2008 Faculty Senate Admission Committee Report
Prepared by Clint Richards, Chair

Summary

The committee conducted 13 regular meetings during 2008 lasting approximately two hours each, and an additional four emergency email meetings to review last minute emergency applications. Each meeting required the review of alternative admission student applications containing gpas, reference and personal letters, transcripts, and test scores. Many meetings required additional preparation to discuss policy issues. The committee’s efforts were coordinated with Enrollment Management, Advising, and the Academic Success Center through additional meetings, emails, and conversations between committee representatives and officials of the relevant administrative units. Their support was critical to the implementation of practices the committee adopted to 1) address the Board of Regent’s desire to significantly increase alternative admissions in order to improve access/diversity at the state’s universities while regular admission standards are raised; 2) reduce the time between admission application and student notification; 3) respond to UNLV’s need to stabilize enrollments; and 4) accomplish these goals while maintaining or improving the success rates of Alternate Admits (AAs).

The result was an increase in the number of newly registered AAs from approximately 400 in the fall of 2007 to over 800 in the fall of 2008. (For comparison purposes, the total increase in headcount from fall 2007 to fall 2008 was 461.) The 2008 AAs increased diversity at UNLV as intended, with 18.3% being Latino and 16.6% African-American compared to 15.6% and 9.6%, respectively, of all newly registered undergraduates.

Clearly, doubling the number of newly registered AAs has addressed the Board of Regent’s desire to significantly increase alternative admissions, increased diversity among the incoming class, and helped stabilize enrollment at UNLV. The question is what effect, if any, this will have on the retention rates of new AAs. The committee is cautiously optimistic. We adopted the new objective criteria which increased our ability to review more AA applicants only after thoughtful consideration, and the enhanced AA advising that we have championed for nearly two years is now a reality that is scheduled for continued improvement.

The committee also worked on updating policies and the composition of the committee, and on making information more accessible to prospective applicants without discouraging or delaying those who meet the automatic alternative criteria (and therefore don’t need to go through a full committee review). This work culminated in the approval of a number of changes and recommendations at the year-end December meeting.

The chair would like to thank Terri Bernstein, Pam Campbell, Adrienne Ekas, Wendy Hoskins, Jessica Hyam, David Jackson, Audrey McCool, Steve Parker, Michael Pravica, David Weiller, Joel Wisner, and Nancy York for their service in 2008. Some joined the committee during the year, or served only part of it, but all contributed significantly. The examples set throughout the year by Terri Bernstein, Jessica Hyam, David Jackson, Audrey McCool, Michael Pravica, Joel Wisner, and Nancy York no doubt deserves some of the credit for that.

The chair would also like to thank the professional and executive staff of Enrollment Management, Advising, and the Academic Success Center who contributed to and supported our efforts, including but not limited to Anne Hein and Cheryl Tillotson, Director and Assistant Director of the Academic Success Center; Gayle Juneau, Executive Director Of Academic Advising; Cem Sunata and Katie Collins, Registrar and Associate Registrar; Luke Schultheis, Executive Director of Admissions & Recruitment;
and Associate Vice President Suzanne Espinoza and Director of Assessment Angelina Copeland of Enrollment & Student Services.

Those who are interested in the details of the committee’s work will find them in the pages that follow.

Spring 2008

The committee met four times during the spring semester for approximately two hours duration each, on January 11, February 22, March 28, and April 25th. The committee also held an emergency email “meeting” January 14 to review last minute emergency applications for the spring semester. Committee members Terri Bernstein, Pam Campbell, David Jackson, Amanda Lange, Audrey McCool, Steve Parker, Michael Pravica, Clint Richards, Nancy York, and Joel Wisner were present or provided their input and voting by email. Adrienne Ekas and David Weiller joined the committee at the April 25 meeting. Also present at that meeting were guests from the Academic Success Center (Anne Hein, Cheryl Tillotson) and from Enrollment Management (Suzanne Espinoza and Angelina Copeland).

