

COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS,
AND FINANCIAL AID
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2011-2012

I. Function

The Committee on Undergraduate Recruitment, Admissions and Financial Aid (CURAFA) is committee is charged with representing the faculty in regard to all aspects of the recruitment and admission of students and in regard to all aspects of financial aid for students except those handled by the faculties of individual colleges, schools or departments. It is further tasked with making recommendations to the faculty concerning (a) the formulation of, or any substantive modification in, university policies on admission and financial aid, and (b) programs directed at enhancing the quality and diversity of the undergraduate student body. It also advises the administration on and review of the implementation and operation of those policies and programs.

II. Accomplishments During the 2011-2012 Academic Year

The committee met twelve times between September and July. Accomplishments and items of discussion are listed below.

- a. In light of the many discussions last year regarding the admission of students of color at the university, CURAFA met several times throughout the year to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with admitting a diverse student body. In an effort to learn more about the issue of equal opportunity programs such as pipeline programs and affirmative action, and to gain scholarly perspectives on how they promote institutional goals, CURAFA commissioned an independent ad hoc committee devoted to the tasks of (1) synthesizing the literature on diversity effects in higher education, (2) considering the institution's mission and the role of diversity in that mission, (3) analyzing the legal basis for affirmative action, and (4) exploring the data on student composition and admissions at the university to understand better the claims made by the university. The ad hoc committee completed its work in late summer 2012, and CURAFA expects to consider its findings during 2012-2013.
- b. The committee sought to learn more about the process of admissions at the university. This began with a meeting in which Director of Admissions Adele Brumfield discussed recent trends in admission rates for targeted minority applicants; the admissions office's efforts to recruit targeted minority applicants (and others); and the premise of holistic admissions. Brumfield provided the committee with a copy of the UW System application, which is available online. Brumfield described the "art and science" of admissions practices and the efforts to ensure that students who might benefit the most from a UW-Madison education have that opportunity extended to them. CURAFA members also watched Brumfield's testimony to the Wisconsin legislature during a hearing. Finally, twice during the academic year, committee members visited the admissions office for a tour and participated in an intensive "mock admissions exercise" to learn about how holistic admissions is actually implemented.
- c. CURAFA members examined how admissions and financial aid policies at the university are shaped by state and federal policies. They met with Legal Counsel Nancy Lynch and attended a special session hosted by the university with Art Coleman, a legal expert in the field.
- d. Committee members discussed the role of diversity programming across the institution, how this related to institutional mission, and how these efforts might be strengthened and enhanced. In this effort, members twice met with Chief Diversity Officer Damon Williams and asked him to serve as a consultant to the committee in the future.

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- e. Another topic was the criteria for which students are determined competitive for admission. Academic Planning and Institutional Research committee ex officio member Clare Huhn shared data on the pipeline through which students gain admission to the university, and how test scores vary by race/ethnicity. Committee members considered the appropriateness of standardized test scores as a measure of “college readiness” and discussed the need for considering alternatives.
- f. Director of Student Financial Services Susan Fischer reported on the current and future challenges for those in the office of financial aid. She noted that close attention is being given to Congress’ actions to reduce or eliminate aid to students in non-degree programs. This has become an issue in Congress as a way to confront the problem of fraud/lack of accountability in proprietary schools, although legal restrictions will be applied across the public and private landscape of higher education.
- g. In light of a recent report indicating merit-based aid has overtaken need-based aid at most American public universities, CURAFA discussed the difficulty of clearly assessing the relative proportion of Madison’s institutional financial aid distributed based solely on financial need versus with consideration of merit. The decentralized nature of distribution of these awards makes this difficult.
- h. The committee discussed enrollment priorities and targets and learned about how they are established at UW-Madison. Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Joanne Berg visited with the committee to provide this information and describe current priorities (which include international students, out-of-state students, first-generation students, women in science, etc.).
- i. The committee discussed the Office of Enrollment Management’s desire to streamline recruitment practices across the university, helping to present a unified source of information to the community and introducing efficiencies in the process. Members considered the need for decentralized recruitment activities to fulfill school and college missions and build the pipeline for recruitment, weighing these against the need to cut costs and ensure consistency and transparency. They made recommendations to VP Berg in this regard.
- j. CURAFA kept abreast of the Wisconsin legislature’s Special Task Force on UW Restructuring and got regular updates on discussions related to admissions and financial aid.
- k. A new University Committee ad hoc task force on tuition was formed after discussion with CURAFA members, who participated in helping to shape its membership and mission. CURAFA chair Goldrick-Rab serves on the task force.
- l. CURAFA met with John Bechtol who is in charge of veteran’s affairs on campus. He discussed several issues facing vets at Madison, including (1) their small numbers on campus, (2) the lack of financial support for vets compared to support at other Big 10 institutions, (3) campus, system, and state priorities re: vets, and (4) strategies for engaging vets on campus.

III. Important Information for Faculty

Members of CURAFA wish to draw the attention of the Faculty Senate to the following pieces of information about recruitment, admissions and financial aid at the UW-Madison. We believe they deserve further attention and consideration by all professors and urge you to share this data with your departments.

- a. *Less than 1,000 students of color who graduate from Wisconsin high schools* are currently assessed as “well-prepared” (based on available data at all steps of the enrollment pipeline) for admission to UW-Madison. UW-Madison faces significant challenges in creating equitable opportunities and a diverse learning environment. A recent report from Academic Planning and Institutional Research found that “In 2010, the number of well-prepared White Wisconsin high school graduates was more than 14,000, compared to just 52 American Indians, 108 African Americans, 221 Hispanic/Latino(a)s, and 372 Asians. Overall, 18% of Wisconsin high school graduates are from minority groups but only 5% of well-prepared graduates are from minority groups.”

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- b. *At least partly due to financial need, fewer than one in two UW-Madison students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds completes a bachelor's degree in four years. Sizable fractions of UW-Madison's students are left with unmet financial need (which must be filled by long work hours or large loans) because of the very small size of the state's need-based grant and limited institutional funding for need-based financial aid. The State of Wisconsin allocates just \$415 per needy undergraduate, compared to Minnesota's \$742. The four-year graduation rate of UW-Madison students receiving federal Pell Grants (our neediest students) is just 37%, compared to 57% for non-Pell recipients. Recent evidence from Wisconsin shows that increasing the total size of students' financial aid packages can boost the retention rates of Pell Grant recipients.*

IV. Committee Membership, 2011-2012

Katie Biddick, Associated Students of Madison

Adele Brumfield, director, of Office of Admissions and Recruitment

Susan Fischer, director, Office of Student Financial Aid

Allie Gardner, Associated Students of Madison

Sara Goldrick-Rab, chair, associate professor, Educational Policy Studies and Sociology

Mary Louise Gomez, professor, Curriculum and Instruction

Awad Hanna, professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering

Clare Huhn, policy and planning analyst, Office of Academic Planning and Institutional Research

Janet Jensen, associate director, School of Music

Clark Landis, professor, Chemistry

José Madera, assistant dean, College of Letters and Science

Benjamin Marquez, professor, Political Science

Leland Pan, Associated Students of Madison

Michael Peterson, associate professor, Theatre and Drama

E. Alison Rice, student services coordinator, College of Letters and Science

Douglas Rouse, professor, Plant Pathology

Nicholas Strohl, Associated Students of Madison