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University of Minnesota, Morris Scholastic Committee
Meeting #11, November 23, 2010

The Scholastic Committee met at 9:00 on Tuesday, November 23, in Behmler 130.

Present: J Goodnough (Chair), E Christensen, C Dingley, S Haugen, A Helgerson, H Ladner, L Ranelli, J Ratliff-Crain, J Richards, D Stewart
Guest: C Contant, Dean

1. The Minutes of November 17 were approved.
2. Report from the chair
 - If no petitions are received by Wednesday, the meeting on December 1 will be canceled.
 - If no data is received from Admissions, the meeting on December 7 will be canceled.
 - The Chair visited the Humanities Division to talk about Academic Integrity and on-line translators.
3. Petition 1195: Waive the Sci-L requirement based on meeting the spirit of the requirement, on hardship, and on institutional responsibility. **Approved.**
4. Discussion of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score. The first time the UMM Catalog included a recommended IELTS score for international student admission was fall 2009. Although no paper trail was found, it was most likely submitted by the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment, who had responsibility for the catalog page where it appeared. Before fall 2009 the only score required from students applying from outside the United States was from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): at UMM, the minimum expected is 550 paper, 213 computer, or 79 Internet-based. TOEFL has a long history, changes to the scores along with explanations are communicated to users, but it is not easily available in some foreign countries. IELTS is new in the last 10 years and is easily accessible. To date there is no proven concordance table between TOEFL/IELTS. There are two options:
 1. If a minimum IELTS score is going to appear in the catalog, the campus needs to follow a process to set the number. It is unlikely we could meet the publishing deadline for the 2011 catalog.
 2. Remove the IELTS information from the current catalog.

If we remove the information, how will Admissions make decisions on international student admission? We have tripled the number of students from China this year, and officials there are processing three to four times the former number of applications. The economic climate in China is good, students are allowed to study abroad because the opportunity there pulls them back when their degree is completed.

The score that was published was 6, but a transfer agreement with Shanghai University of Finance and Economics uses the score of 5.5 UMTC uses a score of 6.5. How do the scores compare in predicting success? Data on cohorts is being collected to address this question. Some guide to English language proficiency is needed. Students will look at the TOEFL score for admission requirements.

The Dean's experience with graduate student admissions was that most schools do not set minimums, for numerous reasons: test anxiety, tests can be culturally biased, exceptions are readily available anyway. Scores alone do not really measure potential.

High school transcripts provide a measure of performance, and college preparation requirements, such as four years of math, tend to measure potential and motivation for success in college. Unlike domestic student application materials, all we have to use for international student admission is the score. We need conversations about expanding international application materials.

Consensus was to remove the IELTS score from the catalog. It should be removed from the admissions web page, as well. However, there is a danger of admission with no scores. The standard needs to be universal.

The recommendation was made to consult SCEP minutes for any policies concerning minimum TOEFL score requirements. [A search was performed and an email conversation with Gary Engstrand revealed no such discussion in SCEP back to 1991.] Other schools do set score levels, and our students may attend them via NSE or other programs. We must consider the UMM resources necessary to bring us to the needed level of support for our international students. Remember that international students impact graduation and retention rates.

The UMM Constitution empowers the Scholastic Committee "to admit students;" research of IELTS and scores will be undertaken during spring semester 2011. Do we want to set minimum scores for admission or to establish guidelines? We can finesse the question by describing the typical student as having scores of x, y, z, etc. We do not wish to re-invent the wheel; if we can piggyback with something that is working, great. If not, we can modify or create, if necessary.

Submitted by Dorothy De Jager