

GEORGE HANSON, Director
Basic Writing Office

PROFESSOR ERIC VAN YOUNG, Interim Dean
Division of Arts and Humanities

SUBJECT: Review of English as a Second Language (ESL) Instruction at Mesa College for UCSD Students

In 2004, the Committee on Preparatory Education (COPE) approved a new program that eliminated ESL courses on campus and directed students to Mesa College course SDCC 4 for ESL instruction. At that time, the Committee also determined that baccalaureate credit was inappropriate for ESL coursework and that students should receive workload credit only for SDCC 4; this was necessary in order to bring the campus into compliance with Senate Regulation 761 – Remedial Courses.

Since then, the Committee has spent considerable time reviewing the ESL instruction UCSD students are receiving in SDCC 4 and how well it prepares students to pass the Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR). The attached report concludes our review of this trial program. In summary, the Committee found no evidence that the new program has resulted in a decrease in the quality of ESL instruction for UCSD students or that it hinders student efforts to satisfy the ELWR. In fact, SDCC 4 students taking the exit exam fulfill the ELWR in less time than it would have taken them before. Given such results, we see no reason to change the way UCSD students receive necessary ESL instruction and do not recommend any changes to the structure of SDCC 4.

You will note that the Committee intends to continue to review how students satisfy the ELWR at UCSD, and for this, we will need further assistance from the Basic Writing Office. Please see the recommendations on page six of the report. It is critical that the Committee have access to this information. If you have any questions about this, please contact me.

In its June 3, 2004 memo the Committee stipulated the terms on which SDCC 4 was to be offered. These included:

- The course will receive four units of workload credit only.
- The course must include at least fifty hours of instruction per quarter.
- Class size shall not exceed fifteen students.

These stipulations remain in effect. We have instructed the Office of the Registrar that no changes to the SDCC 4 courses may be made without this Committee's explicit authorization. If you find that you would like to change any element of this course, please do so by submitting a proposal to the Committee.

Thank you for assisting the Committee throughout its review of the trial program.

Melissa Famulari, Chair
Committee on Preparatory Education

cc: M. Brown C. Lyons B. Sawrey
D. Donoghue J. Posakony
D. Hamann R. Ready

May 28, 2008

TO: COPE Members
From: Melissa Famulari, Chair of COPE
RE: Evaluation of the 2004-2007 pilot to have Mesa College teach basic writing to UCSD students who have English as a second language.

Three changes to UCSD's English as a Second Language (ESL) program occurred in 2004.

- ESL classes (SDCC 4) are taught at Mesa College as opposed to at UCSD. Note that the Basic Writing class (SDCC 1) has been taught at Mesa College since the late 1980's.
- Students designated as ESL are allowed to take the exit exam and pass UCSD's Entry Level Writing Requirement after SDCC4. Prior to 2004, students designated as ESL generally had to take both SDCC4 and SDCC 1 before they were allowed to take the exit exam.
- The grading option for ESL classes changed from P/NP grades to letter grades.

Since all three changes occurred at the same time, it will not be possible to isolate the effects of moving ESL instruction to Mesa College by comparing student outcomes before and after 2004. Rather I analyze the effects of all three changes to the ESL program on ESL student academic outcomes. Below I discuss the student outcomes I analyze, the data used in the analysis, the results and offer concluding remarks.

I. Student outcomes examined.

1. Fraction of students that fulfill the University of California Entry Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) within one year and the fraction of students that fulfill the ELWR within two years.

The 2004 ESL policy changes may change the fraction of ESL designated students that eventually meet the ELWR and/or change the time it takes students to meet the ELWR requirement.

2. Change in score on an essay exam

All students take an essay exam, currently called the Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE), prior to being placed into either SDCC 1 or SDCC 4. Students who score a 6 or less and are designated as ESL on the placement exam must take and pass SDCC 4 before they take SDCC 1 unless he or she fulfills the ELWR in another manner (e.g., AP score of 3 or better, C or better in a college writing class prior to matriculation at UCSD).