In addition to reviewing alternative admission applications this spring, the committee discussed two major issues at length: the advising of alternative admits and assessment of the considerations and criteria used in selecting those perspective students. We received good news regarding the first, and hope to also have good news about the second soon.

1. Last spring the Senate passed a number of recommendations following a report from the President’s Task Force on Equity and Diversity. One of those recommendations involved students enrolled in the university through the alternative admissions program. That recommendation stated:

   The Faculty Senate recommends that students enrolled in the university through alternative admission criteria because their high school GPA and test scores are insufficient for regular admission will be:
   a. required to take UNS 101 or equivalent in their first semester on campus
   b. assigned to an individual advisor, with whom they must meet prior to registration, and on a regular basis throughout semester. This requirement should hold for at least the first four semesters the student is enrolled at UNLV.
   c. assigned to a faculty member as soon as the student declares a major, and must meet with this faculty member on a regular basis during semester, and before they register in any semester for courses required for their major. This requirement should hold until the student graduates.

   The Admissions Committee has championed b) in particular, or a facsimile of it, with various people on campus who could make it a reality. There has been little resistance to the idea in principle, and in fact plans already exist to strengthen advising for all incoming freshman through the First-Year Success Center, but there has been some concerns expressed about providing required advising to alternative admits as early as next fall. However, we are happy to tell the Senate that University College has agreed to provide the resources necessary to advise all alternative admits coming in with a GPA under 2.75. Letters to affected alternative admits are being revised to inform them of this requirement. We are grateful for University College’s support and for the enthusiasm displayed by its Advising Center in embracing this added work in order to improve these students’ chances of success.

2. The other major issue discussed at length this semester has been our need to assess the decision considerations and criteria we use in selecting alternative admits. We are being asked to decide about more perspective students than ever before as the cap on alternative admissions increases along with regular admission requirements. Recognition of the potential negative effect of these increased standards on student diversity and enrollment stability is apparently at least partly responsible for the Board of Regents’ decision to raise the cap on alternative admissions from 10% of the previous year’s freshman enrollment to 15% of the previous year’s freshman admissions. We are told this means a cap of
approximately 1300 for summer, fall, and spring of next year. That’s more than twice as many as we have ever dealt with before, and requires more efficient processing on our part as well as fewer delays and other impediments to the application process itself. It also heightens the importance of using valid selection criteria so we are not setting this increasing number of students up for failure.

The Board of Regents does give us guidance in selecting alternative admits, and of course we use it, but that guidance is pretty general. The NSHE Handbook states that the criteria for admission under the alternative admission program are to be:

   a.) A combination of test scores and grade point average that indicate potential for success;
   b.) Special talents and/or abilities such as, but not limited to, the visual or performing arts or athletic abilities;
   c.) Other evidence of potential for success;
   d.) Improvement in the high school record;
   e.) Overcoming adversity or special hardship; and
   f.) Other special circumstances.

The March 28 and April 25 meetings involved not only the usual discussion and voting on applicants, but also considerable information and discussion about policy issues and recommendations of the committee.

In the March 28 meeting,
1) The chair reported on progress in getting support for our recommendation to hold the enrollment of our committee’s admits until they see an advisor. Executive Director of Academic Advising Gayle Juneau and University College Director of Advising Anne Hein support it. The Provost supports it in principle, but was somewhat equivocal about authorizing it for next fall. The chair will discuss implementation details with Anne Hein and bring those back to the committee along with a first draft of a statement urging the Provost to authorize it.
2) The chair reported that 800 + students have been admitted under alternative criteria to date this year. New Board of Regent guidelines will allow us to admit approximately 1300 over fall 2008 and spring and summer of 2009.
3) The chair noted that unless admissions starts recording the criteria under which alternative admits are accepted, it will not be possible to examine retention rates of alternative admits next spring by these criteria. Committee members expressed their concern about continuing to allow large numbers of students to be admitted under criteria we are not coding for future evaluation, and asked the chair to express this concern to enrollment management and investigate exactly what would be required to begin recording this information.

