

## **Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee**

**Friday, March 30, 2012  
9:00 a.m.**

### **Meeting Summary**

**Attending:** Abraham, Aguero, Billeaux, Day, DeFranco, Peebles, Hardin, Hopper, McMillen, Redden, Schonberg, Walch, Walter, Daniel Spencer (proxy for Smith)

**Staff:** MacGregor Stephenson, Kevin Lemoine, James Goeman, Allen Michie, Catherine Parsonneault

**Guests:** Loraine Phillips, Neal Armstrong, David Roach, Gary Elbow, Pamela Matthews, Roberta Rincon, Oscar Hernandez, Danita McAnally, Rissa Potter, Jennie Kennedy

- I. **Welcome and call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Co-chair Rex Peebles.
- II. **Consideration of approval of Meeting Summary for April 8, 2011 Meeting:** The Meeting Summary for the April 8, 2011 meeting was approved.
- III. **Discussion of the Coordinating Board staff presentation of low-producing programs data:**  
Dr. Stephenson began the discussion by relating the proposed increase in the Low-Producing Programs productivity thresholds, including their recent deferral until a later Board meeting. Dr. Lemoine laid out the data used in determining the staff recommendation. The advisory committee members were charged to discuss the proposed threshold changes, and invited to make recommendations regarding their implementation.
- IV. **Small group discussion of changes to proposed low-producing program thresholds and possible effective dates for such changes:** The committee members divided into four groups, and invited guests in attendance to join the discussion.
- V. **Discussion of the feedback from small groups by committee as a whole:** The four groups reported the results of their discussions. The reports were presented by David Billeaux (Group 1); Rex Peebles (Group 2); Terry Walch (Group 3); and Larry Abraham (Group 4). A summary of each group's conclusions is attached.
- VI. **Consideration of recommendations, if any, for changes to the proposed low-producing program thresholds:** Two motions were made. The first was proposed by Jeff Schonberg and seconded by Rueben Walter:

Accept the proposed increase in the threshold for AAS and baccalaureate degree programs, but delay implementation of the increased threshold for all programs until FY 2019, starting to count graduates in FY 2014.

Larry Abraham moved to table the motion until the threshold question is resolved, but there was no second, so the motion failed; Rueben Walter subsequently withdrew second for the original motion, and no other second was forthcoming, so the motion failed for lack of a second.

The second motion was made by Larry Abraham and seconded by David Billeaux:

Thresholds should be established in spring 2014 and implemented beginning in FY 2019. A committee or task force should spend the next two years studying the effects of the FY 11 and FY 12 LPP process, in order to determine the appropriate threshold levels and rules regarding exemptions.

This motion passed with 7 ayes, 3 nays, and 2 abstentions.

- VII. **Consideration of recommendations, if any, for the implementation of changes to the proposed low-producing program thresholds:** This agenda item was considered simultaneously with the discussion of Agenda Item VI., and the recommendation covered both agenda items.
- VIII. **Next meeting date and adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm. O date has been set for the next meeting of the advisory committee.

UEAC 3-30-12 Discussion Questions:

- Should the current thresholds be raised? If so, what new thresholds should be considered?
- If new thresholds are raised, when should the change be implemented?
- How should exemptions or exceptions be handled? What special circumstances should be considered?

Motion: Accept the proposed increase in the threshold for AAS and baccalaureate degree programs, but delay implementation of the increased threshold for all programs until FY 2019, starting to count graduates in FY 2014. (JS moved; RW seconded; LA moved to table the motion until the threshold question is resolved, no second, failed; RW withdrew second, no other second; motion failed for lack of a second)

Motion: Thresholds should be established in spring 2014 and implemented beginning in FY 2019. A committee or task force should spend the next two years studying the effects of the FY 11 and FY 12 LPP process, in order to determine the appropriate threshold levels and rules regarding exemptions. (LA moved, DB seconded, MOTION PASSED)

Aye: 7

Nay: 3

Abstentions: 2

UEAC 3-30-12

Group 1: (David Billeaux) Some common concerns, some different perspectives, not a lot of concern with increasing thresholds. Incentive to recruit and improve is useful. If we are given five years (until 2017) to start new thresholds, that's OK.

Exemptions may be too narrow. Take into consideration "institutional context." Decisions about maintaining some LPPs in context may be valuable to inst. Balance efficiencies among programs. Not always clear about what a temporary exemption means. In critical programs or questions of access (isolated locations), may need to have a long-term temporary exclusion with a periodic review, encouraging recruitment, but allowing institution to make some decisions about how to organize its own house. Some regional institutions were established to provide access – it's a part of the mission. They were not established to be "revenue generators," but to provide access, so balancing those parts of a mission is important. Institutions should find ways to increase enrollments in current LPPs, think about exemptions and criticality of programs. What programs are essential to "be a university" – even if they are LPP – due to location? Clarify and extend exemption categories, more detail.

Group 2: (Rex Peebles) Regarding thresholds, consensus of group was that the new numbers would be OK, but one group member disagreed. Timing was also an issue. Rather than use FY 2017, FY 2018 would be preferable, considering when this might go to the Board. Most discussion revolved around exemptions, criteria that might be used to grant exemptions. Difference between 2 and 4 year exemption, suggestion to look at length of exemption. Maybe go to a 5-year exemption across the board. (KL explained that there is a statutory requirement to review programs every 4 years.) Different exemption periods based on degree level? Time to degree considerations for degree levels. Two years is not a very long time to turn things around.

