

Recruitment Retention Policy Committee Report to Vice Presidents Chapman and Burcham

June 15, 2001

To: Barbara Chapman, Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dan Burcham, Vice President for Student Affairs

From: Recruitment Retention Policy Committee

Subject: Recommendations and Reflections on the Admissions Standards Committee Report

Charge

In December 2000, the newly-created Retention Recruitment Policy Committee was charged with reviewing the report of the Admissions Standards Committee and (1) identifying the implications for implementation of the report's recommendations and (2) suggesting a process for implementing the retention recommendations. to arrive

Membership

Co-Chairs: Michael Cairns, Student Affairs
Douglas Haneline, Academic Affairs

Members: Terry Doyle, CTLFD
Julian Easter, Allied Health Sciences
David Engels, Administration and Finance
Ronnie Higgs, Student Affairs
Jana Hurley, Residence Life
Matthew Klein, Arts and Sciences
Penny Papo, Institutional Research and Testing
William Potter, University College
Michael Ryan, Arts and Sciences
Kristen Salomonson, Institutional Research and Testing
Susan Starkey, University Advancement and Marketing
Mary Steeno, Allied Health Sciences
Linda Travis, Business
Craig Westman, Registrar

The Admissions Standards Committee Report

Approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2001, the report made ten major recommendations, five on recruitment, and five on retention:

1. Beginning in 2002, require a minimum ACT composite as a condition of admission.
2. Beginning in 2002, require all students to have a 15 ACT composite score or a HS GPA of 2.25 for admission to any academic program/major.

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3. Gradually increase admissions standards from an initial level of an ACT of 15 or a HS GPA of 2.25 in 2002 to an ACT of 16 or a HS GPA of 2.35 in 2004, to an ACT composite of 17 or a HS GPA of 2.5 in 2006, to a final level of an ACT of 18 or a HS GPA of 2.7 in 2008.
4. Students not qualifying for program/major admission may be offered admission to University College.
5. Stop admissions for students that do not meet program/major admission requirements 21 days prior to the beginning of each semester.
6. Require all first-year students to enroll in FSUS 100 (Orientation to College course).
7. Require all students admitted to University College to enroll in two SLA-supported courses during their first semester of college.
8. Require all faculty to complete an advising update workshop on a three-year rotating basis.
9. Require all first-year students to meet a minimum college readiness competency in reading, math, and English by the time they have earned 36 credits.
10. Establish a University-wide class attendance policy in all 100-level courses.

RRPC Recommendations and Reflections

The Committee met four times during Winter Semester 2001. Discussion was wide-ranging at all meetings. The Committee's goal was to identify the effects of implementing the recommendations in a variety of areas, including (e.g.) registration, housing, and financial aid, marketing, and academics. The final text of the report is the product of numerous revisions and discussion.

The Committee is unanimous in regarding the development and approval of the new admissions standards as an important moment in Ferris' institutional history, perhaps as significant as the shift from independent to state affiliation in the 1950's and the achievement of university status in 1987. The adoption of the standards is occurring in the context of three long-term trends—(1) the University's mix of degrees conferred has changed from primarily associate to heavily baccalaureate, with anticipated expansion in selected graduate programs; (2) the curriculum, for most of Ferris' history almost exclusively occupational, is broadening to include selected arts and sciences programs of a kind not hitherto offered here; (3) the increasing gap between University tuition and community college tuition, combined with the expense of maintaining the high quality of the University's programs, means that the penalty for taking underprepared students—a penalty levied on both the institution and the students themselves—is much greater than at any time in Ferris' history.

If, therefore, Ferris must be more selective in choosing its student population, and now that as an institution the decision has been made to implement the admissions standards, the following needs to be done so that the implementation will be as pain-free and productive as possible.

1. **Admissions Office Preparations**—Adoption of the new standards and their implementation is a multi-year, multi-step process. In other words, Ferris is changing its admissions standards four times in the next seven years—every other year until 2008. For this reason, the Admissions Office staff will need to train in the details of the new

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standards so as to minimize confusion among applicants, high school counselors, and others.