In the April 25 meeting,
1) Anne Hein, Director of Advising Center, University College, and Cheryl Tillotson, Advisor for University College, discussed their support and progress made regarding the committee’s advising initiative for Alternative Admits; and
2) Suzanne Espinoza, Associate VP for Enrollment and Student Services, and Angelina Copeland, Director of Assessment and Policy Analysis for the Enrollment and Student Services, discussed reports that they will make available to us regarding the success of students admitted under Alternative Admit Selection Criteria.

Summer 2008

The Admissions Committee worked throughout the summer break, meeting five times and conducting an additional two emergency email meetings in late August to review last minute emergency applications for the fall. The committee reviews student transcripts, ACT or SAT test
scores, student essays, letters of reference, and summary information on core and high school GPAs in order to make its admission decisions. Committee members are emailed files of the applications days before the meeting and come prepared to discuss and vote on the applicants’ admissions. Committee members Terri Bernstein, Wendy Hoskins, Jessica Hyam, David Jackson, Audrey McCool, Michael Pravica, Clint Richards, Cheryl Tillotson, David Weiller, Joel Wisner, and Nancy York attended or email their votes and comments.

Fall 2008

The committee met four times in the fall and held two additional emergency email meetings in late August to review last minute emergency applications for the fall semester. In addition, the committee chair presented two reports to the Faculty Senate.

The committee met on September 26, October 24th, November 21, and December 12th. Although the committee continued to review applications as usual, a major portion of the eight plus hours of committee meetings was spent dealing with policy issues and the dissemination of information to prospective applicants. The number one policy issue was whether to continue practices employed for fall 2008 Alternate Admits (AAs) which greatly increased the number of applicants the committee was able to evaluate. Those practices were a resounding success in terms of addressing the Board of Regent’s desire to significantly increase alternative admissions in order to improve access/diversity at the state’s universities while regular admission standards are raised, reducing the time between admission application and student notification, and helping UNLV stabilize enrollments. The practices adopted also reflected the committee’s commitment to examine the impact of its admission criteria on the retention and success of AAs. Those practices doubled the number of newly registered AAs while increasing the diversity of the UNLV student body. Over 18% of newly registered AAs in the fall of 2008 were Latino, and another 16.6% were African-American. This compares to 15.6% and 9.6%, respectively, of all newly registered undergraduates.

The question is whether the doubling of AAs and the resulting increase in diversity were accomplished without compromising AAs’ chances of success. We won’t know until late January 2009 or early February when we get retention and grade information, but we’re cautiously optimistic. Our goal of seeing greater advising for AAs became a reality, and the new criteria we used to increase the number of AA applicants that could be reviewed were adopted only after thoughtful consideration.

Meetings and Reports to the Faculty Senate

Sept. 26 Committee Meeting:
In addition to discussion and voting on applicants, committee members received updated information on Fall 2008 Alternate Admit and Regular Admit Registrations, Alternate Admits Coding, and discussed possible changes in the Alternate Admit Process and Policies.