At UCSD, this same exam must be retaken by the students before the ELWR can be fulfilled. If a student scores a 6 or more (note that the passing score on the exit exam is a 6 whereas a passing score on the placement test—the AWPE—is an 8) and passes her class, then she has fulfilled the ELWR and can proceed to take UCSD's college writing classes (DOC 2-3, HUM 1-2, WCWP 10A-B, MMW 2-3, CAT 2-3 or MCWP 40-50). At this point the essay exam is called the "exit exam". Prior to 2004, the exit exam was administered only to students who had taken SDCC 1 though, at the invitation of the ESL

director, a student could be administered the exit exam after SDCC 4. After 2004, all students taking either an SDCC 4 or SDCC 1 class are administered the exit exam.

The difference between the placement exam (AWPE) and the *first* time the student takes the exit exam (which may be after as few as one SDCC 4 class or as many as three SDCC 4 classes plus one SDCC 1 class) before and after 2004 is a measure of the effects of the 2004 changes to the ESL program.

3. Grade earned in SDCC 1 after taking one or more SDCC 4 classes.

Students typically take one or more SDCC 4 classes and then take one or more SDCC 1 classes. Another measure of the effects of the 2004 changes to the ESL program is the average grade of ESL designated students in SDCC 1.

4. For students that pass the ELWR, the grade in their first college writing class.

All UC students must pass two quarters of college writing before graduation. Each of UCSD's six colleges has a writing program and in each program there are two classes that are identified as fulfilling the college writing requirement. Another measure of the effects of the 2004 changes to the ESL program is the average ESL student's grades in UCSD's college writing classes.

II. Data

The data for UCSD's ESL designated students from 2002-2006 were provided by George Hanson, Director of UCSD's Basic Writing Program. I focus only on the students who were admitted in fall quarter and take an ESL class. These data include the student's AWPE score, years in the US, years in US schools, SAT writing or verbal scores, and for each ESL and basic writing class taken, the quarter taken, grade earned, score on the exit exam score, and whether the outcome was appealed by the student.

For 100 randomly selected ESL students from each of 2003 and 2005, I also obtained the student's major and, for each college writing class taken, the quarter taken and the grade in the class from TritonLink. If a student did not fulfill the ELWR, I also collected her GPA at UCSD. I chose 2003 and 2005 because (1) these are the years right before and right after the 2004 changes, (2) 2004 is the transition year and so the effects of the 2004 ESL changes may be less representative for this group of students (2) because average student writing ability (as measured by the fraction of students with an AWPE score of a 6) was the same in both years and (3) I did not want to use 2006 because these students are less likely to have taken their college writing classes at this point. Of note is that Revelle appears to be the only college that allows its college writing classes, HUM 1 and HUM 2, to be fulfilled at a community college.

III. Results

1. Passing the ELWR

Column 1 of Table 1 reports the number of students who took an ESL class in their first year at UCSD. Across the 5 years studied in this report, 2003 had the fewest and 2005 had the greatest number of ESL students with 120 and 246 students respectively. To assess the writing skills of the ESL students over 2002-2006, Column 2 of Table 1 reports the fraction of students earning a 6 on the AWPE essay, which is the highest score a student could earn and not fulfill the ELWR. AWPE scores for the ESL students thus

range from 1 to 6. In these data, approximately 40% of ESL students scored a 6 though a substantially higher fraction of ESL students entering in 2002 had a 6 score (57.3%).

In the last three columns of Table 1, I report the fraction of students fulfilling the ELWR in 1, 2 and 3 years. A substantially higher fraction of students fulfill the ELWR within one year in 2005 and 2006 which is not explained by higher writing ability of ESL students in those years (as measured by the fraction earning a 6 on the AWPE).

In Table 2, I report the fraction of ESL students taking 1, 2 or 3 ESL classes. Care must be taken when examining the data for 2006 because I did not have 2007 information for these students. Students appear to be taking fewer SDCC 4 and SDCC 1 basic writing classes in the more recent time periods than in the past.

