

Minutes

ACADEMIC STANDARDS & EVENTS COMMITTEE

January 29, 1985

Present: B. Brothers, Chair; J. Conser, P. Munro, M. Robinson, D. Rost, J. Scriven, R. Tabak, G. Tribble, B. West

I. Minutes of January 22 were amended as follows:

Number IV., paragraph 2, will read "Yiannaki related some recommendations of Asst. Provost Scriven: 1) a review of GPA standards (NOTE: YSU athletes are required to have a minimum GPA of 2.0 after completion of 50 q.h.) and 2) ..."

Also the Motion of paragraph 3, Number III, was made by Tabak, not Munro.

II. Referring to Munro's motion of January 22 on commencement ceremonies, it was discussed as to what would be appropriate dates for December and June ceremonies. A decision could not be reached.

III. Regarding specific recommendations to address problems of students who are having academic difficulties, the following issues were identified:

1) Identify academically marginal students and assign them to specific advisors so that registration and add/drops can be validated.

2) Identify high-risk students before they are admitted into the University.
NOTE: Dr. Scriven will make available to the Committee suggested guidelines for interpreting ACT scores and Dr. Brothers will provide the same for the the English Placement Test (EPT) and the Nelson Denny reading test.

3) Possible restriction of students in the hours that they carry and also the courses that they register for. These students should make up all deficiencies and take courses that satisfy general requirements.

4) Recommend that academically weak students take English 520 (Basic Writing Workshop), 540 (Introductory College English) and/or Education 510 (Reading and Study Skills) before completion of 45 hours.

5) Insist that academically weak students retake, the following quarter, courses in which they have not earned a C or better.

6) Make better use of Summer Quarter for the high-risk students.

7) For a first suspension require a 2-quarter minimum suspension before reinstatement; for a second offense, a 5-year separation from the University. Any exceptions will require approval of the Provost.

8) Require high-risk students to come into the University with a "warning" status. Students could then be suspended at the end of 2 quarters if they are not in good standing.

IV. Brothers related some general observations of responses received from department advisors regarding courses that count toward general area requirements.

Submitted By:

J. Ellen Hall
Jo Ellen Hall, Sec.

cc: Dr. Gillis
Larry Esterly
✓ Maag Files

attachments 2

by William F. White

A College Program to Ameliorate Developmental Lag

Helping academically unprepared college students catch up is the goal of the program, and so far it's proving to be a success among students and faculty alike.

ONE OF THE SERIOUS ISSUES in higher education during the latter part of the 1970s that has continued with more emotion and intensity through the 1980s is the acceptance into colleges and universities numbers of students with marked developmental lag. In a large number of institutions in the country, students have entered colleges unprepared to read the texts used in freshman courses and unable to understand the abstract functioning demanded in science, mathematics, and English composition classes.¹ The problem is not new. In the late 1960s, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Act attempted to deal with the effects that poverty and cultural differences have on homes and schools. Very large numbers of students left high schools and yet could not write three lucid paragraphs. Colleges that had hitherto dealt only with highly able, motivated students began to accept nontraditional students, including those who were disadvantaged (many of whom were minorities), some handicapped students, larger numbers of women students, part-time students, and older sometimes elderly, students. The same curriculum was used for all. If students didn't measure up to the standards, they either dropped out, were dropped from the freshman rolls, or were moved to continuing education classes.