October 7 Report to the Senate, as summarized in the Faculty Senate minutes:
“Senator Richards (and Chair of the Admissions Committee) provided an update on Alternative Admissions. A temporary agreement between the Senate Admissions Committee and UNLV Admissions made in Fall 07 allowed for use of preset determining criteria to be used to speed processing alternate admits for Fall 08. Part of the agreement was that Enrollment Mgmt would code the criteria and track student success. Unfortunately, the SIS coding did not happen and the agreement continuation lapsed. Admissions have now asked to continue the experiment with the Senate Admissions Committee and will code the applications for tracking purposes. Provost Smatresk asked that the agreement continue and promised student support services for these students. Senator Richards was able to provide some very encouraging numbers regarding the comparison between alternate admit and other admit retention rates over the last few years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Alternate Admits</th>
<th>Fall Admit Retention Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>64.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>66.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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October 24th Committee Meeting:
The major topics of this meeting, other than the review of applicants, was the use of objective automatic admit standards for fall 09 alternative admits, the chair’s October 7 report to the Faculty Senate, and several meetings the chair recently had with Enrollment Management officials discussing objective criteria and what reports could be given to us about the success of those who were admitted under different criteria. The chair had promised the Senate that he would return to their October 28 meeting with proposals from the Admissions Committee regarding the continued use of objective criteria and other plans. The committee reviewed the five objective criteria used for fall 08 and discussed statistical information about the success of previous students with similar qualifications compiled by Angelina Copeland, Director of Assessment and Policy Analysis for Enrollment and Student Services. The committee noted that it can’t get the results on the effects of the objective standards used for fall 08 alternate admits on retention and GPA of those admits until late January or early February. The question was what to do about them in the mean time. A summary of the discussion on each criterion follows. The committee voted in favor of using all of the standards described below until we are able to more fully evaluate their suitability. The standards and summary of discussion about them are presented below.

1. **Students who have a 1040 on the reading and math portions of the SAT or a 22 composite ACT but who fall short of high school core curriculum requirements.**
   - **Comments:** A 1040 on the SAT or 22 on ACT equates to a required high school GPA of 2.0 on the NCAA sliding scale.
   - 90% of those admitted in fall 2007 by this test score standard were still enrolled in spring 2008, compared to 87% of the entire fall 2007 entering freshman class.

2. **Students who completed high school in the past twelve months who are fully admissible per their high school record but who have taken college credits while in high school and/or since completing high school that don’t allow them to be fully admitted as transfer students.**
   - **Comments:** High school transcripts are probably more reliable indicators of future success in this case than limited college credits taken very recently or in high school.
   - “Other evidence of potential for success” is one of the criteria specified by the Board of Regents to be used in considering alternative admissions, and one of obvious merit if you can identify the evidence.

3) **Transfer students who have earned at least a 2.3 GPA on 24 or more college credits and at least a 2.5 in their last semester (minimum 6 hours required in the last semester).**
   - **Comments:** Shows improvement, a Board of Regents’ suggested criterion that we believe is likely to indicate an increased likelihood of success.
   - Meets the recently increased standard in the last semester.

4. **Students who have at least a 2.5 overall GPA and at least a 17 in English on the ACT or a 400 verbal SAT.**
   - These verbal test scores are likely to indicate basic proficiency since they are sufficient to place the student above remedial English, something that many of our students fail to do.
   - English proficiency is important for nearly all majors, and is therefore likely to be a major predictor of success.
   - This standard combines consideration of test scores and GPA, something suggested by the Board of Regents alternative admit criterion of “a combination of test scores and grade point average that indicate potential for success”.
   - The question is what GPA should be required with this test score to be reasonably certain the student will be successful. How much does greater English proficiency compensate for lower GPA?
We considered both a 2.5 and 2.75 and reviewed information requested from Enrollment and Admissions Management on the retention and college GPAs of students who came in with under a 2.5 high school GPA compared to those with 2.5 – 2.75 high school GPA. Results are provided in the attachment “GPA and Retention Analysis”.

We noted that the 2.5 vs 2.75 groups did not have significantly different retention rates, but the direction of differences were in the expected direction and the size and significance levels varied with different analyses (from .07 - .48).

We noted that high school and UNLV GPAs were highly correlated, but that fall 2005 undergraduates with less than a 2.5 high school GPA were only slightly more likely to have less than a 2.5 UNLV GPA than those with a 2.75 high school GPA (50.60% vs. 49.63%)

AAs are now getting more advising than before, many will have to seek advising before enrolling in spring semester, and AAs are being targeted as a priority group with the Student Success Center and Program. This increasing support for AAs is likely to significantly increase their chances of success.

