

**COMMITTEE ON UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITMENT, ADMISSIONS, AND FINANCIAL AID
2013-2014 ANNUAL REPORT**

Kent A. Weigel, Chair

Faculty [term ends]

Janet Jensen, L&S/Music [2015]

Christina Kendzioriski Newton, SMPH/Biostatistics and Medical Informatics [2016]

Clark Landis, L&S/Chemistry [2014]

Kristyn Masters, ENGR/Biomedical Engineering [2017]

Douglas Rouse, CALS/Plant Pathology [2014]

Anita Thompson, CALS/Biological Systems Engineering [2017]

Michael Thornton, L&S/Afro-American Studies [2017]

Kent Weigel (chair), CALS/Dairy Science [2016]

Academic Staff [term ends]

Jose Madera, L&S/Student Academic Affairs [2014]

E. Alison Rice, L&S/Student Academic Affairs [2015]

Students

Justin Bloesch

Rebecca Brown

Genevieve Carter

Andrew Stoiber

Ex officio, Non-voting

Adele Brumfield, Office of Admissions and Recruitment Director

Susan Fischer, Student Financial Services Director

Consultants

Clare Huhn, GEA/Academic Planning and Institutional Research

Eric Williams, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Diversity and Academic Excellence

Our first meeting was held on October 18, and several new members were welcomed to the committee. Experienced members spent much of the time helping new members learn about current processes, challenges, and opportunities. Topics of discussion included: recruitment of inner city students (i.e., Milwaukee Public Schools), attracting rural students, affordability for students from families with low or moderate income, impact of the out-of-state enrollment cap, inner workings of the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU) program, the Great People Campaign, adoption of the Common Scholarship Application, and the philosophy and practice of holistic admissions.

The focus of our December 13 meeting was financial aid, and Susan provided an extremely informative overview of the financial aid process. The committee was impressed with the positive impact of the MIU program, though a large gap of roughly \$40 million in unmet need per year remains. Discontinuation of the Perkins Loan program was discussed, as UW-Madison is the third-largest user of this program in the nation. We also discussed how the challenges of access and affordability have shifted slightly from the lowest income students, who can get need-based aid (e.g., Pell Grants), to students from families with moderately low income. Lastly, the committee was pleased to learn that UW-Madison is among the lowest in the nation in student loan default rates.

Our February 6 meeting featured discussions on a variety of issues, including graduation and retention rates for students enrolled in high-impact practices (e.g., first-year interest groups or residential learning communities), and the question of whether such activities should be recommended for certain students at the

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time of admission (e.g., first-generation students or students from extraordinarily small high schools). In addition, we discussed the impact of changing majors or delaying the declaration of a major, noting that such students tend to require significantly longer time to graduation and accumulate significantly larger debt loads. The family income distribution of UW-Madison students, as compared with that of typical Wisconsin families, was also a topic of discussion. Our current campus budget model relies heavily on the enrollment of students who can afford to fully pay tuition out-of-pocket, and the committee was divided regarding the question of what magnitude in income difference was morally or ethically “acceptable”. A potentially greater concern is that many low- or moderately low-income students tend to self-select out of UW-Madison by failing to apply, whereas others choose less expensive institutions or those offering more favorable financial aid and scholarship packages after being admitted to UW-Madison.

At our March 5 meeting, CURAFA passed the following motion unanimously (motion by Doug Rouse, second by Janet Jensen): "CURAFA recommends that the writing component of the ACT and SAT tests be neither required nor recommended for prospective students applying to UW-Madison". Background of the issue is as follows. A recent report from the Office of the Provost's Academic Planning and Analysis Unit, which was based on 2010, showed that for every 100 students who graduate from Wisconsin high schools, 68 took the ACT or SAT test, 21 were considered as "well prepared" (for the purposes of this study, “well prepared” was defined as ranking within the top 25% of high school class and having ACT score > 22), 8 applied to UW-Madison, 7 were admitted to UW-Madison, and 5 enrolled at UW-Madison. For students of color, the numbers were 60, 6, 4, 4, and 3, respectively. The report further showed that 72% of Asian, 70% of White/Other, 63% of African American, 53% of Hispanic/Latino(a), and 35% of American Indian high school graduates in Wisconsin took the ACT test, and the percentages who were "well prepared" for UW-Madison were 25% for White/Other, 15% for Asian, 6% for Hispanic/Latino(a), 5% or American Indian, and 2% for African American students. The most shocking statistic from this report was that there were only 108 African American students who graduated from a Wisconsin high school in 2010 that were "well prepared" for UW-Madison, according to the criteria noted above. Among the students who were "well prepared", students of color applied to UW-Madison at higher rates, were admitted at higher rates, and enrolled at higher rates than their White/Other peers. We concluded that the shortage of resident students of color at UW-Madison is likely due to an insufficient number of high school graduates who are well prepared, coupled with lower rates of taking the appropriate ACT test in preparation for applying to UW-Madison.

