

UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL MEETING

October 23, 2003

Members present: Deborah Baumgold, Hilary Gerdes, Colleen Bell, Steve Pologe, Laura Vandenburg, John Postlethwait, Herb Chereck, Jim Imamura, Sue Yockelson, Ron Severson, Mark Thoma, Harry Wonham, Martha Pitts, Karen Sprague, Deborah Exton, Tyler Neely, Julie Newton, Dave Hubin

Members absent: Paul Engelking, Gordon Sayre, John Lysaker

SAT and ACT Writing Examinations

Martha Pitts distributed two articles to the council regarding the ACT and the SAT examinations. The SAT will change its format in 2005, making changes to the Math and Verbal portions, and adding a section on Writing. SAT-takers will complete all three sections, and scores for all three sections will be reported when students release their scores. The ACT will offer an optional writing section, but will not require students to complete that section. The council discussed whether to require students applying for 2006 who submit only ACT scores to include the writing section. Arguments for and against were as follows:

Arguments Against

1. How much value do we want to place on the writing score? We could equalize the requirements for all students by ignoring the writing portion of the SAT.
2. The writing score could be used for advising and placement only, rather than for admission.
3. We could lose applicants if we require another test score. Requiring the ACT with writing this year would have affected about 600 applicants (out of a total of ~ 10,000).
4. Would we discriminate against second language students with a writing test? Probably not, since low standardized test scores do not automatically preclude admission. Instead, they trigger a complete review of the application with the opportunity for evaluating compensating strengths.

Arguments For

1. There would be comparable data for all students if the writing section were required for ACT-takers.
2. We don't want to create a back door for university admission via inconsistent requirements for SAT and ACT writing tests.
3. Discussion in the UGC last year emphasized the importance of writing, and the council strongly supported the use of the SAT writing test for UO admission. Therefore, it seems reasonable to require the ACT writing test, as well.
4. How much alike are the SAT and ACT writing tests? The ACT test is not yet available, but is likely to be comparable to the SAT test because of market pressure from schools that use both.

300-level Syllabus Review

A packet of 13 course syllabi was distributed to council members. On the basis of last year's tally for Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4b on the course survey form, these courses were suggested as good examples of group-satisfying courses at the 300-level. That is, they are broad enough to serve as an introduction to a large field, but have the depth and rigor that is expected at the 300-level. Council members were asked to examine these courses to discover whether they actually are good, defining examples and to articulate the characteristics that distinguish group-satisfying courses at the 300-level from those at the 100- or 200-level. The council identified the following preliminary list of characteristics:

- The course expects students to analyze, rather than memorize, material.
- A 300-level group-satisfying course should not have pre-requisites due simply to its position in a sequence. Pre-requisites that recognize the necessity for prior mastery of other material (e.g. math for science courses) are appropriate.
- The range of topics covered can distinguish a 300-level group-satisfying course from a 100- or 200-level course.
- The course requires activities other than reading and multiple-choice exams, such as projects or papers.

Next Meeting

For the next meeting, council members should review the remaining syllabi from the packet, looking for additional characteristics of 300-level group-satisfying courses. In addition, council members should review the proposal (distributed at the meeting) for a new major in Marine Biology, and be ready to discuss it at the next meeting on November 6, 2003, at 10:00 am in the Johnson Hall Conference Room.

Undergraduate Council, 5256 University of Oregon • (541) 346-1221 • Last Update: November 14, 2003