Student Relations Advisory Committee
Minutes
January 9, 2009

Present: Chair Koopmann, Beverly Fauman, Karl-Georg Federhofer, Annette Haines, E. Royster Harper, Leo McAfee, David Potter, Ian Margolis, Karin Teske (Student Support)

Guests: India Plough, Language Assessment Specialist, English Language Inst., LSA; Paula Trial, Academic Program Office, LS&A Dean’s Office

Sandy Dunn, Director, Residency Office
Debra Kowich, Assistant General Counsel

The meeting was called to order at 12:02pm

1) Chair Remarks

Chair Koopmann clarified from last meeting that no formal actions were taken, but suggestions that came up from the student panel from last meeting should be followed up on next year to see if anything has improved.

Any ideas from the committee for topics towards the end of the semester are welcomed to fill the open dates- please email Simone Himbeault Taylor or Chair Koopmann.

Question about students on academic probation and study abroad eligibility over winter break may be better addressed by the Academic Advisory Affairs Committee or to go through the provost.

2) VPSA Remarks

(Will be addressed at the end of the meeting)

3) GSI English as a Second Language Skills

The 2002 Office of the Provost task force on testing and training prospective GSIs issued five recommendations:

1) Establish procedures for ongoing evaluation of GSI testing and training programs
2) Expand and improve GSI training programs so that all units have a minimum of four hours of pedagogical training
3) Without discriminating on the basis of citizenship, identify which graduate students require testing and training for English language classroom competency.
4) Establish equitable and adequate preteaching training for all GSIs
5) Establish equitable and adequate monitoring, mentoring, and ongoing training for all GSIs while they are teaching.

-Previously, country of origin determined whether you would be tested for English competency; for example if a student is from Australia no training is required. This was determined to be a discriminatory selection method.
Currently, undergraduate degree determines if require training; if student attended a university outside US, and if media of instructed was not in English, then students must be trained and tested for English language skills. If the media of instruction at their undergraduate university was English, no testing would be required.

- Rackham provides a list of students who need further training; students who attend U.S schools are exempt; non U.S. schools but whose programs are taught in English also exempted; 3rd category of students go on for testing and training; department nominates those students; 3 week training for LSA in August for 1st year 1st term, or a winter course for 2nd semester

- If a student has 4 rating or above out of 5 point scale for English speaking and comprehension ability, can go on to be a GSI assigned.

- Students who don’t pass with a 4 or above are not allowed to have assignments; department asked to fund that student for a year to be re-tested so they are not left out to dry.

- Students may be tutored that year, there is an effort to improve English while they are here

- Requirement that student has funds to support themselves for a year- sometimes those funds were b/c they were assumed to have a GSI appointment; if student fails, don’t get GSI support but get minimum requirement for them to stay in the country.

- Departments often put student on fellowship, or have them do grading but no instruction

   **A student who graduated from an English speaking university may be able to comprehend English, but how do we verify that they can speak it clearly?**

   4 years instruction in English does not ensure spoken ability; however previous to 2002 all non-U.S. students were tested; 97% who attended an all-English taught school passed the test so it is considered sufficient

-Efforts are being made to get requirement out to all departments;
-Currently not all departments are getting their students tested;
-Some departments are unaware of the testing requirement
-Provost office should disseminate this requirement

69% of UM grad students are native English speakers; 31% are non-native English speakers

77% of GSIs are English medium while 23% of GSIs should be taking an Oral English Test.

**The Oral English Test**

-developed 20 years ago and is constantly revised. The UM test is one of the best compared to other schools.

-Three evaluators are used: 2 ELI testing staff, one senior and one junior staff member; as well as 1 faculty representative from the department where the GSI may be working.
- Scores are based on the consensus of the three evaluators
- Tasks designed to reflect what GSI will do in their appointment, but does not assess their teaching ability, only their language ability

  First task:
  put GSI at ease thru a general interview; assesses interactional discourse ability; small talk, etc.
  get students talking about a familiar topic to put them at ease

  Second task:
  student chooses a topic and gives a lesson presentation; can prepare in advance; evaluators act as undergrads to interrupt and answer questions; looking at transactional language use- can they get information across?; sequential organizers, use of sentence connectors; first, second, third, therefore, because, etc. some eastern languages have different organization; want to make sure they can adapt western style.