2. **Informing High School Counselors**—The multi-step, multi-year feature of the new standards means that a thoughtful and comprehensive process is needed for informing school counselors, about the standards; however, we should avoid what could be described as “publicizing” the standards. Ferris needs to start the process of communicating with high school counselors this summer and fall, well in advance of the implementation of the first step of the new standards. As part of this process, the Admissions Office is planning to send letters to counselors and teachers during Fall 2001. The Committee also feels that in discussing the new standards, Ferris needs to avoid the implication that we have heretofore been without standards.
3. **Raising Standards and Recruitment**—Information produced for the Committee on the retention history of other public institutions that had raised their standards indicates that as a group the institutions raising admissions standards experienced a slight, initial drop in enrollment, but that levels spiked upwards within two years. This recovery was brought about by increasing efforts to attract higher quality students through scholarships, marketing campaigns, and new tuition/fee structures.
4. **Ferris and Higher-Ability Students**—An area to which Ferris needs to pay special attention is the recruitment of higher-ability students. Until now, except in the professional programs, Ferris has had admissions policies that have brought an academically heterogeneous student body to campus. Implementation of the new standards will have the long-term effect of diminishing the numbers of students with poorer credentials, so, in order to maintain a stable enrollment level, as an institution, internally and externally, Ferris will need to develop materials and practices that will increase the numbers of higher-ability students. More specifically, Ferris will need to develop materials that stress the need for firm command of math, communication and technical skills for the completion of our programs. In addition, the availability and affordability of community colleges for underprepared students needs to be included plus a welcoming transfer commentary to those who successfully complete such programs. It should be mentioned that already the Honors Program’s size has been increased, and that as of May 2001, 225 more students who had been offered scholarships had indicated they were coming to Ferris than at this time last year.
5. **Flexibility in Applying New Standards**—One of the insights that came out of the Noel-Levitz consultancy visit in January 2000 was that commercially available programs and data bases that predict the enrollment patterns of prospective students based on ACT scores do not work well for students planning to enter engineering technology fields. This may be true for students entering programs in Allied Health Sciences as well. To maintain the health of its programs, the University needs to move carefully so that the new standards do not have unintended effect of screening out students who could succeed here. Right now, as an example, the Admissions Office forwards the credentials of selected applicants directly to programs in Allied Health Sciences so that the programs can decide if they want to admit the students into a pre-program. The Committee recommends, therefore, that each of the undergraduate colleges have at least one program to which students can be admitted who have met the University’s entrance requirements (15 ACT or 2.25 HS GPA).

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6. **New Application Cutoff Date for Students Failing to Meet Program Admission Standards**—The recommendation to cut off admission to this underprepared population of students 21 days prior to the beginning of each semester is one of the most important pieces of the new standards. It is the Committee’s feeling that failing to adhere consistently to the proposed deadlines will make it more difficult to meet the goals of the standard changes. Since such a policy is so new to Ferris, with our community-college tradition of openness, it is important to remember that this deadline applies not to all students, but only to those who are below the admissions standards (15 ACT; 2.25 HS GPA in 2002). Yet to be worked out are the details of actual policy implementation. The Committee notes that there are three categories of “unqualified” students: (a) those not qualified to enter regular academic programs; (b) those not qualified to enter pre-programs; and (c) those not qualified to enter Ferris. The colleges need to construct the actual mechanics and to identify program admission specifics. Working with students whose HS GPA is below 2.0, University College has had success with **matriculation** (admitted, deposit paid, registered for classes) deadlines of August 1 for Fall Semester and December 1 for Winter Semester. The Committee recommends that starting in Fall 2002 applicants with a HS GPA below a 2.0 should have to meet May 1 matriculation deadlines. For those in the new COSK range (HS GPA 2.0 to 2.25), the matriculation deadline should be August 1. These deadlines will need to be clearly stated in Ferris marketing/admissions materials.
7. **Readmission Decisions**—The Committee recommends that, with the exception of readmission to University College, students who are dismissed for academic reasons be required to complete at least nine credits of 100-level (non-remedial) courses elsewhere with at least C work prior to readmission. Although the readmission language of the current catalogue does not reflect the change, anecdotal information indicates that some Ferris colleges have adopted this policy already.
8. **Financial Implications**—As previously mentioned, even with the most prescient foresight and under the best circumstances, the experience of other institutions that have raised standards indicates that a drop in lower-end enrollment may occur before a rise in upper-end enrollment, causing near-term enrollment instability. As Ferris does not have large endowment that might cushion the transition, the University will need to anticipate the possibility of such an enrollment drop in its planning.
9. **Academic Benefits of the New Standards**—The Committee feels that in the long run there will be substantial academic benefits resulting from the implementation of the new standards. A population of students that is better prepared is more likely to succeed academically. The presence of better students means that retention and graduation rates are likely to rise. The new standards may mean that resources now devoted to remediation can be directed toward students more likely to succeed academically. Even programs now aimed at a less-prepared population will be affected; an example is the Collegiate Skills Program (COSK), which will work with students in 2.0-2.25 HS GPA range, rather than below a 2.0.
10. **Program Continuance Decisions**—The Committee feels that it should be emphasized to both faculty and students that program continuance decisions will not be made on the basis of short-term enrollment trends, especially in the context of any change resulting from the implementation of the new admission standards. Also emphasized should be a commitment that, as indicated in (5) above, flexibility will be employed as needed in

