

University Curriculum Committee Meeting

Meeting #20, April 8, 2024

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

Dave Paul, Chair*

Dean Pantaja

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: Rebecca Frost, Ted Unzicker, Ken Udas, Dean Kahler, Jean-Marc Gauthier, Diane Whitney, Charles Tibbals, Barb Kirchmeier, Torrey Lawrence, Indrajit Charit, Cari Fealy, Cate Collins, Mark Nielsen, Jessica Eby, Sara Scudder, and Alison Henken

- I. Chair Dave Paul called the meeting to order at 3:45 pm.
- II. Announcements and Communications
 - a. Jerry Long had requested the committee discuss certificate requirements, and Dave had some Vandal Gateway questions, but he planned to discuss these points after the agenda had been completed. Due to some needed discussions on these and other issues and a couple last-minute curriculum changes, the committee planned to meet once more before closing for the year.
- III. Old Business

ISAT Admission Standards Discussion

Cate Collins, Jessica Eby, Sara Scudder, and Alison Henken joined UCC from the state to provide more information on the ISAT test. Jessica explained that direct admissions is a tool that proactively admits Idaho students into a list of public colleges based on their high school GPA and tests scores. She added that the requirements have changed over the years, such as when tests scores were removed as a requirement during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, having direct admissions doesn't remove the need for the U of I's admissions process: rather, she explained, it could be seen more as a "fast pass" that enables students to be accepted automatically by the state due to the standards that U of I have given as criteria.

Cate explained that the state no longer requires students to have taken the SAT, but one of the requirements to graduate high school does include taking the ISAT. By using the ISAT in college admission standards, it allows for a more holistic view of a student's ability to succeed in college.

The ISAT, Alison explained, was created by Smarter Balanced because Idaho is part of the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium and has been since it first began. She said the test's purpose is for states to give the highest quality test for the most reasonable price while allowing for the best accommodations for students with additional needs. It was originally designed for 11th graders, but it was then revised for 10th graders, but it had now been reverted to being most appropriate for 11th graders. She further explained that the test was "the best on the market" because there isn't another assessment test that has demonstrated a higher level of quality, citing the ease and quickness by which the ISAT based the federal peer review process compared to other assessments.

Referring to the 10th to 11th grade change, Stacy Isenbarger asked how the value of the test could remain the same if the language arts portion hadn't changed during this process as Alison had previously explained. Alison explained that Common Core standards were set up to be evaluated at the high school level, not individual high school grades, which impacted the test because the ISAT is based on these standards. Additionally, this revision process was more a matter of flagging questions depending on grade level (e.g. a question may be more advanced than grade level for a 10th grader, but at grade level for an 11th grader).

Erin James asked for more information on the difference in purposes of the ISAT vs the SAT vs the ACT. Alison explained that the ISAT evaluates based on established Common Core education standards. The ISAT has two main parts: one that utilizes short answers, multiple choice, multi-select question, etc. with that portion of the test getting easier or harder to best gauge a student's ability, and the second part is a larger project with a format that's dependent on the main subject (language arts or math). In contrast, the SAT and ACT were purely designed as college entrance exams, and they're more "normatively based." However, in their research, they've found that the ISAT provides the same level of assessment in terms of college success as the SAT or ACT, even though that was not the original intent.

Dave requested to see the information gathered on the ISAT in terms of comparison with the SAT and ACT and how well it predicts college success. Before showing the collected data, Cate said she wanted to clarify that they had found that GPA was one of the best predictors of student success, so this test would be in conjunction with a student's GPA, not in replacement of it. Jerry Long pointed out that the proposed admission standards included having a 3.0 GPA or a level 3 proficiency in math and literacy and asked what a level 3 meant. Alison explained that a 3 means that a student is proficient in that subject at a high school level. This, she continued, isn't an easy mark to hit, with 65% of students reaching a score of 3 or above in language arts and 35% of students reaching a score of 3 or above in math.

Jerry also asked for more information on other states using this test, and Alison explained that many other states are exploring the possibility of using this test—with South Dakota already using it as part of their admission standards—but Idaho would be the first state to use it as part of the direct admission process.

Cate pulled up some charts to illustrate the collected data. They showed the correlation between the ISAT and the student Fall-Immediate College Go On rate.

Erin asked how a test that calculates how well a student is meeting high school standards gives more information than a GPA and how it is a good gauge of college readiness. Referencing a chart, Cate pointed out that some students that did not do well on the ISAT may have 4.0 GPAs. This could mean that a student isn't ready for college, so using the ISAT could have a college gauge their readiness. Erin then asked if there were charts that compared SAT and ACT scores, and Cate said that because the state would no longer be paying for students to take the SAT, they couldn't use it in their data for direct admissions because it won't be a helpful tool in analyzing future data since many incoming students won't have it.

Dave asked about students that didn't have a GPA above a 3.0, but that could be accepted by direct admission on their ISAT scores alone, and how comparable these standards are. Cate explained that most students had both. For those that don't, they're what are often called the "diamonds in the rough" because the test indicates their proficiency in the subject matter. Alison added that she'd often heard that these were students who either didn't apply themselves in high school or students who had other things come up, such as becoming ill or experiencing something substantial in their families, while in high school.

Dave also asked how this would impact a student's motivation to do well on the test. Alison explained that there's already incentives in place for high schools to encourage their students to do well, and they've already heard that students are taking it more seriously due to even the possibility that the test could impact their college admissions. Steve Shook asked if that meant that she expected scores to increase, and she said she did, though she couldn't predict by how much.

Steve also asked why the ISAT score wasn't one sum like the ACT or SAT score. Alison explained that the test scales weren't compatible in that way because they were designed to be individual scores.

Cate showed a graph that illustrated how a student's first year college GPA aligned with their test scores and GPA, noting the strong correlation.

Francesca Sammarruca asked why an "or" was used (a 3.0 GPA or a 3 in the ISAT's language arts and math tests), and Cate explained that only 34% of students met both of those criteria, and most schools decided that was a narrower field than they wanted.

Erin asked what the consequences would be if U of I didn't adopt the ISAT in its admission standards. Cate explained that since it is a statewide initiative, all schools must agree with using the ISAT. Otherwise, it will go back to being GPA only. Alison reiterated that this would only be for direct admittance, and the university could choose other standards to use for their regular admission process.

Admission Standards Discussion

Torrey Lawrence expressed concern about U of I not being included in the direct admission process because it reaches many potential students. Jerry said that they'd said that either everyone came to a consensus, or it didn't happen, though he said that clarification didn't mean he was for or against it. Many committee members expressed their approval of using the ISAT for direct admission. Stacy Isenbarger pointed out that this would be a good tool for high school students and may provide a better measure of a student's success in her college.

After a brief discussion, the committee voted unanimously for the following standards:

1. Students with a high school GPA of ≥ 3.0 or ISAT Math level ≥ 3 and ELA/Literacy level ≥ 3 will be directly admitted.
2. Students with a high school GPA of 2.60-2.99 will require a minimum of 740 SAT Verbal + Math or 15 ACT scores.
Note: Students that do not meet the required 740 SAT or 15 ACT score or do not have a test score would need to go through the Admissions Committee.
3. Students with a high school GPA of 2.30-2.59 will be admitted to the Vandal Gateway Program regardless of test scores.
4. Students with a high school GPA of <2.30 can appeal to the Admissions Committee.

IV. Chair Dave Paul closed the meeting at 5:14 pm.

Sydney Beal
UCC Secretary