Are there any significant difference across 2003 and 2005 ESL students? I find that the 2005 students take significantly fewer SDCC 4 and significantly fewer SDCC 1 classes. In fact, the total number of pre-collegiate writing classes taken is 3.09 on average for 2003 ESL students and is 2.26 for the 2005 ESL students and this difference of .83 of a class is statistically significant.

Both the fewer number of pre-collegiate writing classes and the greater numbers of students passing the ELWR within one year are likely to be attributable to the change in exit exam policy and not to the change in who teaches the ESL classes. Starting in 2004, students take the essay exam after SDCC 4. Prior to 2004, students were commonly able to take the exit exam only after first passing SDCC4 and then taking SDCC 1. Since students scoring a 6 on the AWPE do not need to improve their exit exam score to fulfill the ELWR, these students need only replicate her score on the exit exam to pass the ELWR. Therefore, the 2004 policy change on when the exit exam could be taken is both likely to reduce the number of classes taken and increase the fraction of students passing the ELWR within one year.

2. Grades in SDCC 1 and change in essay exam scores

Note that I only have a SDCC 1 class grade for students who actually take SDCC 1 and, from Table 2, I know that fewer students take SDCC 1 in later years and that these students are likely to be better writers than the average student designated as ESL. Few students withdraw from SDCC 1 but those that do I record as earning an F grade.

As illustrated in Column 5 of Table 2, the reduction in classes noted above does not appear to have harmed the student's performance, as measured by her grade in SDCC 1. The average grade assigned in SDCC 1 to ESL students is a 2.1. The one outlier is 2003 where the GPA is a 1.75.

For the random sample of 100 students from 2003 and 2005, I find that there are 76 students from 2005 who earned an average grade of a 2.0 in SDCC 1 while there are 86 students from 2003 who earned an average grade of a 1.83 in SDCC 1. The difference of +.17 is statistically significant at the 10% level¹. This result is surprising given the change in exit exam policy that occurred in 2004. We expect high

¹ In the full sample of 2003 and 2005 ESL students I also find this result: the mean basic writing grade is 1.8 and 2.1 for ESL students in 2003 and 2005 respectively and the difference of .30 is statistically significant at the 1% level.

ability ESL writers from 2005 to skip SDCC 1 entirely by passing the exit exam after taking SDCC 4 and so moving directly into the college writing program. This would leave a less able group of 2005 students to take SDCC 1 compared to 2003 where nearly all ESL students took SDCC 1. The significantly higher grades assigned in Mesa's SDCC 1 in 2005 suggests that Mesa's SDCC 4 classes are more effective at preparing students for Mesa's SDCC 1 class.

In Table 3, I examine the students who take at least SDCC 4 class but who do not take SDCC 1. Omitting 2006 from the comparison (because I only have one year of data for these students), it is clear that the reason for the increased fraction of students are that not taking SDCC 1 after 2004 is that more students have fulfilled the ELWR and moved directly to the college writing program and not because there is an increased number of dismissed students or students who have withdrawn from UCSD after 2004.

I next look at the change in the essay exam score (from the AWPE score to the *first* time the student takes the exit exam) in Tables 4 and 5. One limitation of this analysis is that the exit exam scores in spring quarter 2005 are only recorded as 4, 6, or 8. In all other quarters of data, the exit score data has more variation. A further limitation is that both the AWPE score and the exit exam score must be reported for me to examine the change in score and, particularly in later years, one or the other of these scores is frequently missing. I find that, on average, there is no change in the essay exam score and, if anything, the change in scores is higher for later years than for earlier years. Across 2003 and 2005, average AWPE scores are not significantly different while exit exams scores are on average significantly higher in 2005. Finally, the average difference in exit-APWE scores is +.77 significantly higher in 2005 than in 2003.

3. Grades in College Writing

Finally, I examined how a random sample of students from 2003 and from 2005 did in their college writing classes. First, I examined whether there were significant differences in the underlying writing ability of the random sample of ESL students I chose across the two years. In the 2003 sample, there are 96 students with an AWPE score and the average score across these students is 5.03. In the 2005 sample, there are 83 students with an AWPE score and the average score across these students is 5.11. The .08 difference in average AWPE scores across these two years is not statistically significant.