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implementing the standards. Particularly avoided should be the practice of filling low-enrollment programs with students actually desiring another program altogether. A historical review of program enrollment patterns with respect to student HS GPA should be part of the planning for a possible enrollment downturn so temporary faculty assignments can be planned for areas that may have more demand (i.e., COSK with the new 2.0 to 2.25 HS GPA students). In any case, the graduated nature of the implementation of the new standards means that at each point, a re-evaluation of the impact of the changes can be made.

11. **Judicial Services/Student Life/Housing**—The Committee feels that the new standards will have a positive effect in the area of student life. Students who have problems with their schoolwork are often disruptive, causing behavior and discipline problems. With fewer such students, there are likely to be fewer discipline problems. And because a poor atmosphere in residence halls and classrooms often negatively affects the experience of the other students, causing them to consider leaving Ferris, the effects of implementing the recommendations are anticipated to have positive long-term effects on enrollment and retention.
12. **Non-Traditional Students**—As a group, non-traditional students tend to be more committed to completing educational goals than are their younger peers. Thus, they are likely to be pleased by the long-term changes in classroom atmosphere that result from rising standards. These changes can be expected to include less disruptive behavior and better class attendance. In addition, the presence of more capable students will mean that classroom expectations can rise as well.
13. **African-American Student Enrollment Effects**— Ferris has a good record in recruiting African-American students and it is important to continue with that record. The Committee feels strongly that as the changes in standards are implemented, their effects should be monitored so that black enrollments do not disproportionately suffer. One means of monitoring this indicator would be to develop the capability of tracking student retention by race, gender, and program for Ferris, both forward and retrospectively. The Committee feels strongly that all students will be aided by the new standards, because they will assure a better fit between enrolled students and the University's programs, and produce higher retention and graduation rates. In the meantime, the University's commitment to this issue is reflected in the programs of the Minority Affairs Office, the SCHOLAR program, and the scholarship program for graduates of Detroit Public Schools.
14. **Scholarship/Student Aid**—Part of preparing realistically to attract the higher-ability students we hope will want to enroll at Ferris in larger numbers involves adjustments to the University's financial aid program. The Committee feels that since higher-ability students as a group are likely to be wooed by several institutions, Ferris may have to undertake a more substantial merit-based scholarship program, including expansion of the Honors Program to a third residence hall.
15. **Applicant Grade Inflation**—The Committee notes that throughout the United States HS GPA figures have been rising for many years. Some of this rise is due to higher grades overall; some is due to the high grades students earn in cooperative or job-shadowing type courses for which high school credit is given. Many/most of our sister institutions do not utilize the "total" HS GPA in their enrollment practices. Grades in non-academic classes like physical education, office assistant, hall monitor, classroom assistant, and

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remedial or special education classrooms are not included. Alternatively, it may be that simply raising the entering HS GPA requirement to 2.5 would take care of this grade inflation at the secondary level.