5. Participants in the Center for Academic Enrichment and Outreach programs who have a GPA of at least 2.5 on the required core courses.
   - These students receive a great deal of support and guidance to help them overcome what has often been hardship or adversity.
   - Overcoming adversity or special hardship is another Board of Regents criterion suggested for alternative admits.
   - The same comments and information about success measures for those with GPAs under 2.5 compared to 2.5-2.75 described in the discussion of standard #4 also apply here.

October 28 Report to the Faculty Senate, as summarized in the Faculty Senate minutes:
Senator Richards (also Chair of the Admissions Committee) was asked to provide additional update on Alternative Admissions criteria tracking. He explained the 5 alternate admissions criteria and the process of admitting the students. He indicated the Fall 08 students have been encouraged to access advisors and been contacted more than students in the past. As soon as data is available, they hope to find that these students have done well academically. Enrollment management will attempt to code the criteria used and the Academic Success Center will follow up with increased services to ensure a successful cohort. The Admissions committee is pleased and asked the Senate to approve the continued approval of this procedure. It was approved by a unanimous show of hands.

Nov. 21 Committee Meeting:
2. Discussed the possible establishment of a committee website (accessed from the Faculty Senate Website) and other means of providing better information to potential applicants about the process (including information given to potential applicants in written or oral form). There has been some confusion among some applicants lately. The question is how do we clarify the process for these potential applicants? We will have to coordinate the distribution of information with the use of the five "automatic" criteria (since we don't require the same information from those meeting these automatic criteria).
3. Discussed process for appeal for reconsideration of acceptance of transfer credit.
4. Discussed possible changes in Faculty Senate bylaws regarding membership on the Admissions Committee and voting.
5. And of course reviewed applicants.

Dec. 12 Committee Meeting:
Continued discussions begun over the last two meetings and
1. Approved Proposed Faculty Senate bylaw changes regarding membership to be submitted to the Faculty Senate with pros and cons (as requested by the Faculty Senate):
The Admissions Committee recommends the following deletions (crossed out) and additions (in bold) from 5.1 of the Faculty Senate bylaws.

Admissions
1. Academic faculty from each **undergraduate** degree granting college and school
3. Undergraduate students

1. Dean, University College or designee (ex-officio, non-voting)
1. Director, Academic Enrichment & Outreach or designee (ex-officio, non-voting)
1. Director, Undergraduate Recruitment or designee (ex-officio, non-voting)
1. **Dean, Academic Success Center or designee (ex-officio, non-voting)**
1. Director, Student Athlete Academic Services or designee (ex-officio, non-voting)

Pros:
1. The committee considers only undergraduate admissions. Therefore, it appears appropriate to include faculty from each undergraduate degree granting college and school.
2. Faculty, as instructors and experts in their fields, are in the best position to judge the likelihood that a student who does not meet minimum university standards can still be successful in the classroom. They should therefore determine standards for alternate admits and control the implementation of those standards.
3. If student input is desired, that could be accomplished by ex-officio membership. However, there may still be confidentiality concerns as students would be reviewing other students’ applications.
4. All voting members of the Admissions Committee (and other Faculty Senate committees) are elected by faculty except for student members.
5. The University College will soon be eliminated. Its representative previously represented student athletes.
5. The Academic Success Center is currently placing a priority on serving alternative admits, and is thus very familiar with their needs and the likely characteristics which tend to predict their success. Including a designee will improve communication between the committee and the Center.

Cons:
1. Students will not have input into the committee’s decision making unless they are added as ex-officio members.
2. It may be unpopular with students to remove students from the committee.

2. Discussed further the need to make information more accessible to prospective applicants without discouraging or delaying those who meet “automatic” criteria and while complying with UNLV bylaws which state that “The Committee shall publish, in an easily accessible manner, a guide containing the criteria it considers.”

