

## **COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION**

### **Annual Report 2011-2012**

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Committee on Preparatory Education (CPE) held seven meetings throughout the academic year to discuss specific issues related to its charge. The work and accomplishments of the Committee during the 2011-12 year are summarized below.

#### **Online Math Placement Exam (MPE) Report and Data:**

CPE members reviewed the Mathematics department's proposed changes to the Math Placement Exam (MPE): to write a new exam, deliver it entirely on-line, and make it available to students in the spring before they arrive at UCSC. CPE members consulted with the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) and Mathematics Department Undergraduate Vice Chair Marty Weissman. The previous test was developed by the Math Diagnostic Testing Project (MDTP). While the new test is not very different in coverage, it will have the advantage of being under the control of the department. Administrators of the test will be able to easily randomize answers and change the questions slightly. The initial offering was made on January 20, 2012 and then again for continuing students in May 2012.

CPE consulted with Vice Chair Weissman on the preliminary results of the first offering. CPE emphasized the importance of continuing to track the correlation of placement results with final grades, and, in particular, recommended specifically looking for students who place very well and do very poorly – this could be a population that cheats on the placement exam, which will be easy (but illogical) now that it can be taken repeatedly from home. Other suggestions from CPE included studying the past history of the lowest-performing students in Math 11 and 19 (did they come in via Math 3 or the placement test? If the latter, how close were they to the boundary?) and comparing average scores on the new test topic-by-topic with the analogous sections of the MDT (is geometry, which had a very low average on the new test, equally weak in the old one?).

CPE will follow up in the fall with Mathematics to review the summer test score data.

#### **Tracking the Possibility of UCSC becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution**

CPE discussed the possibility of UCSC enrollments of students of Hispanic descent reaching the 25% mark necessary to allow our campus the federal definition of a Hispanic Serving Institution. During the year CPE received reports via the VPDUE's Office on the status and the creation of a committee or team on Hispanic Institution Status. This team will work on criteria needed to fill out the necessary paperwork and policy that must be in place before UCSC can receive the designation.

#### **Tracking Transfer Students Success in Writing Courses:**

CPE discussed with member and Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) Coordinator Hope-Parmeter; new data on transfer students' success in writing courses after arriving at UCSC. CPE asked Learning Support Services (LSS) Director Holly Gritsch De Cordova if her unit could provide these data. LSS provided data on transfer students' writing in DC courses. The differences in achievement between transfer and native students were generally small, but

transfer students were somewhat lagging in a few majors, including psychology, and in particular in the percentage of students with a grade of A. In spring CPE consulted with the LSS Director and staff member Jessica Maines on the results. LSS also conducted a survey on what transfer students' writing experience was before enrolling in their major DC course. The majority of responses indicated that the students felt well prepared for the level of difficulty of the writing assignments they encountered. Two recommendations came up during discussion – suggesting to departments that they prepare a 2-unit course introducing disciplinary conventions for writing and citations, and advertising to incoming transfer students that they should not rush to take gateway courses for their major before they are sure that they are thoroughly prepared to do well in them.

### **Math 2 Stretch Report on Progress in Math 3**

CPE consulted with LSS Director Holly Gritsch De Cordova on the Math 2 Stretch Progress Report. While the results are for a very small cohort, the data did provide positive outcomes for students success rates when progressing to Math 3 and receiving a passing grade. From the report it was clear that students who passed Math 3 did so, on average, with a grade about one grade lower than they received for Math 2 Stretch. LSS and Mathematics will offer this course again next year, but both are open new ideas or courses that would help students who struggle with math.

### **The Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS )Transfer Proposal from Systemwide for Divisional Comments**

CPE members discussed the draft proposal from the Systemwide BOARS Committee for students who transfer from a community college into the UC System. The proposal is intended to place a greater emphasis on preparation for the major in the advice given to prospective transfer students and in transfer admissions. CPE considered the question of whether too much concentration on the major would undermine preparation in writing or math. The committee concluded that in quantitative disciplines, good math preparation would be part of the preparation required by the majors anyway. Regarding writing preparation, it was suggested that students who want to avoid taking preparatory writing courses in community college will probably do so under any circumstances.

