



SUBJECT: Review of Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC)

DATE: April 30, 2014

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Per UC San Diego Academic Senate policy, a faculty committee was convened on Friday, April 18, 2014, by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Education to review Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC). Our committee met with subsets of ERC leadership, faculty, staff, teaching assistants within ERC's "Making of the Modern World" program, and students during the process. In addition to these interviews, our committee was furnished with the college's self-study prior to this review and numerous statistical data and survey instruments (e.g., UCUES, post-baccalaureate surveys, college surveys) covering various aspects of undergraduate experience, curriculum, and course evaluations. As ERC has never been previously reviewed under the Senate policy, no prior review information was available.

ERC was the fifth of six UC San Diego residential colleges, founded in 1988 and named in 1994 after Eleanor C. Roosevelt (First Lady 1933-1945), who was a US delegate to the United Nations, Chairperson of the UN Commission on Human Rights and member of the Peace Corps Advisory Council. Each residential college at UC San Diego is responsible for establishing its general education themes and mission, and students enrolled in each college typically fulfill general education graduation requirements unique to that college in addition to major requirements. Commensurate with Eleanor Roosevelt's lifetime commitment to global citizenry, service, and human rights issues, ERC's stated mission is (<http://roosevelt.ucsd.edu/about/index.html>):

- Serve students interested in pursuing academic excellence, establishing the groundwork for success in their chosen careers or graduate study, and becoming lifelong learners and effective citizens.
- Foster the ideal of an education in the liberal arts and sciences that develops intellectual capacities and expands general knowledge by exposing students to a variety of disciplines.
- Offer an academic foundation that is suitable for all majors, whether in the natural or applied sciences, the social sciences, or the humanities and the arts, and that prepares students for opportunities to study and conduct research with UC San Diego faculty and scholars.
- Feature dimensions of international understanding and cultural diversity in the general education curriculum and in co-curricular programming.
- Provide a community where students are valued and respected, where they are challenged and helped to succeed, and where they can develop a strong sense of belonging and confidence about their roles in society.

The core of ERC's general education curriculum is a five-course sequence called "Making of the Modern World" (MMW), which traces the cultural development of primitive human beings to present time. As stated in the self-study, these courses "trace the development of major civilizations and enable students to compare and contrast different religious and philosophic traditions and political and social systems... discuss the conflicts and cultural confluences that have endured through trade, conquest, and empire building..." and conclude "...with education in the challenges of creating a world of justice and peace amidst the wars, revolutions and technology driven social change of the 20th and 21st centuries." Faculty from history, anthropology, literature, sociology, and political science teach the MMW sequence. The MMW program also integrates a basic analytic writing program, which is consistent with core curricula from each college.

Beyond MMW, the ERC curriculum is then completed out with two courses in formal methods (e.g., mathematics), two in natural sciences, two in fine arts, a foreign language requirement, and 3 courses in a regional specialization of the student's choice, drawn from courses focused on societies in Asia, Africa, the Americas, multi-ethnic USA, the Middle East, Europe, or Eurasia. The foreign language requirement and regional



specialization series distinguish ERC's general education requirements from the other five UC San Diego colleges. The requirements for transfer students are modified so that the MMW component is reduced to two courses. ERC's overall requirements are on the higher side of the range among the six colleges.

ERC also hosts the Global Health minor (soon to move to Anthropology now that it has Senate approval as a major), the Human Rights minor, and the International Migration Studies minor.

Beyond its core academic curriculum, ERC fulfills its mission by actively promoting study abroad (30% of its students participate, substantially more than any other college) and hosting International House, the center of cultural, intellectual, residential, and social exchange for students who attend UC San Diego from over 30 countries.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review committee, upon completion of detailed interviews with the various ERC constituents mentioned and studies of the provided data, unanimously and enthusiastically commends ERC for doing an admirable job in fulfilling its mission and successfully serving its most important clients, the undergraduate students. Specifically, the committee would like to acknowledge several items in this regard:

(1) ERC provides a truly unique program that fully integrates its mission with all aspects of student intellectual life, social life, and residential experience. The success is (at least partially) indicated by data that show in most survey categories related to student satisfaction with, relationship to, and assessment of, their college, ERC performs better than all other colleges (with "better" being defined as at least a 5% greater positive response in the particular survey category). Furthermore, ERC fills up more quickly than other colleges at admission time, which indicates that ERC attracts students that know ERC is a "good fit" for their general educational and residential goals.

