

June 26, 2014

SETH LERER
Dean
Division of Arts & Humanities

Subject: *Basic Writing Program*
Audit & Management Advisory Services Project 2014-59

The final audit report for Basic Writing Program Audit Report 2014-59, is attached. We would like to thank all members of the department for their cooperation and assistance during the audit.

The findings included in this report will be added to our follow-up system. While management corrective actions have been included in the audit report, we may determine that additional audit procedures to validate the actions agreed to or implemented are warranted. We will contact you to schedule a review of the corrective actions, and will advise you when the findings are closed.

UC wide policy requires that all draft audit reports, both printed (copied on tan paper for ease of identification) and electronic, be destroyed after the final report is issued. Because draft reports can contain sensitive information, please either return these documents to AMAS personnel or destroy them. We also request that draft reports not be photocopied or otherwise redistributed.

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Attachment

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UC San Diego

AUDIT & MANAGEMENT ADVISORY SERVICES

Basic Writing Program
June 2014

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Project Number: 2014-59

Basic Writing Program
Audit & Management Advisory Services Project 2014-59

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Attachment A – Entry Level Writing Requirement Summary

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I. Background

Based on a request from the Arts & Humanities Dean's Office, Audit & Management Advisory Services (AMAS) completed a review of the Basic Writing Program (BWP) as a supplemental audit to the approved audit plan for Fiscal Year 2013-14. This report summarizes the results of our review.

The Regents of the University of California require all undergraduate students (including international students) to demonstrate a minimum proficiency in English composition. This is called the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), otherwise known as the Subject A requirement. Incoming students can satisfy the ELWR in a number of different ways, as detailed in **Attachment A**.

At UCSD this policy is encapsulated in Academic Senate Regulation 600.K.4:

A student who has not satisfied the Subject A proficiency requirement prior to his or her first quarter of study at UCSD must satisfy the requirement by completing with a grade of "C" or better a course approved for this purpose by the divisional Committee on Preparatory Education AND by passing a proficiency examination administered in accordance with standards established by the Divisional Committee on Preparatory Education.

The regulation further states that students have three quarters to satisfy the requirement or they will not be eligible to enroll for the fourth quarter. The limitation is extended to six quarters for English as Second Language (ESL) students. Students who fail to meet the standard can file an appeal through the Academic Senate Committee on Educational Policy.

The BWP is a department within the Division of Arts & Humanities that ensures that students meet the Subject A requirement. For students who have otherwise not met Subject A requirement prior to arrival at UCSD, the department offers the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) multiple times throughout the year. Students that do not pass AWPE are registered in the requisite BWP course in their first quarter. In compliance with Regulation 600.K.4, BWP schedules a separate exam upon completion of the writing course. Students who do not pass the exit exam must retake the course. UCSD is the only UC campus that requires students pass a separate exit examination upon completion of the course.

Although BWP classes are held on the UCSD campus, the instructors who teach the classes are contracted via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with San Diego Mesa College.¹ Per the agreement, instructors for 32 course sections are provided at no

¹ San Diego Mesa College is part of the San Diego Community College District (SDCC).

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cost each year, and UCSD is charged for any additional sections. During the 2013-14 academic year UCSD paid for 110 additional sections at a rate of \$6,913 per section, for a total invoiced amount of \$760,430.

The BWP consists of two full-time staff members, a Director and a Program Coordinator. The Director provides student counseling, oversees the San Diego Mesa College instructors, and hires the exam proctors, graders, and appeals evaluators. The Program Coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of management, planning and administration of the BWP, in addition to administrative functions including course, budget, facilities and personnel management.

II. Audit Objective, Scope, and Procedures

Based on the request from Arts & Humanities executive management, the objective of our review was to determine if the BWP processes were adequate to ensure the following:

- Proctors, scorers and appeal evaluators were being hired and paid appropriately;
- Exit Examination results were being accurately submitted to the Registrar's Office for posting;
- Students were receiving counseling and academic advising from the appropriate personnel;
- The number of sections needed for any quarter were being reasonably estimated;
- Payments made to San Diego Mesa College for instructors provided under the MOU were reasonable; and
- Students who did not meet the Subject A requirement within the required number of quarters were being dismissed or counseled appropriately.

