will receive three or four quarters of instruction in Writing on their way to satisfying the Requirement. In the past, the Program received E-designated papers from the systemwide and local AWPE, and after all of these papers were read again, about half the students were placed in the Writing 1 course. The other half of the students have issues with syntax, vocabulary or idiomatic expression and are placed in the ELWR-satisfying courses.

Most of the students with E-designated papers are placed into courses that do not include special EMS instruction. Now, more of the placements result from UCSB's English Language Placement Examination, although these decreased this year due to deferrals and decreased enrollment of international students at UCSB. As a result of the decreased enrollment, the WP has reduced three full-time lecturers to less than full-time. The Program received a grant to create an online English placement language examination, which was rolled out last summer and, while the exam appears to be successful, it is unclear if it will continue to be utilized once in-person instruction resumes. An online remote assessment for graduate students was also created. Major accomplishments include development of a collaborative writing placement process to replace the AWPE and hiring a new EMS program director after a yearlong search. It was noted that many instructors want to continue teaching remotely once the campus reopens.

Santa Cruz: The multilingual curriculum consists of two courses that do not satisfy the ELWR, Writing 25 and Writing 26. The Writing 1e course is designated for multilingual learners and passing this course satisfies the ELWR. The portfolios have been eliminated and now the instructor assesses if the criteria for passing has been met. After passing Writing 1e, students take Writing 2 which fulfills UCSC's Writing requirement. Every student is enrolled in a core College Writing course at each of the ten Colleges and this is offered in collaboration with the WP. The Program created a rubric to assess the final projects in Writing 25 and Writing 26 and found that the students did well except for on the language outcomes. Interviews were conducted with students who have completed all of the Writing courses to get feedback about their experiences. The WP is also looking at assignment sheets to make sure that they are meeting the learning outcomes and to determine if their design is reader friendly.

### **III. Placement Procedures**

Chair Beehler invited members to report any particular successes or challenges they have experienced with placement this year.

**Discussion:** UCR continues using the AWPE and last year offered other placement exams for students unable to take the Exam. More students took the AWPE in 2020 than in 2019. This campus has a summer placement committee with numerous instructors available to read E-designated papers and determine the best class for each student. The Program was concerned that students' writing in the online environment would not reflect what they would do in-person, but placements

have worked well for the majority of students, and there were only a few reports from instructors about students who seemed to be in the wrong class based on their skill level.

The \$30k given to UCI's Writing Program paid for readers, but there was unacknowledged and unpaid labor including a year of weekly meetings. There are major costs associated with creating a local placement mechanism and building the infrastructure from nothing. It is not clear that an individual campus should be responsible for creating a new process when a robust systemwide infrastructure exists. While UCI has been particularly vocal about their concerns with the AWPE, a practical question is whether the WP has the time, energy, and resources to continue this work when the significant staff support required is unpaid.

Creating a new placement mechanism was a great deal of work at UCD as well, but there was collective agreement that this work was necessary and other things should be set aside to pursue it. The Davis WP noticed that readings of E-designated papers from the AWPE were not informing how students were responding to the curriculum and learning outcomes. The Program wanted to vertically align the course learning outcomes and the AWPE was not communicating with this, so UCD decided to invest in a placement mechanism that could address the needs of all learners without looking at visa status or other factors that did not seem to intersect with writing, and this has been a major improvement.

A member inquired if there is any information about the costs and benefits of Directed Self-Placement (DSP) in comparison with the AWPE. UCB's WP is small and does not have the staff to develop an alternative to the AWPE, which would also require that different departments buy into making changes. It might be acceptable for students to opt out of the AWPE and into the College Writing course, but since UCB does not have multiple levels the only decision to be made is whether the student should be placed in an ELWR-satisfying course or not. Decisions about changing placement mechanisms should consider the curriculum at each campus, and thought should be given to how many levels a program has, the rationale behind multiple levels, and potential ways to address this in the curriculum.

Last March, UCSD began working on a new process for placing international students who were not likely to pass the AWPE, and it was used to test 800 students beginning in June. About 50 of the students who were tested were instructed to take the AWPE, and most of them passed it. This process allowed the WP to make course recommendations earlier on. It is likely that DSP is significantly more expensive than the AWPE because providing the direction is labor intensive, and it would be difficult for the UCSD program to manage this work. Academic advising plays a large role in DSP but there might not be enough advisors, and they are inadequately funded as it stands. It would be helpful to have accurate information about the cost of DSP that takes into account the types of instructors and faculty engaged in this work.

#### **IV. Consultation with AWPE Committee Chair/Chief Reader**

- *Jon Lang, UCB*

AWPE Committee Chair Lang joined the Advisory Group to discuss questions and concerns related to the systemwide Analytical Writing Placement Exam. It is unlikely that the AWPE will return to an in-person administration because the infrastructure for this was expensive, and Chair Lang noted that the online administration allowed UC to offer the Exam to out-of-state students. The online AWPE will not be offered to international students primarily due to the challenges posed by different time zones but also because of test security. Chair Lang would prefer that campuses administer the exam in-person in fall to minimize the risks of the materials being posted online, but

this is a decision each campus will need make, especially since it may not be feasible to offer the AWPE in-person if large numbers of students are not allowed to congregate.

Since UC is not allowed to use SAT/ACT scores for admissions, the scores have been embargoed until after admissions decisions have been made but will soon be released to the campuses for use with placement. Right now, it is not known how many students have submitted scores from standardized tests or how many students will submit Statements of Intent to Register to the five campuses that continue to use the systemwide AWPE, factors which will drive the exam volume. UCOP is estimating that 13k students will take the AWPE, and Chair Lang is in the process of identifying readers, a process that has been complicated by a new law requiring that they are hired as employees instead of contractors.

**Discussion:** Chair Lang indicated that UCOP has not studied whether readers respond differently to students' handwritten versus typed AWPE essays because the move to the online exam was done quickly because of the pandemic, and it was noted that such a study would be a big expense. Typed exams are easier to read and there is no need for readers to try deciphering handwriting, but it is possible that different reader experiences could impact the validity and reliability. Chair Lang believes that UCOP conducted a study of the predictive validity of the AWPE in the past, but the exam was not designed to predict student success. Members may be able to track down the results of this study at their campuses.

Advisory Group members are interested in knowing the costs of the systemwide AWPE and the local administration of the Exam at the campuses. The AWPE is funded by student fees which are paid by about half the students, and this revenue supports the components of the program handled by the vendor that cannot be done at UCOP. UCOP figured out a formula to provide funds to campuses to help cover some of the costs for administering the Exam on campus. The AWPE Coordinator at UCOP recently asked campuses to provide estimates of the per student cost for administering the AWPE, but UCOPE would need to follow-up with the four campuses not using the AWPE about the costs of their alternative mechanisms.

## **V. New Business**

Next year's Advisory Group meeting, which may be in-person at UCOP, will be on Friday, April 15, 2022.

Videoconference adjourned at: 11:50 AM  
Minutes prepared by: Brenda Abrams  
Attest: Paul Beehler