(2) The leadership (Provost, Executive Committee, Dean), other staff, advisors, teaching assistants, and faculty of ERC are extremely collegial, industrious, and—perhaps most importantly—extraordinarily committed to the ideals and mission of the college. The harmonious relationships that exist at all levels within ERC clearly inspire a culture of all constituencies "buying into" the mission statement and providing students with precisely the enriching experience which it intends to do. While not many students were able to attend interviews with the committee, the students who did attend were very positive towards MMW, ERC's opportunities (particularly study abroad, which ERC even promotes with internal scholarship funding), and their evolution as "global citizens".

(3) Despite never having been required to review itself since its inception, ERC takes self-assessment seriously and has adapted MMW to respond to budget and other institutional (such as "time to degree") challenges in recent years. Some examples are (a) MMW was reduced to its current 5-course curriculum from the original 6-course curriculum; (b) the fine arts requirement was reduced to 1 course; (c) the two courses for the MMW program for transfer students are under proposal to be changed to upper division courses from the current lower division status; and (d) the MMW program is offered in summer and in conjunction with several existing global seminars programs. The committee agrees that these actions are good decisions in light of challenging times and endorses no further reductions in MMW, as it is both institutionally and pedagogically sound in its present form, and ERC is making it very available to its students in multiple modes to address accessibility within the larger UC San Diego campus discussion on "time to degree".

Even though ERC is functioning extremely well and the committee wishes to see ERC continue the tremendous success it's already established, there are a number of issues that are challenging ERC to operate in "status quo". Some of these issues are more minor and are specific to ERC, but the largest issues are more institutional problems with UC San Diego and likely affect all the colleges. The committee feels that even though our formal charge is to



review ERC, an appropriate discussion of these more “global” issues in the context of reviewing ERC is nonetheless appropriate.

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) UC San Diego (indeed, most universities) have endured budget crises and responded with policy shifts in recent years. This current cycle has led to a number of challenges, perhaps unintended consequences of policy shifts in some cases, that are clearly affecting ERC, and likely all colleges. One of these biggest issues is the result of admitting a large number of international students, which by our definition, includes those coming directly from a foreign country to seek a degree at UC San Diego and those with foreign passports who have graduated from a community college (or similar) and transfer to UC San Diego (which also denotes them as “transfer students”). In addition, there are many newly-immigrated students still carrying foreign passports. UC San Diego has aggressively recruited these students without paying attention to the broader context of addressing the challenges that come with this action:

(a) English language proficiency. Although they may have scored high enough on the TOEFL to gain admission, that does not mean they can comprehend lectures, participate in discussions, or write required papers. Given ERC’s stiff writing requirements, this poses additional problems for the TAs in MMW within the context of the Writing Program in general.

(b) Academic integrity. Several interviewees mentioned a high increase in cases of plagiarism and cheating. Leaving aside the ethical issues, investigating and pursuing these cases is enormously time-consuming, and resources have not been allocated to help ERC with this.

(c) Cultural adjustments. This includes not only living with students foreign to them, but also UC San Diego’s teaching and research culture and the corresponding expectations. Resources for additional advisors, counselors, etc., have not been allocated to offset the overburdening, increased workload of the current ERC staff.

(d) Demographic issues. The single child family policy of China and very low birth rates elsewhere in East Asia means that parents have invested huge amounts of money as well as their hopes and dreams on their children and expect them to succeed. At times this means interfering in the educational process. There is a combination of a sense of entitlement for their child as well as enormous pressure on the child to succeed on behalf of his/her family. These pressures have increased students’ stress levels and contributed to some psychological concerns. Interviewees reported that in many cases students with need to see Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) have had to wait several weeks for an appointment; again, resources are not available to address this alarming situation.

These challenges related to adjustment are further burdened by the threat of deportation for these students if they fail or are expelled for academic integrity issues. What ERC—and certainly UC San Diego in general—want to avoid at all costs is setting up its students to fail international or otherwise.

Recommendations related to (1):

We found that many and especially international students did not fully comprehend UC San Diego’s college system and that this could be better explained through video (e.g., YouTube) and other more modern visual means, possibly with subtitles in their own language, rather than lengthy and often confusingly-written dry, online textual materials. We were glad to learn that the Chinese Student Association conducts a live program for Chinese students helping to orient them prior to attending UC San Diego. Whatever orientation work can be done prior to the students’ arrival on campus should help, but it will remain abstract until they actually set foot at on campus.



In a similar thread, we were surprised that during the entire review day that no mention of online education, currently a hot topic at UC San Diego and UC in general, was made. In exit interviews, we learned from the Provost that there was some effort being put into looking at online versions of MMW, which we applaud in general. Nonetheless, we urge ERC to continue to exploit the evolving landscape on online education to see how such methods could create efficiencies that are still pedagogically sound and retain the spirit of ERC's mission.