A. **Approved the establishment of a committee webpage to be linked from the Faculty Senate and Admissions websites.**

B. **Recommended linking from Admissions website at the points where it says**, If you’ve been denied admission, you may appeal to the **Alternate Admission Committee** by submitting . . . . .

C. **Recommended a link from the Faculty Senate website to the Admissions website at:**

Student Petitions Forms & Instructions
- Grade Grievance Petition
- Petition Form & Inst.
- Student Petition Guidelines
- Student Referral Guide
- Reinstatement (College Suspension) Form
- Reinstatement (University Suspension) Form
- **Admissions**

D. **Approved including an Admission Appeal Process description either on the committee webpage or accessed from it.**
E. Approved including criteria described in the Board of Regent’s Handbook in the Admission Appeal Process document to be used on the committee webpage.

3. Approved the following Admissions Appeal Committee document and the policies described in it:
   Admissions Appeal Committee
   Applicants who are denied admission have the option to appeal the decision through a process called Admission by Alternate Criteria. Alternate criteria include a combination of test scores and grade point average that indicate potential for success; special talents and/or abilities such as, but not limited to, the visual or performing arts or athletic abilities; improvement in the high school record; other evidence of potential for success; overcoming adversity or special hardship; and other special circumstances.

Files submitted are reviewed by the Faculty Senate Admissions Committee, which typically meets at least once a month to review complete files. The admissions committee can vote to overturn or affirm the initial admission decision.

In order to have your file reviewed, the following materials must be submitted to the Faculty Senate Admissions Committee Liaison, 4505 Maryland Pkwy., Box 451021, Las Vegas, Nv. 89154; phone 702-774-UNLV(8658), fax 702-774-8008, or email appeals@unlv.edu at least 7 days before the committee meeting:

- Personal statement explaining the circumstances surrounding your academic performance.
- 2 letters of recommendation, preferably from teachers, counselors, or other official who can speak on the student’s academic abilities.
- ACT or SAT test scores are required for students with GED, home-school, or less than 24 transferable credits. Scores can be sent by fax, mail, or email and do NOT have to be official scores sent by the testing agency.
- If you have more than 24 transferrable credits, it is not required to have an ACT or SAT test score, but is HIGHLY recommended.

All students admitted through the Alternate Criteria process are admitted on probation. The student must complete at least 6 college-credits during their first semester at UNLV with a minimum GPA of 2.0. Failure to do so will result in the cancellation of admission and a change in status to non-degree seeking student.

Students whose applications are denied by the committee are not allowed a further appeal during that academic semester. Students are encouraged to continue to strive to meet the UNLV transfer requirements through the means listed below:

1. Attend another Nevada institution such as the College of Southern Nevada or Nevada State College to obtain 24 transferable college credits with a 2.5 or higher GPA. Or,
2. Attend UNLV as a non-degree seeking student if you are at least 18 years old and in good academic standing with UNLV. As a non-degree seeking student, you are not eligible for federal or state financial aid and may not register for more than 8 credits per semester. No more than 24 undergraduate credits earned as a non-degree seeking student can be considered for credit toward graduation.

4. Recommended an Admission site change due to the policy change in the above. Regarding Admission alternatives, transfer students, recommended changing description of requirements to
“One official copy of your ACT and/or SAT test scores is highly recommended but not required.” Before the statement “If you do not have test scores, or you would like to improve your scores, you may take the ACT residual exam at UNLV”

5. **Recommended an Admission site change in wording to reduce possible delay or discouragement of those who meet “automatic” criteria. Change to**

“If you do not satisfy the minimum admission requirements for an undergraduate freshman, you may still be eligible for admission. If you are denied admission, the information below describes your alternatives for gaining admission.

6. **Recommended a process for appeal for reconsideration of acceptance of transfer credit which calls for the Faculty Senate office to add a “Transfer Center Recommendation” form to be sent to that center for a recommendation and justification, with that then being added to the petition before sending it to the Admissions Committee.**

7. **Reviewed and voted on new applicants.**