

University Curriculum Committee Meeting
Meeting #16, March 4, 2024

Members (those present in bold; * indicates a voting member):

Dave Paul, Chair*
Dean Panttaja
Francesca Sammarruca
Erin James*
Stacy Isenbarger*
Stacey Doumit*
Magdy Noguera*
Kyle Howerton*
Steve Shook*
Erkan Buzbas*
Emad Kassem*
Jerry Long*
Hanwen Dong*
Lindsey Brown
Emma Johnston*
Nate Trachimowicz
Gwen Gorzelsky

Guests present: Ken Udas, Jean-Marc Gauthier, and Mark Nielsen

- I. Chair Dave Paul called the meeting to order at 3:30.
- II. Announcements and Communications
- III. New Business
 - a. Discussion on Admission Standards

Chair Dave Paul summarized that the previous history of the discussion by explaining that prior to COVID, any student with a 3.0 GPA or higher was immediately accepted to the university, while students with a lower GPA would require a combination of GPA and a sufficient ACT/SAT test score. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the standards were lowered to allow for immediate acceptance for a 2.8 GPA, and the test scores required for students with lower GPAs also decreased. The discussion was on whether the post-COVID requirements should remain in place or whether the university should return to the requirements from before the COVID-19 pandemic. This discussion would also entail deciding whether ISAT test scores could be accepted instead of SAT/ACT scores.

Dave continued by saying that after reviewing the institutional data on admissions, he couldn't see a large difference created by changing the standards, and he added that it could be due to other factors caused by the pandemic. He also added that there's no institutional research on the ISAT and how it equates to other tests like ACT or SAT.

Jean-Marc Gauthier showed data collected from 2019 that illustrated the significance in admission numbers when using GPA and ISAT scores vs GPA or ISAT scores. He added that the numbers concerned thousands of students, so the impact of whatever was decided wouldn't be negligible. He further explained that there was likely not going to be a loss of enrollment by maintaining the 2.8 immediate admission's standards, but there could be a decrease with a return to the 3.0 standard.

Jerry Long pointed out that the data illustrated in the PowerPoint presented by Jean-Marc Gauthier could have other causes or be impacted by other factors, such as how many students applied for college that year. Thus, more information and data would be helpful in clarifying the additional factors at play.

Jean-Marc Gauthier added that through research, it appears that the ISAT is a better metric in terms of reducing gender, economic status, and race discrimination than the SAT.

Dave asked if the state would mandate the use of the ISAT in admission standards, and Jean-Marc said that it would be up to the university to decide.

Magdy Noguera asked what the ISAT was, and Jean-Marc explained that it is the Idaho SAT. It was created because of criticisms of the cost of SAT tests and criticism that the SAT functions as a business. He also explained that the ISAT would create more localized statistics than the SAT or ACT, which are used to compare a student to national averages. Magdy noted that this meant that some students, such as international students or students from other states, wouldn't be able to use the ISAT as a measure for admission.

Jean-Marc said that adding the ISAT could be useful if the state implements it more in the future, and Dave noted that Steve Shook had shared that 97% of students submitted SAT scores in the last year because taking the test is currently free to Idaho students.

Francesca Sammaruca asked what the solution was for students from out of state, and Jean-Marc explained that these students can still submit SAT scores.

Steve Shook said that he reviewed previous catalogs back through 1998 and the admissions standards had never changed until the COVID-19 pandemic. He also said that he would be fine with adding the ISAT option, but he'd like to see more data on the score correlation between the ISAT and the SAT.

Stacey Doumit said that she didn't think keeping the lowered admission standards was a helpful practice in raising retention or graduation rates. Jean-Marc pointed out that the student population was estimated to drop in 2026, so maintaining the 2.8 GPA admission standards may be putting the college ahead of other colleges that may change their standards later due to the student drop.

Jerry Long said that the people who gave Jean-Marc the admission data should have come to UCC directly, and Jean-Marc said that it was an intentional choice to not skew the committee's perspective and that they wanted a faculty member to represent them. Jerry also pointed out that due to grade inflation, admission standards should go up instead of staying maintained at the lowered COVID admission standards. He continued by saying that if the financial gain was the only motivating factor, the university would drop the standards completely and accept all students, no matter their potential ability to success, which would be immoral. Steve agreed with this statement.

Stacy Isenbarger said that, looking at it from another side, she was still seeing students who had potential and would be great students, but they needed extra leniency getting in due to the impacts of COVID on their high school experience and adjusting to being in college. Thus, she was okay with keeping the post-COVID standards for another two years before returning to the former admission standards. She also noted that the SAT doesn't grade students in her discipline well, so the GPA is a better way for students in that discipline to be accepted into the university.

Magdy said that because school finances can be a hardship for students, it may not be fair to economically disadvantaged students who are accepted based on lowered standards if they aren't ready for a college learning environment. She also noted that the recently released success initiative noted that the goal was to increase graduation rates from 61% to 77%, and admitting students who have a lowered chance of graduating wouldn't help the university reach that goal.

Stacy Isenbarger suggested adding a fourth group for admission (adding ISAT standards in addition to SAT standards) rather than replacing any tests, which would be beneficial for students if the ISAT is implemented in Idaho high schools. Steve said he would support that if institutional data on the ISAT was available.

Francesca asked Jean-Marc if he knew how the correlation was made between the suggested ISAT admission standard and the SAT score. He said that it was made to be as comparable for out-of-state students as possible.

Stacy Isenbarger suggested requesting additional information on the ISAT if the committee decided to go back to pre-COVID admission standards to potentially add it as a fourth column, especially while there was greater interest and attention on the issue.

After a short discussion, the committee voted unanimously to return to pre-COVID standards. Dave agreed with Stacy's point and added that with institutional research on the ISAT, the committee would be willing to consider adding it in the future.

IV. Chair Dave Paul closed the meeting at 4:25 pm.

Sydney Beal
UCC Secretary