

CAEAS Report to the Senate on Issues of Freshman Admissions 11.07.17

At the Senate session of September 13, 2017, a question was raised about the causes and implications of this year's increase in Freshman Enrollment, and whether there has been a change in admission criteria. The Committee on Admissions, Evaluations and Academic Standards was asked to look into this. As a result, our committee called three meetings, one on October 11, in which Vice President Jose Magdaleno explained current data, one on October 25, in which Vice Provost Reine Sarmiento and Director of Admissions and Recruitment Laurie Austin responded to our questions, and again on November 6 at which VP Sarmiento explained additional data as well as a memo from CUNY Central regarding the Opportunity for Student Success (OSS) program. We have asked for more information which will be presented to the Senate as we receive and analyze it. What follows is our review of this matter as of November 7, 2017.

Brief History

There are three basic ways of gaining admission to Lehman College as a freshman: through Regular admissions, through OSS, and through the SEEK program.

- **Regular Admissions:** The criteria for admission is based on SAT scores (critical reading and math) and CAA grades (academic grade point average) and CPI units (College Preparatory Initiative). In 2013, the Senate voted to raise the guidelines for eligibility to a 950 SAT, and an 82 CAA. In 2015, the SAT standard remained the same but we voted to raise the CAA to 83. However, recognizing that our enrollment had been decreasing rather than increasing, and along with the long standing practice that students who did not quite meet these numbers could appeal and be judged on a case by case basis, came the 2015 policy that if one of the two criteria was lower but the other one higher, a student could still be considered for admission. For example, an applicant presenting with a 920-940 SAT but an 85 CAA, would still be considered for admission. In 2015, the Senate voted on another alteration in criteria, concerning CPI credits (college preparatory academic units). Previously, students had to have attained 16 of these credits for admission, but in recognition of the fact that some of these CPI classes may not yet be reflected on the applicant's transcript when applying, we voted to lower the requirement to 14 CPI credits by time of application.
- **OSS (Opportunities for Student Success) Admissions:** Since 2012, CUNY initiated a "pilot program," a more flexible admission initiative in which the college may accept up to but no more than 10% of its admitted students who do not quite meet the established criteria but whom Lehman feels, with support, would succeed here. The OSS students meet or exceed the standards for SEEK admission. They have demonstrated satisfactory levels in one of the two proficiency test standards (each four year college may choose either English or Math and Lehman chose English), but may need assistance in Mathematics upon admission. The OSS students must pass the college math proficiency

test after their first year. According to the original OSS memorandum issued by CUNY Central in 2015, "Students admitted through the OSS program should constitute no more than 10% of the admitted freshman class."

- SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) Admissions: SEEK has been an effective program at Lehman. The required SAT and CAA grade averages to be admitted through SEEK are lower than for the regular admits. Lehman provides SEEK admits with a great deal of support upon entering Lehman, and students have achieved excellent success rates through this program. However, due to New York State funding, there is a cap on the number of SEEK students we are permitted to accept each year. There are many applicants who qualify for SEEK for whom there are no spots available through that program.

Review

What prompted this review initially was the preliminary enrollment data: in 2017, 8394 students were accepted and 946 enrolled: 724 were Regular and OSS freshmen compared to 481 in 2016, an increase of 51%. Our fall, 2017 enrollment is comprised of 30% Regular, 25% OSS, and 25% SEEK. (The remaining 20% represent other, missing or incomplete data.) Of the 25% OSS students, 58% would meet SEEK requirements but could not be accepted through that program due to the cap. In view of these increases, Lehman committed sizable services (money and personnel) for the OSS admits, comparable to services SEEK students receive. As to the question of whether our criteria has changed, we have learned that no, our criteria has **not** changed, but the distribution of students within categories has changed: the number of OSS students enrolled has more than doubled, though they still represent less than 10% of the accepted student pool. However, neither CAEAS nor the Senate had been formally consulted about the OSS program: its criteria or the 10% number, until now.

Lehman's Mission and our Questions:

Our mission at Lehman as expressed by President Cruz is to become the leading institution in meeting the needs of the Bronx community by helping students fulfill their educational, economic, and career aspirations. In this spirit, and in view of the stated goal of 90x30, our freshman admissions policies are poised to give more applicants a shot at a Lehman education. Our committee shares the dream of the mission, and wants all students to succeed at Lehman. We have several questions to consider before we can draft a resolution regarding this policy.

Our committee's requests for additional data for years 2013-present include:

1. Standard deviation and range data (not just the average/mean) for each graph we have examined, including the CAA and SAT scores of all three groups since 2013, and interquartile range graphs for all measurements and outcomes,
2. Outcome data at the conclusion of this semester and in the spring including GPA and retention rates for all three categories,
3. Data pertaining to retention levels, 2013-present including proportion of students on probation and dismissed from each of the three categories,
4. Results of the first- year Math Proficiency test for OSS students,
5. A breakdown of the 20% "other" in the admissions data

Our Questions:

- a) If this is a "pilot program," is there an end date?
- b) If each senior college is advised to admit *up to* 10% via the OSS program, might it be wise to lower that percentage, perhaps with a number amount instead?
- c) Do we have a commitment of data being provided to CAEAS and the Senate on an ongoing basis so that we may determine whether and how to strengthen this program going forward?
- d) How will Lehman ensure the monetary and personnel allocations required to support these students going forward? Can the appropriate body at Lehman conduct a cost-benefit analysis to ascertain how resources are being allotted?

Attachments:

*MEMORANDUM on OSS from CUNY Central dated 10.13.15

*Proposed Revision for Criteria for Freshman Admissions Preliminary Data, 10.31.17, provided by Associate Provost Sarmiento, Source: IR and IT

Submitted by Dr. Penny Prince, Chair, and the CAEAS Committee 11.07.17