There will be costs associated with addressing these challenges, particularly hiring more advising and counseling staff, year-round tutors (especially for English), and staff particularly sensitive to and knowledgeable about the cultural particularities of sending countries, especially China. Substantially enhanced training should be provided at UC San Diego for these advisors/counselors. We furthermore believe that it might help to provide opportunities for some of the advising/counseling staff to visit the home countries of international students to get a first-hand look at their schools and family life.

Given ERC's global focus and orientation, having International House situated on its campus, and the fact that it has the highest number of students who study abroad, it is attuned to these issues and already addressing them, but much more work needs to be done campus wide. International students should be debriefed at several times during their stay on campus to gauge their needs and problems, as well as how these vary among different nationalities. We think this is an opportunity for ERC to fuel the discussion (perhaps initially through the Council of Provosts) and start a healthy campus discussion about the consequences of an increased international student presence on campus.

(2) The transfer student population—a substantial community comprising about 25% of the undergraduate population—on UC San Diego's campus has changed rather drastically in the last 10 years. Gone are the days where many transfer students were older students who were returning to complete their degrees after having some life experience. These types of students still exist, but they are far fewer in number than they were in 2001. The majority of transfer students appear to be students who are seeking a cheaper education by attending their first few years of college at the community college level and then completing their last two years at UC San Diego or other four-year institutions. These students are often from the United States, but increasingly many of them are international students who come here to go to community colleges and then transfer to four-year institutions. This population brings with it a complexity that can be challenging for the university and specifically ERC to deal with. These students may or may not have limited English language speaking skills that are most often coupled with even more limited writing expertise. By and large, UC San Diego has not put adequate resources in place to assist these types of transfer students. The lack of resources continues to contribute to frustrations of the teaching faculty and staff, ultimately devaluing the integrity of an undergraduate degree since many professors and departments seemingly have to reduce their standards to accommodate the wide influx of students with varying skill sets.

Recommendations related to (2):

Specifically, ERC has proven to be responsive to these changes and needs of the transfer students and has adapted its curriculum to allow transfer students to take a smaller number of courses connected with the MMW program and has endorsed upper division conversion of these courses. Writing and argumentation skills are still the hallmark of ERC and the committee congratulates and encourages the College to continue to uphold its standards.

It seems that the inclusion of the Village as a residential space for transfer students created a number of concerns and problems that have not been adequately addressed. Again, this is a critique of UC San Diego in general and not specifically on ERC. It was noted by several populations that we spoke with, that the transfer student population is not well integrated into ERC. In fact, by having the transfer students reside in the Village, they segregate themselves and do not fully get integrated into the Colleges that they have been assigned to. It seems as though there should be a better system in place to have a space where transfer students have shared community, but a living arrangement where they are better integrated into and reside at the Colleges.



More could also be done via webinars and outreach to transfer students over the summer months and periodically during the academic year, perhaps meetings once per quarter to have information and feedback on how their transition into the general student population is going and to provide them with information and resources that may have been too overwhelming to comprehend when first attending campus.

(3) ERC's advising staff is clearly excellent and doing an admirable job, particularly in light of the overburdened workload they have. Nonetheless, we noticed a large imbalance in the gender diversity in their composition.

Recommendations related to (3):

While we have no data to compare ERC's advising staff composition to other colleges, we nonetheless encourage ERC to especially consider gender diversity in future recruitments. This perhaps is particularly important given the culturally-related issues associated with the international students. It was also mentioned by the ERC advising staff that there were attempts to include Muslim staff advisors; the committee commends and encourages this type of sensitivity to student needs.

(4) ERC has a relatively low STEM student population, even when compared to other colleges. ERC's general education requirements are more difficult (or at least perceived to be more difficult) to satisfy for a number of STEM field majors, particularly engineering, where major requirements are very high. Thus, STEM students often feel ERC simply presents a higher burden over some other colleges.

Recommendations related to (4):

We certainly in no way wish to suggest ERC should in any way pedagogically modify MMW or its current mission execution, but we encourage the Provost and Executive Committee to engage in dialogues with the Dean of Engineering and the Dean of Physical Sciences about the important role ERC (and colleges in general) plays in STEM student education and development. We feel these Deans would be very receptive to such discussions, and these discussions are important anyway within the broader context of ongoing campus discussions about unit reductions related to time-to-degree concerns.