The contribution of economic factors and cultural environment to intellectual development is no longer disputed in scholarly discussions. When the home environment has been restricted or limited, children display limited perceptual discrimination. In economically deprived homes there are few adults who can be used as sources of information, corrective feedback, and stimulators of vision and future goal setting.² Children growing and developing in the restricted environment of poverty

seldom defer gratification. The primary motive is survival, and deferring reward or pleasure through sacrifice and education is very infrequent.³ Since highly verbal adult models are seldom found in deprived homes, the symbolic language-system of the children is limited. Because language is severely limited, information, concepts and abstractions are seldom observed or utilized.⁴

Language development, or lack of it, aptly describes developmental lag.⁵ Students from economically deprived environments have been found, consistently, to have difficulty in shifting, of their own volition, from the concrete to the abstract in their thought processes. The thinking of young students from economically deprived neighborhoods is rooted in the immediate and instinctual. The poverty of the language, or verbal ability, restricts the practice of thinking. Many factors contribute to this unfortunate outcome. Most deprived homes lack the large variety of objects, toys, pictures, newspapers, magazines, and books found in affluent homes. Travel away from home and exposure to other experiences is seldom, which can account for the severe restrictions in language acquisition among economically deprived children. The young child is not "read to" very much by adults. Auditory discrimination tends to be quite limited, and the child receives little feedback regarding enunciation, pronunciation, and grammar. The speech model provided by his or her parents is typically limited and bound up in a narrow range of experiences. New concepts and terms are largely acquired verbally, i.e., by definition and context from oral production and speech observed in the restricted opportunities of poverty, rather than by abstraction from the direct concrete experience. The individual growing and developing in a deprived neighborhood suffers from the scarcity of abstractions in the

everyday vocabulary of other adults and children. Further, the rarity of stimulating conversation in the home and at school, as well as the relative absence of reading matter, determine the level of thinking and speaking, and the performance of abstract functions.

It is well recognized in the literature that students emerging from economically deprived backgrounds have identifiable developmental lag. Many students are found to be deficient in range and precision of language and grammar. Articulation and communication are seriously

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defective. Retention and recall are rooted in the limited experiences of the individual. Students are impoverished in such language-related knowledge as number concepts, self-identity information, and understanding of the physical, geometric, and geographical environments.

Differences in language and conceptual measures also tend to increase with advancing age, thus demonstrating the cumulative effects of both an initial deficit in language development and continued environmental deprivation. Students with developmental lag respond more to the concrete images, the immediate, the present, the instinctual, and the particularized properties of objects, than to the abstract, categorical, and relational properties.⁶ The language and abstract-functioning problems are exacerbated if students are taught by teachers who have, for the most part, emerged from the same environment. The professional inbreeding of teachers perpetuates the characteristics of depressed areas, particularly in rural parts of the country.

Many of the freshman students entering open-admissions universities or colleges with minimal admissions criteria demonstrate severe cases of developmental lag. In a recent study conducted at Morehead State University (MSU) in Eastern Kentucky, it was found that more than 50 percent of students in a stratified, random sample of freshman students in general education courses in five discipline areas were not able to read with sufficient comprehension the assigned textbooks for the course. They were reading at levels far below the college reading level of the selected texts. Students were using an aural approach to understanding the discipline and the content of the course.

The academic test scores of entering freshmen at MSU are quite low compared with national norms. In the 1980-81 academic year, 74 percent (1,051) of the entering freshmen (1,416) reported ACT scores. Fifty percent of the 1,051 students had standard composite scores of 15 or below. (The standard score of 15 for the ACT composite score is equivalent to the 32nd percentile on

national norms.) About 27 percent of the freshmen at MSU in that year had composite scores of 12 or below. Traditionally, fewer than 20 percent of the MSU freshman students earn degrees four years later. However, at least 8 percent of entering college freshmen at MSU earn associate degrees two years later.⁷

In 1978, William White and Wanda Bigham designed an information systems approach to instruction to reduce attrition among freshmen at MSU.⁸ Title III funds were granted (\$940,000), under the Strengthening Developing Institutions Program, for a four-year study. The purpose of the diagnostic-prescriptive model was to reverse the developmental lag of entering freshmen and increase retention of motivated students. Based on research findings, severe developmental lag is irreversible in 3 percent of students. The White and Bigham model at MSU was not merely a program to remediate or upgrade the skills of academically deficient students, or to deal with the effects of economic deprivation. A comprehensive instructional program was based on a humanistic point of view toward college experiences. The objective of the developmental program was to address the many and varied needs of each individual by trying to improve and make urgent the self-image and motivation of each student. It strongly encouraged and provided the means for students to take control over their education and their lives.

