

Committee on Preparatory Education
Minutes

Wednesday, March 10, 2010
9-10:30 a.m., Kerr Hall Rm 129

Present: Nandini Bhattacharya (NSTF Rep), Mary-Kay Gamel (Chair), Roxanne Monnet (Staff), Sarah-Hope Parmeter (ELWR Coordinator), David Smith, Anna Tsing.

I. Announcements and updates.

A Senate Forum on Modernizing the Narrative Evaluation System is scheduled for today.

The Committee on Preparatory Education (CPE) discussed briefly their concerns over changes that are occurring in response to budget issues across campus. CEP also discussed its concerns about the needs associated with disadvantaged students and what UCSC can do realistically to serve them better. At the next meeting the Committee will consider whether to write a letter asking that preparatory courses in math and writing, and support services associated with these courses be spared further cuts, including the cuts that come with significant reductions in teaching assistant support. The letter would be copied to Senate committees with charges that also may bridge to the concerns that CPE has, such as the Committees on Educational Policy, Planning and Budget, International Education, and the Graduate Council). The possible impact to Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) eligible students of a significant cut to the Academic Excellence Program (housed in the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences) was also discussed.

The November and January minutes were accepted.

Members decided to keep the same meeting time for spring quarter (Wednesdays, 9-10:30) and will hold their first meeting on March 31.

II. Retention Services response

CPE expressed concern about the potential for cuts to programs that provide support to EOP eligible students and other students who may be struggling to come up to speed with their writing and math skills.

Before responding to the letter from Retention Services, CPE decided that they would like to better understand potential issues around EOP support for students. The Committee decided to write to ask Students Affairs/Retention Services about progress made since August in support of EOP students and to ask about possible changes to student organizations that currently support EOP students.

At their next meeting, CPE will consider these topics and whether to set up a future consultation to learn more about these topics.

III. UCOPE English as a Second Language (ESL) Meeting

Since UCSC has no ESL program or staff in ESL Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) Coordinator Sarah-Hope Parmeter serves on the University Committee on Preparatory Education, English as a Section Language (UCOPE-ESL) subcommittee. She reported on the recent meeting of UCOPE-ESL and provided CPE with information on ESL programs at the other UC campuses. Three populations at UCSC students appear to be most in need of support to improve their writing and English communication skills: entering frosh, transfer students, and Education Abroad Program (EAP) students.

Sarah-Hope reminded CPE of the distinction between English language learners (ELL) and ESL students. ELL students have usually been bilingual most of their lives but speak a different language at home from what they speak at school or in the community, whereas ESL students spoke solely another language for a period of time before learning English. In both cases, the students may need additional support. Based on their performance on the Analytical Writing Placement Exam, UC students receive the “E” designation to identify their need for additional support in writing and communicating in English.

Sarah-Hope indicated that the current situation of support of EOP students is not at crisis level but is in need of improvement.

College 10 has a core course that stretches over two quarters, allowing more support for writing. It was offered for the first time this year. CPE looks forward to learning whether the students enrolled in that course sequence will satisfy ELWR at a faster rate than do other EOP students.

In light of concerns on how the budget shortfall may affect student progress toward degree, the Committee would like to better understand issues around access to C2 (Writing 2) courses at UCSC. CPE would like to ask the Writing Program about the number of “floats” (course seats set aside for students needing C2) over the last 5 years and projections for next year.

CPE wondered whether Master’s degree students in UCSC’s Education Department get ESL/ELL training and whether they could they help teach at UCSC.

Ideas to augment support for writing include a writing institute for transfer students, courses to support the needs associated with the new Disciplinary Communication requirement, and hiring a person to teach ESL courses—ideally focussing on sciences or engineering.

UCSC also needs to ensure that graduate students who are English language learners are developing their skills before they serve as teaching assistants. The need for writing support courses for students visiting UCSC through the EAP was briefly discussed. Presently, due to a lack of available space in classes, EAP students are administratively dropped from Writing Program courses.

IV. Post consultation discussion: learning support services

CPE discussed the recent consultation with Learning Support Services Director Holly Cordova and decided to invite her to the March 31 meeting to continue the discussion. Specifically, CPE is eager to know how they can support the issues for EOP students and other struggling to satisfy ELWR and preparatory math.

The Committee would like to know what data is available on ELL students to track them as a subset of EOP students and whether the information is available for transfer students. CEP would like to further the discussion of how to identify lower-division courses that enroll a significant number of ELL students and how to provide support to instructors and students of those courses.

So attests,

Mary-Kay Gamel, Chair
Committee on Preparatory Education