In order to achieve our objectives we completed the following:

- Interviewed the Dean and the Assistant Dean of Arts & Humanities;
- Interviewed Basic Writing Program Director and Program Coordinator;
- Reviewed UCSD Academic Senate Regulation 600.k;
- Reviewed the California Code or Regulations § 51025, § 53301, §53302, §53309 and § 53310, pertaining to California community colleges;
- Consulted with the San Diego Mesa College's Dean, School of Humanities regarding the relationship between San Diego Mesa College and UCSD;
- Reviewed the MOUs between San Diego Mesa College and UCSD for the academic year 2013-2014;
- Reconciled San Diego Mesa College purchase orders and approved invoices to Basic Writing Program records of the number of sections offered between the academic years 2007-2008 and 2012-2013;
- Performed a walkthrough of the process for estimating the number of Basic Writing Program sections to offer each academic quarter;

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- Performed a walkthrough of the Basic Writing Program process for submitting grades and exit exam scores to the Registrar's Office;
- Interviewed Registrar's Office personnel regarding the process by which grades are received by the Registrar's Office;
- Reviewed and evaluated the roster of 2014 Winter quarter exam proctors, scorers and appeals reviewers;
- Reviewed the Enrollment Bulletin handed out to each student; and
- Reviewed the job card for the Basic Writing Program Coordinator.

III. Conclusion

We concluded that the BWP processes included in the scope of our review were generally adequate. Exit Examination grades were submitted to the Registrar's Office by the Program Coordinator, and posted grades were independently verified by the Director. The number of Basic Writing Program course sections offered each quarter appeared to be reasonably estimated by determining the number of current and incoming students who had not yet satisfied the Subject A requirement. San Diego Mesa College appropriately billed UCSD for instructors based on state regulated rates, and only billed for the number of sections exceeding the 32 free sections. The Basic Writing Program did not have authority to dismiss students and, as such, was only involved in the process by advising students on the appeal process.

However, we concluded that two BWP processes could be improved. The names of individuals responsible for student advising and counseling could be better communicated to students so that they know who to go to with specific questions. In addition, the BWP could maintain records supporting the qualifications of exit exam graders and appeal evaluators. These findings are discussed in further detail in the balance of this report.

IV. Observations and Recommendations

A. Student Advising

The names of individuals responsible for student advising and counseling could be better communicated to students.

Student advising is an important aspect to every academic program, including the BWP. Students frequently need advice as to how they can obtain a better grade in the course, how the exit exam will be administered and affect their overall course grade, how to file appeals, and how many quarters they have to complete the course and pass the exit exam.

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The Program Coordinator's job card states that responsibilities include advising students on proper enrollment of BWP classes. Our interviews indicated that the Program Coordinator had advised students on matters beyond those stated in the job card, and that the Program Coordinator has subsequently been counseled for this activity.

One way to ensure that student advising is provided by the appropriate personnel is to communicate to students as to whom they could contact for specific questions. At the beginning of each academic quarter, an Enrollment Circular is provided to each student that provides general information about the BWP. The document touches on several important and relevant aspects of the BWP, including relevant regulations, course grades, exit examination requirement, appeals, and how to submit complaints and compliments about the program. The circular does not, however, advise students as to who to contact for counseling or student advising, nor does it provide the Director's office hours or availability.

Management Corrective Action:

The Dean's Office will direct the BWP Director to clearly communicate to students, at the beginning of each academic quarter, who they should contact for academic counseling or student advising. This communication will also include the Director's office hours and the availability to address programmatic questions beyond proper course enrollment.

B. Policies and Procedures

The BWP did not maintain written policies and procedures for selecting, training and verifying the qualifications of exit exam graders, appeal evaluators and proctors.