If the purpose of the program is to overcome academic deficiencies, I would term the program remedial, in the standard dictionary sense in which remediation is concerned with correcting weaknesses. If however, the purpose of the program is to develop the diverse talents of students, whether academic or not, I would term the program developmental. Remediation in academic skills area is, I think, a legitimate part of developmental education [but] we have for the past three decades concentrated on correcting weaknesses without giving equal time to developing strengths.⁹

The model of the diagnostic-prescriptive, information-systems approach to alleviate the cause and effect of developmental lag has provided an educational plan that should help to ameliorate the low academic functioning of students and increase the intellectual development of those who are well motivated. The model provided the following:

Advisement and counseling services for every college student—an advising system and a counseling center have been established.

Information systems that monitored and evaluated each freshman student, and all students in developmental studies.

1. The reading component primarily comprised classes of developmental reading, and research into "college reading" was highly emphasized. The work students performed was individualized and self-paced.

2. The mathematics component focused on intermediate algebra and trigonometry. Research into diagnostic, competency-based mathematics was highly emphasized. Accurate placement of each entering freshman in mathematics classes was established by a highly personal screening process, yet based on standard criteria.

Table 1. Retention-Attrition of Cohort 1 (Freshmen Enrolled Fall 1980) and Cohort 2 (Freshmen Enrolled Fall 1981)*

First-time enrolled as freshmen	(N) Enrolled	N with ACT scores	Average ACT Standard Scores					Retention through two semesters		Retention through three semesters		Retention through four semesters
			Eng.	Math.	Soc. Sci.	Nat. Sci.	Composite	N(%)	d%**	N(%)	d(%)**	N(%)
Cohort 1 (Fall 1980).....	1,416	1,051(74%)	16.3	13.3	15.1	19.1	16.1	1,076(76)	8+	819(58)	18+	706(50)
Cohort 2 (Fall 1981).....	1,224	801(65%)	16.3	13.3	15.2	19.1	16.2	1,032(84)	15+	769(63)	23	673(55)
Cohort 3 (Fall 1982).....	1,167	817(70%)	16.3	13.5	15.1	19.1	16.2	957(82)		900(60)	20	607(52)

* Attrition was 60% for 1978-79, 42% for cohort 1 (1980), and 37% for cohort 2 (1981).

** d% is the percentage of difference between the present data and the MSU data from the criterion year of 1978-79.

3. The English composition component comprised numerous classes in written compositions that focused on upgrading the writing skills of freshman students. Faculty research into language arts, technical writing, and compositional practice were emphasized.

4. The oral communication component comprised diagnosis and treatment of articulation and speech deficiencies among college freshmen.

Learning laboratories were established and maintained. Students received tutorial and instructional assistance with the latest curriculum materials.

Professional development of the faculty and curriculum improvement. More than 33 fellowships and grants were awarded to faculty members up to September 1982. At least 76 professional papers have been read at regional and nationally recognized meetings.

Identity and emphasis and support for academically talented students was provided through advisement, special courses, and an honors program.

The model is highly complex and is built on the foundations and conclusions of research in education and psychology. How do we demonstrate that the program was effective over the past two years of its funding?* It would be very difficult from a measurement standpoint to look for intelligence changes or IQ differential. Reliability of cognitive factors and their modification would be an exhaustive measurement exercise and too esoteric for interim evaluation designs. In the original proposal we defined goals and objectives of program success. It appeared to us that *attrition-retention of students* would be the bottom line if there were to be a reversal of developmental lag. Students who had upgraded their skills and developed strong self-confidence in their academic work would continue to matriculate in the university. The overall indicator of success with students would be their retention in good academic standing until they obtained reasonable goals. The objective stipulated in the proposal referred to a significantly improved retention rate at MSU in relation to the retention rate of the criterion year, 1978-79.