Second, I examined the grade the student earned in her *first* college writing class. In principle I could examine the average grades earned across the two college writing classes, except that several 2005 students have not yet completed the second class. Rather than drop these students from the analysis, I chose to simply focus on the grade in the first basic writing class. 77 of the 100 randomly selected ESL students from 2003 took a college writing class and earned an average grade of 2.61. In 2005, 78 of the randomly selected ESL students took a college writing class and earned an average grade of 2.55. The -.11 grade difference is not statistically significant.

IV. Conclusions

At least three changes occurred simultaneously in 2004: ESL classes are taught at Mesa College and not at UCSD, ESL classes now assign letter grades whereas before they were graded pass/fail, and students may take the exit exam and can pass the ELWR after taking an ESL class only. The combined effect of

these three changes on ESL student outcomes is primarily to reduce the number of ESL classes and basic writing classes taken by ESL students after 2004. I find little effect of the reduction in classes on either exit exam scores or on average grades in SDCC 1 and in the first college writing class. Thus, whether the goal of the UC ELWR is to improve student performance on the essay exam or to prepare students for collegiate writing, neither goal appears to have been significantly negatively impacted by the changes made to UCSD's ESL program in 2004.

There are several limitations to my analyses which were noted in the text. Most importantly, I only examine the college writing grades of the 2005 ESL students because many students from later cohorts have not yet taken a college writing class. Second, I chose 2003 as my key comparison year, but this was the last year that UCSD's ESL instructor taught at UCSD and so 2003 may not be representative of UCSD's pre-2004 ESL program². Third, changes in the essay exam score could not be calculated for many students in 2005 and 2006.

Nevertheless, it appears that ESL students are fulfilling the ELWR more quickly and with little cost in terms of reduced grades in either SDCC 1 or college writing classes. This could be because:

- high ability students do not benefit much by taking SDCC 4 and SDCC 1 and so letting these students into UCSD's college writing program more quickly does not lead to lower grades
- no student benefits much by taking SDCC 4 and SDCC 1 and so letting any student into UCSD's college writing program more quickly will not lead to lower grades.
- Mesa College's SDCC 4 classes are more effective at teaching writing skills than were the UCSD's ESL 10 classes

Distinguishing among these competing hypotheses is important for UCSD's ESL students but is not possible to do with these data.

² Mark Appelbaum gave me class and grade data on UCSD's freshman class of 2000. In these data there are 142 students who took at least one ESL class. The fraction of students with an AWPE score of 6 is 38.0% and I find no significant differences in the AWPE scores across 2000, 2003, and 2005 ESL students. 82.4% of ESL students from 2000 take SDCC 1. I find no significant differences in the number of SDCC 4 or SDCC 1 classes taken by ESL students in 2000 and 2003. However, I find that the total number of writing classes taken before a college writing class is significantly less in 2000 and 2003 than in 2005. Finally, I find no significant differences in grades in the first college writing class across 2000, 2003, and 2005. I should point out that in 2000 I did not use data from Warren College students because, at that time, Warren college graded on a P/NP basis. As a result, whether I use ESL students from 2000 or from 2003 as the pre-2004 cohort, my conclusions remain unchanged. One other fact of note is that 28 of the 142 ESL students from 2000, or 19.7% of students taking UCSD's ESL classes, had not graduated by 2006. For the freshman class of 2000, 16% did not graduate by 2006.

V. Recommendations

- UCSD continues the changes to the ESL program that were instituted in 2004.
- COPE examines the 2006 ESL student's college writing grades next year. It is clear that these students are taking fewer SDCC 4 and SDCC 1 classes. It is important to determine whether the small negative, but not statistically significant, difference in college grades found for the 2005 ESL students is representative of the effects of UCSD's 2004 ESL policy changes
- Basic Writing Program keeps careful records on the AWPE and the exit exam scores for each student. Exit exams scores continue to be graded from 1-12.
- UCSD conducts research to distinguish among the competing hypotheses to explain why the substantial reduction in SDCC 1 and SDCC 4 classes has had little effect on student grades in either the SDCC 1 or the college writing classes.