  Third task:
  office hour role play; junior staff member plays role of a student; looking at interactional ability

  Fourth Task
  10 minimally contextualized questions given by video of actual undergrads in classroom setting; GSI responds directly to the video monitor; looking at listening comprehension and pragmatic competence.

  - Strongest predictor of language approval is often transactional/ interactional language, pronunciation.
  Poor performance on a single task does not necessarily mean failure of the entire test.

  - Approval rate is 75%; for 2008 and is consistent from year to year
    * Engineering often higher in approval rate; typically college of engineering does not test students right away, GSRA’s first, then GSI testing the next year

  - A student can retest but must show in between they did formal work to improve language ability

  - Test also serves as diagnostic; pronunciation course gets highest recommended enrollment, GSI counselor will arrange something with the department, unapproved GSI can shadow a GSI

    How does students performance in class relate to GSI English speaking ability?

    Students claim that their GSI’s inability to speak clearly caused their poor grade; most likely it was the difficulty of the class

    Students should be taught that communication is a two way street; they need to be proactive in communicating with their instructors; it is beneficial for a young person to be exposed to different speaking styles that they will encounter in the real world.
Address student awareness of GSI position; Promotion at MSA, or general meetings to speak about it; the Daily would cover guest speakers; help to dispel rumors that there is a limit to the number of times a prospective GSI can take the OET. Additionally, it is important for the departments to know the rules for their GSIs.

4) Residency requirements:

Residency at UM criteria established by board of regents

Residency guidelines apply to students on all 3 campuses; 3 areas of university to confirm students are attending the University under correct classification

-Admissions office looking at application; can notify student to file application to verify their residency status if some information on their application points to out-of-state activity.

-Residency office processes applications, provides audits

-Appeal committee established by regents to review decisions made in residency office by student request

-Residency office- 4 staff members handling 2,000 residency applications over a calendar year; also responsible for audits and question answering

  how does the office verify if a student says they’ve been living at an address in Michigan?

-First hurdle is admissions office; also will look at high school or college attendance; also asks parental info, job history, etc.

-if student claims to be a Michigan resident but admissions see out of state activity, the application is flagged, a letter is generated the student which requests file of an application for resident classification; often students ignore the letter which can cause incorrect tuition bills come the beginning of the semester which must be sorted out.

-internal audits of the system allow for internal verification-can be approved with just a phone call to help alleviate false flags of individuals who obviously qualify as residents

-80% of applicants which are flagged by the admissions office and are reviewed by the residency office are granted residency status.

There was some concern by the committee about the timing of the letter to students, and when their bills are due:

  given how we’ve changed the date around tuition, is there any validity in adjusting the deadline for residency?

For other reasons, the push is to stretch deadline deeper into term; for fall term can file as late as December; in that letter generated by admissions office for flagged application, add something to say “please get information to us as soon as possible”
Undergraduate letter does say ASAP and this affects admissions and financial aid; on website declares processing can take up to 3 months;

Some students in that situation want to know in May whether or not they will have instate tuition; moving back filing date may not be in the correct direction; fundamental decision of attendance for some is whether student will be paying in or out of state tuition

Letter which go out as soon as student applies that says you need to determine your residency status; for the high school senior applying in the fall and waiting to hear; if take message seriously would already have decision on residency status for next fall;

Significant savings in tuition is at stake, and people have become very creative to lie; that is why verification is important.

Thank you to the guest speakers.

**VPSA Remarks**
December 2008 Minutes approved unanimously 1:22pm

Meeting was adjourned at 1:24pm

Submitted by:

Karin Teske

SACUA Student Support