At the conclusion of each quarter the exit exam is offered to students in order to fulfill the Academic Senate Regulation 600.K.4 requirement that students pass a proficiency exam in addition to the BWP course. The examination process involves a group of exam proctors, exam graders, and appeal evaluators.

The BWP exit exam is an essay exam that is scored by at least two different graders. Each grader provides a score between one and six, and the scores are averaged to provide the final exit exam score. While exit exams are usually scored by two graders, more graders could be asked to grade an exam if the scores provided by the two initial grades differ significantly. No more than five different individuals can score a single exit exam.

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Exit exam proctors, graders and appeals evaluators are all selected by the Director, and are paid at rates established by the BWP. While the typical exam grader is a BWP instructor, the Director has determined that this task can be completed by others so long as they are appropriately trained. This training is provided by the Director, and is consistent with the training provided to individuals tasked with evaluating exit exam appeals. Many of the proctors, graders and appeals evaluators selected by the Director have no official affiliation with the University, but are individuals who the Director knows from prior experience.

Based on our review of the winter 2014 grader and appeal evaluator roster, it appeared that six persons listed had no apparent role as BWP instructors in any of the prior seven academic years. Per the Director, each of these six individuals had previous experience that qualified them as suitable candidates for the task. Our search validated that two of six individuals did apparently have affiliations with English instruction at various San Diego Community Colleges. For the remaining four, the only substantiation was the Director's recollection, as the Director did not have documentation indicating their qualifications, or the process for selecting them.

The Director has been with the program for nearly 30 years and stated he is able to recall the backgrounds of instructors and graders. The Director is also able to identify and retain proctors based on his prior experience with them. However, the process to select, train and verify the qualifications for proctors, exam graders and appeal evaluators should be fully documented for succession planning purposes.

Management Corrective Action:

The Dean's Office will direct the BWP Director to document the policies and procedures for selecting, training, and verifying the qualifications of graders, appeal evaluators and proctors. Once the policies and procedures are approved by the Dean, the Director will be required to observe the policies and procedures each quarter.

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Attachment A

Entry Level Writing Requirement Summary

The Regents Subject A Requirement originated in 1898. Below is the current form:

The University of California requires all undergraduate students, including those from abroad, to demonstrate a minimum proficiency in English composition. This standard is called the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR), although in the past it was and may still be referred to as the Subject A Requirement.

The requirement may be satisfied by any of the following means:

- A score of 680 or higher on the College Board SAT Reasoning Test, Writing Section;
- A score of 30 or better on the ACT Combined English/Writing test;
- A score of 3, 4 or 5 on the CEEB Advanced Placement Test in English;
- A score of 5 or higher on the International Baccalaureate Standard Level English A exam;
- Submitting proof of completion of a transfer-level college course of four-quarter units or three semester-units in English composition with a grade of C or better;
- Writing a passing essay on the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) which is required of all students who have not otherwise met the requirement. This examination may only be taken once.

The A WPE is given throughout California in May and is made available to High School Seniors at the costs of \$110¹. The test is given throughout the state at high school test centers. Incoming UC freshman in California do not have to take the test if University's admissions system records the satisfaction of the AWPE requirement prior to April 1.

Essay exam results are available about a month after taking the exam. Students can learn the results by logging onto their campus' admissions website. Those who do not pass may still meet the requirement by other means as listed above, which is most commonly be receiving a AP English score of 3 or above.

Students who do not pass are under the guidance of University of California Academic Senate Regulations, Part III, Section 636.C, which follows:

There are two ways a student may satisfy the University of California Entry Level Writing Requirement subsequent to enrollment at the University of California: by passing the University of California Analytical Writing Placement Examination, or by successfully completing a course or program of study approved for that purpose by an appropriate agency of the Academic Senate Division of the student's campus.

¹ The fee will be waived or reduced contingent on waiver of the UC admission application fee.