(1) At least 55% of first-time, first-enrolled freshmen in 1980 would return for the sophomore year in 1981.

* The first year, 1979-80, was a start-up year, and the grant ended in October 1983.

(2) At least 65 percent of the students in developmental studies classes could be retained in the university throughout the first year of study, 1980-81.

(3) At least 65 percent of first-time, first-enrolled freshmen in 1981 would return for the sophomore year in 1982.

Table 1 contains the data about retention and attrition for cohort 1 (freshmen enrolled for the first time in the fall of 1980), and cohort 2 (freshmen enrolled for the first time in the fall of 1981). In the fall of 1980, 1,416 freshman students (cohort 1) enrolled for the first time. Only about 18 of the 1,416 were part-time students. The testing office at MSU validated and reported that 1,051 or 74 percent of the cohort had ACT standard scores on file. The freshmen demonstrated average standard scores of 16.3 in English, 13.3 in mathematics, 15.1 in social sciences, 19.1 in natural sciences, and a composite (or total) score of 16.1. Since 50 percent of the ACT composite scores are 15 or below, it must be inferred that cohort 1 has large numbers of students who have severe developmental lag. Compared with other college students, MSU freshmen, on the average, are significantly below national standards in preparation for college.

In May 1981, after two full semesters of study, 1,076 freshman students, or 76 percent of cohort 1 (freshman class of 1980) took final examinations. Compared with prior data of MSU students (e.g., the class of 1978), the 76 percent retention (or 24 percent attrition) was at least 8 percent better than in 1978-79. After three semesters (i.e., when the freshman class of 1980 enrolled for the sophomore year in the fall of 1981), 819 students, or 58 percent of the cohort, were still enrolled in MSU. This was better than at any prior year at MSU. The 1978 freshman class had only 40 percent of the original enrollment return for the sophomore year in 1979. Cohort 1 had 58 percent for the fall 1981 semester. The attrition of cohort 1 in the first year was very high, but it was only 42 percent compared to 60 percent attrition in many prior years. After four full semesters of study at MSU, 706 of cohort 1, or 50 percent of the students, remained at MSU. What do all these data mean? Assuredly, MSU students from the fall 1980 cohort were being retained significantly better than at any other time in history. Why? (continued on page 29)

TO: DR. BROTHERS, CHAIR, ACADEMIC STANDARDS & EVENTS
FROM: JIM CONSER
SUBJECTS: WORDING OF POTENTIAL MOTIONS

Based on our discussions of the 29 January 1985 meeting of the Committee, the following are my written comments regarding potential motions.

Move to forward to the Senate for action:

- A. That a mechanism be established by the University to identify entering students who are "high risk" candidates in terms of successful academic performance. *(conditionally admitted students)*
- B. That such students be assigned special academic advisors to monitor their academic registration and progress.
- C. That based on an assessment of the "high risk" candidate, such advisement include:
--possible restriction of course loads → *520 and/or*
--registration for English 540, Education 510, high school deficiencies, and/or general University requirements
--repeating courses failed in initial quarter(s). *520 and/or*
- D. That where a student is required to complete English 540 and Education 510, it be done within the first 45 hours completed at the University; and that the Administration provide the academic resources to offer *adequate* sections in English 540 and Education 510 each quarter, including summer, to sufficiently implement the above requirement.
- E. That the G.P.A. standards for triggering "probation" status be changed to the following:

(proposed)		(current)	
TAH	GPA	TAH	GPA
1-12	1.5	1-14	1.5
13-24	1.7	15-29	1.6
25-36	1.8	30-44	1.7
37-48	1.9	45-59	1.8
49+	2.0	60-74	1.9
		75+	2.0

- F. That any student who is suspended from the University for academic reasons not be eligible for readmission until the lapse of two academic quarters, for the first suspension. If a student is suspended twice for academic reasons, the second suspension shall be for a duration of _____ years.

→ 3?
5?