- 16. Tracking Enrolled Student Progress**—To increase student retention, it is essential to be able to accurately track student progress toward degree completion, including the completion of prerequisites. On Course is an attempt to meet this need, but at this time it is not fully functional, and because of the multiplicity of our programs, the variety of institutions from which students transfer, and the many different courses that can satisfy degree requirements, it may never reach that point. Regardless of the results of any software initiative, each college needs to identify an individual or group whose responsibility is to monitor retention on a regular basis.
- 17. Preventing Abuse of Grading Policies**—Recent changes to the policies governing the use of the Incomplete (“I”) and In-Progress (“IP”) grades now prevent their misuse. In addition, the Committee recommends that faculty contemplating granting student such grades check with the student’s academic advisor to prevent academically denied students from evading the system. Finally, the Committee recommends that Academic Affairs study the desirability of a University policy that would prevent grade changes except in the case of clerical errors.
- 18. Academic Advising**—For many good reasons, Ferris has a tradition of having all students assigned to regular faculty for advising purposes. Nevertheless, the Committee recommends that Ferris experiment with a pilot program (now being piloted in University College) under which students in the first two years would be advised by professional advisors. Based on the experience of other institutions, such a program could help reduce mistakes and assure more consistency in advising. Qualified graduate students and the hall director corps (a group that is master’s-prepared and available in the evening in residence halls) could advise students in “pre-“ programs. Based on the results of the pilot, individual colleges could decide whether they wanted to move in this direction. Additionally, the Committee notes the importance of “intrusive” advising for better student retention. This advising is best done by someone the students see regularly. When students enroll in an FSUS section, their instructor could be their advisor for up to a year. Regular faculty could mentor these new advisors. Good academic advising is so central that the Committee feels that new faculty should be required to attend a training workshop (perhaps during Kick-Off Week). No one should advise students without having attended advising training.
- 19. Midterm Grades**—To increase student retention, the Committee recommends that the institution of midterm grades (in place of warnings) for freshmen and sophomores be studied. The Registrar’s Office would send the grades to the student’s advisor and to the student at the home address.
- 20. Multiple Classroom Assessments in Lower-Division Courses**—One problem in accurately assessing student progress in a semester occurs when the midterm grade is based on only a single test or assignment. For lower-division courses, the Committee recommends that lower-division course midterm grades be based on at least two classroom assessments. Colleges would monitor compliance with this requirement
- 21. Remediation Efforts and Expectations**—As a means of increasing student retention, the Committee recommends ongoing study of the adequacy of the web of resources and policies that enable students in academic difficulty to remediate.

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22. **First Year Student Enrollment in FSUS 100**—The largest groups of students not now taking FSUS 100 are in the Colleges of Business and Technology. For Business, the issue is clouded by the question of whether FSUS 100 is considered a “preparation” by the College’s accrediting body. Clarification is expected this summer. All colleges will need to prepare to offer and staff the course—a rise across Ferris from 50 sections to 120 every fall. The Committee recommends a survey to ascertain to what extent existing introductory courses (e.g., those in PGM, PTM, and the Honors Program) could substitute for FSUS 100.
23. **University College Students and SLA Courses**—The Committee agrees that students in probationary programs in University College would benefit from SLA-supported courses, but thinks that the details of scheduling make it more realistic to require enrollment in two such courses during the first year, as is now being done.
24. **Demonstration of Student Basic Skills Readiness at the 36-Hour Mark**—The Committee feels that this recommendation is one of the most important in the Admissions Standards Committee report. The report identifies a number of ways to accomplish this goal. Each college, however, would need to identify and individual or group to check the student records. An easy enforcement mechanism would be to hold the student’s registration until the problem was addressed.
25. **Attendance Policies in 100 Level Courses**—The Committee feels that a single attendance policy is not necessary, but the presence of an attendance policy in every 0-level and 100-level course is. Departments and colleges can monitor compliance through syllabi.