Table 1: UCSD Students Who Take SDCC 4

Quarter Admitted	# take >=1 SDCC 4 class	%AWPE Score=6	# met ELWR within 1 Yr	# met ELWR within 2 Yrs	# ELWR within 3 Yrs
Fall 02	214	57.3 (n=213)	126 (58.9%)	179 (84.0%)	192 (90.1%)
Fall 03	120	42.5	53 (44.2%)	91 (75.8%)	91 (75.8%)
Fall 04	181	39.8	79 (43.7%)	147 (81.2%)	147 (81.2%)
Fall 05	246	42.3	173 (70.3%)	217 (88.6%)	X
Fall 06	206	36.4	153 (74.3%)	X	X

Table 2: Number of SDCC 4 classes taken, number of students taking SDCC 1, and GPA earned in SDCC 1

Quarter Admitted	# take exactly 1 SDCC 4 Class	# take exactly 2 SDCC 4 Classes	# take exactly 3 SDCC 4 Classes	# take at least 1 SDCC 1 Class	GPA in 1st SDCC 1 Class (St. Dev)
Fall 02	103 (48.1%)	55 (25.7%)	55 (25.7%)	185 (86.4%)	2.13 (.62)
Fall 03	79 (65.8%)	12 (10.0%)	27 (22.5%)	104 (86.7%)	1.75 (.75)
Fall 04	87 (48.1%)	44 (24.3%)	50 (27.6%)	140 (77.3%)	1.94 (.67)
Fall 05	156 (63.4%)	89 (36.2%)	1 (0.4%)	187 (76.0%)	2.10 (.64)
*Fall 06	137 (66.5%)	46 (22.3%)	23 (11.2%)	116 (56.3%)	2.09 (.67)

*Note: Fall 06 results are after only one year while Fall 02-Fall 05 results are after at least two years.

Table 3: Those not taking SDCC 1 after taking SDCC 4

Quarter Admitted	# take at least one SDCC 4 class	No SDCC 1 class but ELWR Satisfied	No SDCC 1 class Dismissed, Withdrew or not clear
Fall 02	214	21 (9.8%)	8 (3.7%)
Fall 03	120	7 (5.8%)	9 (7.5%)
Fall 04	181	28 (15.5%)	13 (7.2%)
Fall 05	246	59 (24.0%)	10 (4.1%)
*Fall 06	206	60 (29.1%)	30(14.6%)

*Note: Fall 06 results are after only one year while Fall 02-Fall 05 results are after at least two years.

Table 4: Change in essay score: difference between AWPE Score and first exit exam score

Quarter Admitted	# with both AWPE & EXIT	AWPE Score (St. Dev)	Exit Score (St. Dev)	Exit-AWPE (St. Error)
Fall 02	181	5.34 (0.90)	5.14 (1.25)	-0.20** (0.10)
Fall 03	102	5.02 (1.12)	4.86 (1.27)	-0.16 (0.15)
Fall 04	125	5.07 (0.96)	4.98 (1.21)	-0.09 (0.13)
Fall 05	135	5.12 (0.92)	5.74 (1.12)	0.62** (0.12)
*Fall 06	114	5.10 (0.87)	5.16 (1.29)	0.06 (0.14)

*Note: Fall 06 results are after only one year while Fall 02-Fall 05 results are after at least two years.

Table 5: Change in Essay Scores after taking some remedial coursework

Difference (Exit-AWPE)	2003		2005	
-4	2	(2.0%)		
-2	24	(23.5%)	10	(7.0%)
-1	14	(13.7%)	15	(10.6%)
0	29	(28.4%)	54	(38.0%)
1	16	(15.7%)	25	(17.6%)
2	14	(13.7%)	25	(17.6%)
3	2	(2.0%)	11	(7.8%)
4	1	(1.0%)	2	(1.4%)

*Note: I have both AWPE and exit scores for 102 of the 120 ESL students in 2003 but only for 142 of the 246 ESL students in 2005. Further, for students taking the exit exam in Spring 05, the scores were only recorded as 4, 6, or 8.