(5) The Provost and faculty indicated that there are sometimes challenges associated with recruiting faculty (in particular, more junior, early-career faculty, and minority faculty) as well as TAs to teach in the MMW program. The challenge for faculty recruitment is primarily rooted in (at least perceived, if not real) pressure for such faculty to engage in scholarly activity in their own disciplines, and that the reward structure for faculty doesn't always appreciate their involvement in high interdisciplinary activities such as teaching within MMW; furthermore, faculty who teach in MMW, owing to the "boot camp" nature of MMW perceived by many of the students while doing it, have observed their CAPE scores to decrease. The lack of participation by minority faculty members was noted by the committee and ERC faculty themselves.

The challenge for TA recruitment is that departments often want to retain their best TAs by trying to give them multi-year packages, which ERC/MMW cannot support beyond a year-to-year commitment.

Recommendations related to (5):

In the case of faculty, we encourage ERC through the Council of Provosts to ensure that the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) (via Senate Council) continues to understand the unique circumstances and benefits of those teaching in programs like MMW and help develop clear guidelines on how such scholarly activity is viewed at CAP in a transparent way. Given that CAP only evaluates what it is given for a faculty file, ERC might consider adding faculty peer evaluation reviews to MMW faculty instructors in addition to CAPE scores. This might present a proper context within which MMW instructors may be evaluated in their teaching capability. We encourage ERC to be creative in ways to encourage and incentivize minority faculty to participate and join MMW;



perhaps a first step might be inviting minority faculty members to offer a guest lecture on an area of their expertise that relates to MMW.

In the case of TAs, we acknowledge there may not be much ERC can do formally, but we do encourage ERC to use existing MMW TAs—who, as discussed in item (6) below, are generally very positive about the MMW program—to serve as “recruiters” for future MMW TAs. Sometimes the best recruiter is an enthusiastic peer.

(6) We met with six TAs who teach various courses/levels within the MMW program. Universally, these TAs loved what they do in MMW, were well-trained, and espoused the spirit of ERC’s mission. Nonetheless, they definitely conveyed a sense of the burdensome workload that MMW puts on them, and in particular how that can compete with pressure from their home department research advisors to advance their research work in a timely way. We were also told that TAs teaching 6-unit MMW courses were paid the same as those teaching 4-unit MMW courses.

Recommendations related to (6):

Certainly, we encourage the Provost to look into the TA pay issue and ensure that everything is in compliance with policy. The MMW workload appears uneven, however, in general, with the first year TAs having a substantially more burdensome job. We encourage discussions among the MMW Director, faculty, TAs, and ERC leadership to discuss ways to distribute workload more evenly (assuming pay is, indeed, spread evenly). Furthermore, since the MMW is also essentially the instrument for teaching writing to ERC students, we also recommend that there should be better coordination with the writing program regarding the role TAs should play in teaching writing as well as course content.

(7) The Second-Year MMW Academic Coordinator appears to have multiple jobs due to the increased workload brought on by international and transfer students, the new transfer student MMW curriculum, and the enormous related spike in academic integrity cases (i.e., the same position apparently handles all these functions).

Recommendations related to (7):

We believe the ERC leadership should request, with this committee’s backing, the commitment to an FTE position from Campus or at least find a reasonable means to provide relief and an appropriate workload for this position.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the committee is very proud to report that ERC is undoubtedly a leading college in integrating its academic life, student life, and residential life to provide its students with an extraordinarily enriching undergraduate experience. Indeed, ERC could very well be a model college for the rest of campus and as such, we encourage ERC to take a leading role in addressing some of the issues we raised above that require campus-wide dialogue.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dept. of Communication

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July 24, 2014

PROFESSOR RICHARD MADSEN, Acting Provost
Eleanor Roosevelt College

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for Eleanor Roosevelt College (ERC)

Dear Professor Madsen,

The Undergraduate Council has discussed Eleanor Roosevelt College's 2014 Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and congratulates ERC on a highly positive review. The Council also appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the College. We were pleased to hear that you will meet with Dean Pisano of the Jacobs School of Engineering this summer to discuss how ERC can attract more engineering students. The Council encourages the College to seek out any other fields, departments, or programs with low ERC enrollments to have similar conversations.

The Undergraduate Council will conduct its follow-up review of the College in Spring Quarter 2015. At that time, our goal is to learn about the College's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee. The Council extends its thanks to the College for its engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,



James Nieh, Chair
Undergraduate Council

cc: G. Boss L. Carver K. Pogliano R. Rodriguez B. Sawrey M. Sidney