Numerous high schools throughout Wisconsin have adopted the ACT test as a replacement for the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) that is given to high school sophomores, and the ACT Suite will replace WKCE in Wisconsin public high schools in 2014-2015. Freshmen and sophomores will take the ACT Aspire Early High School test, whereas juniors will take the ACE and ACT WorkKeys tests that are used by UW-Madison and other institutions of higher education. As a result, public school students will no longer have to travel to an independent testing site and pay a fee to take the ACT test, and this should increase the number of students who are ready to apply to UW-Madison. At present, UW-Madison is the only four-year public institution in Wisconsin that requires the Optional Writing Test in conjunction with the ACT (or SAT, for that matter). Our understanding is that the Optional Writing Test will be given to all Wisconsin public high school students in 2014-2015, but many prospective 2014-2015 applicants will have taken only the standard ACT test.

In 2012, a total of 47,588 Wisconsin high school students took the ACT test, and 54.1% of these students took the Optional Writing Test. By race, these proportions were 60.9% of Asian students, 55.7% of White students, 49.6% of Hispanic/Latino students, and 35.1% of African American students. A recent study by our

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Office of Admissions showed that 463 prospective 2014-2015 freshmen (including 99 Wisconsin students) submitted incomplete applications, and of these 360 applications (81 from Wisconsin) were missing only the Optional Writing Test. First-generation students, as well as students of color, were overrepresented in the pool of incomplete freshmen applications. In addition, prospective students from other states are more likely to be lacking scores for the Optional Writing Test, and proposed changes in the Revised SAT exam will lead to a potentially large number of applications with missing writing scores from states in which the SAT is the college preparatory norm.

Analyses by Academic Planning and Institutional Research into predictors of retention and graduation and course outcomes find that the ACT writing scores offer little additional predictive value beyond UW English Placement Test scores. Furthermore, prospective students who apply to UW-Madison must complete two essay questions as part of the application, and these can be used to assess students' writing skills. Among our agreed upon peer institutions, the University of Illinois neither requires nor recommends the Optional Writing Test, whereas the University of Iowa recommends it, and all other institutions require it. Nonetheless, the committee feels that the Optional Writing Test represents an unnecessary hurdle that prospective students must clear in order to be considered for UW-Madison. Elimination of this requirement will reduce the number of prospective 2015-2016 freshmen from Wisconsin with incomplete applications, and elimination of this requirement will have a positive long-term impact on the number of non-resident students who are ready to apply to UW-Madison based on the state-mandated (e.g., standard ACT) or optional (e.g., Revised SAT) exams used by institutions in their home states.

Our April 1 meeting was devoted entirely to review of the draft report of the Ad Hoc Diversity Planning Committee. Numerous revisions were suggested to CURAFA's representative(s) on that committee, and while those suggestions are not listed herein, our general feeling was that the report contained many admirable goals but lacked important details about how these goals will be prioritized, implemented, and achieved.

Our last meeting, which was held on May 2, focused on preparation for the committee's September 10 meeting with Chancellor Blank, at which time we will discuss her vision for recruiting, admissions, and financial aid at UW-Madison. In addition, we identified key issues for CURAFA during 2014-2015 which will include:

- 1) Identify opportunities to reduce the annual \$45 million gap in need-based aid for UW-Madison undergraduates.
- 2) Consider ways to enhance UW-Madison's ability to recruit a larger proportion of the top young scholars from Wisconsin high schools, given a demographic trend toward fewer total in-state graduates and a Regent-mandated enrollment cap of 27.5% out-of-state students.
- 3) Assess the need for requirements regarding ACT or SAT scores of transfer students – under the current system prospective transfer admission decisions are primarily based on the rigor and performance in college and high school courses. Test scores are not required in the application process.
- 4) Discuss how closely UW-Madison's student population should represent the demographic or socioeconomic status of the State of Wisconsin – right now one-half of UW-Madison students don't apply for financial aid, and one-third of those who apply have no financial need.

In addition, we elected a new chair of CURAFA for the 2014-2015: Christina Kendzierski Newton.