### **Classroom Timeslot Changes Proposal:**

CPE began this discussion last year with a draft proposal from Interim VPDUE Cioc on adding an additional timeslot to accommodate the demand for more large lecture classes. The committee felt there was not enough information to make an informed decision. This year VPDUE Hughey made changes to the previous proposal, and all senate committees were invited to respond. After the Senate Executive Committee sent in the combined committee responses, the VPDUE conducted a survey among campus departments and faculty and submitted a third proposal to the Senate for committee review. CPE's comment on this proposal included a suggestion for an alternate plan ("option 2a"), based on VPDUE Hughey's relatively conservative "option 2", that would add a minority subset of medium and small rooms to the schedule that option 2 provides for large lecture halls. CPE also pointed out the probable necessity of extending finals week in some of these plans, particularly the most ambitious ("option 5").

### **Report on Retention and Consultation with Academic Advising Coordinator:**

CPE invited Academic Advising Coordinator Sketo-Rosener to consult with committee members on retention issues on campus and what procedures or practices are in place that the college advisers follow. College Advisers are governed by senate regulations to determine when students are subject to academic probation.

### **Committee on Retention and Advising / Undergraduate Council**

Continuing a conversation from previous years, the committee discussed the need for a more coherent Senate oversight of retention issues and advising, which are divided among the purviews of CEP, CAAD, CPE, and CAFA. Initial discussions were about a Committee on Retention and Advising, possibly to replace CPE. Chair Smith met with former VPDUE Bill Ladusaw to discuss this idea, and returned to the committee with an alternate idea: an Undergraduate Council. The notion is that retention is such a broad and multifaceted topic that it should not be addressed by members who do not sit on other committees, but rather by a Council consisting of members of the above committees, plus many ex-officio staff members, addressing these and other cross-cutting topics.

### **UC ACCORD:**

This is a Systemwide unit that funds research projects related to diversity and retention. It was brought to the committees attention by member Donna Hunter. There was a suggestion, not followed up in time before the quarter ended, for committee members to divide up and report back on the abstracts of individual ACCORD projects.

### **ALLIES program:**

Committee member Sarah-Hope Parmeter briefed the committee on a program called ALLIES that pairs college writing staff with high school English or writing instructors. It is a mentoring program encouraging teachers to emphasize what students need in terms of writing skills to be successful in the college writing course.

### **Silicon Valley Academic Plan, Faculty Salary Metrics Proposal, and Faculty Satisfaction Survey**

CPE briefly discussed these items that were passed to Senate committees for comment, but felt they were not in the purview of the committee and did not respond.

### **University Committee on Preparatory Education meetings:**

Chair Smith had raised a proposal last year at UCOPE for a systemwide mathematics diagnostic exam to be offered online each Spring to enable incoming students to improve their math preparation in advance of taking placement exams at their UC campus in the fall. After learning about the UCSC math department's plan to start offering **placement** exams online in the spring, however, it became clear that the suggested systemwide plan might conflict with the ideas of the math departments at more than one campus. Chair Smith prepared a letter to be sent to undergraduate vice-chairs at math departments systemwide asking for their feedback. Apparently this has not yet been sent out by UCOPE, however.

**Recommendations for CPE 2012-13:**

Consult with the VPDUE on an Undergraduate Council or Committee on Retention and Advising; assign committee members and/or committee to study and report on how this is done on each of the other UC campuses.

Consult with the VPDUE on the progress of the committee on Hispanic Serving Institution.

Review new data on the MPE online results. The committee is specifically interested in how many of the top 15% scores fail the course or get Cs or lower (possible evidence of cheating). As the year goes on, study the fail rates at all levels (3/11/19) compared to previous years, and the quality of correlation between the MPE and course success compared to previous years.

Visit the UC ACCORD website and review and discuss any relevant research abstracts.

Follow up on the effect (if any) of the changes in administrative structure that began in fall 2011 on Retention Services and LSS.

Follow up on the suggestions made when discussing the progress of transfer students in disciplinary writing: ways to make sure they do not take gateway courses too early and/or without realizing how important they are, and speaking to departments about 2-unit disciplinary practices courses for transfers.

Respectfully submitted,  
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATORY EDUCATION

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