Criteria for granting exemptions? Efficiency – focus is currently on short-term efficiency, but education is a capital investment in human beings, a long-term investment. Keep in mind that efficiency is necessary, but we need to spend wisely and pay attention to long-term strategy. Payoff comes in the future, not immediately. Exemptions: look at region/location. I-35/45 corridor, many institutions, more options for students, and more students in general. West TX and Panhandle, more geographic spread, so an exemption might be appropriate for them. Institutions in remote areas serve a state need. Another consideration is the role of HBCUs and Hispanic-serving Institutions. They might need special consideration. (MS: Commissioner states that HBCUs and HSIs are not fulfilling their responsibilities to those special populations if they are not producing sufficient numbers of graduates. Cited Physics programs recently closed, and low numbers of graduates in the programs.) Loraine Phillips: IPEDS data for STEM degrees granted in two Texas HBCUs. One-third of STEM degrees granted to an African-American students came from one of those two HBCUs.

Importance of STEM degrees and critical fields – possibly receive special consideration for exemptions.

Group 3: (Terry Walch) Suggests a later start date. If new thresholds are adopted, wait to implement the thresholds until 2019. Exemptions: there are a number of additional factors that should be considered, including geographic location, workforce demands, mission of institutions, use of minor by students in other degree plans, consideration of efficiencies should not result in costs being passed on to students (i.e., students shouldn't have to relocate or possibly pay higher tuition if they must seek a degree plan at a different institution). Increasing the thresholds is premature, so waiting until after the two-year temporary exemptions can demonstrate whether improvements have resulted, and there is data to consider, might be a more appropriate time. CC workforce programs see students completing a

certificate but get hired before the complete their degree. If they go straight to the workforce, this should not disadvantage a program. (KL: We count all certificates awarded in the same CIP Code as the AAS, count them together.)

Group 4: (Larry Abraham) Many concerns have already been mentioned. High-need, high-demand in industry degree programs see students hired before they even complete their certificates. How does this affect data? High demand can actually harm the program if they are training and placing students quickly. Impact of closing programs (primarily at univs) where majority of teaching load is in service/core curriculum courses, having majors to teach and more advanced courses may affect ability to hire and retain faculty. Ditto for research-capable faculty.

How might this affect collaborative, cross-institutional programs? Each institution's graduates could look low unless they are accounted for collectively. (KL: We do consider that. MS: If it's a true joint program they are counted collectively.)

The group is reluctant to support increasing the thresholds at this time. If they are raised, raise them gradually, instead of one single step. Timing: 2019 would make a fairer opportunity for institutions choosing to respond to raising the thresholds by increasing program size to achieve those goals. Is the goal to have an incentive for programs to recruit more, or to weed out chronically under-performing programs? Institutions will respond by trying to increase enrollments, but they need a fair chance to do that.

Exceptions and exemptions: one-size-fits-all standards are problematic. Geographical location, institutional size, etc. should be considered. Could committees consider exemptions/exceptions more carefully? State has many priorities, STEM, minorities, etc., so one standard seems inappropriate. Too many special cases unless the criteria are more developed. Maintaining high-quality faculty in the core curriculum is important, as UEAC is well aware, and research-capable faculty teaching in all programs is also desirable.

Final recommendations: major purpose for raising/holding standards is efficiency. Should consider factors related to cost. Students who double-major should be counted in both programs, minors should be counted, these don't address efficiency issue, number of graduates, class size issue, etc. (MS: we did take these factors into account, CBM report has been redefined to count double-majors.) If these are regularly occurring events, there should not be continuing review. (MS: Programs must be reviewed every four years)

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Discussion: getting/keeping quality faculty if there is not a degree program. Faculty may be less well-qualified if there is not a degree program. Difference between research institutions' expectations for faculty, and faculty at non-research (regional) institutions. Are "lesser-qualified" faculty better or worse at teaching? Difficult to determine. Qualifications don't always speak to quality of teaching. How would this be defined as a criterion? How many service courses are taught by non-tenure-track/part-time faculty? What does it take to attract highly-qualified faculty?

Institutional mission is difficult to measure, but every institution must provide a list of small classes. What is the proportional rate of small classes? Should a percentage of small classes be allowed within the institutional context (a relatively low number)?

Student perspective: What the numbers don't show, models fail to realize, is the real impact on students. Choice and access affect the opportunities afforded to students, having an effect in their personal and professional life. (MS: Access must be taking into consideration. In looking at that, the opportunity to have high-quality, competitive programs. Do we provide access, or concentrate resources for quality? There is a trade-off. Raising quality of remaining programs gives students access to a higher-quality program, rather than more access to programs that may not be as high-quality.)

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RP Proposal: There isn't a lot of consternation about raising thresholds *qua* thresholds, nor timing of implementation. But there is concern about the criteria for exemptions. A two-year delay is warranted: apply new thresholds beginning in FY 2019. Meanwhile, have someone/committees look at criteria for exemptions: institutional missions, location/region, standardize exemption at four years.

Robert A: Discuss different exemption lengths for 2-year and 4-year degree programs?