

March 1, 2006

TO: Dr. John Halstead, President
Dr. Mark Noll, President College Senate

FROM: Ad Hoc Committee on Enrollment Caps
Jeffrey Lashbrook (co-chair), Christine E. Murray (co-chair),
Susan Petersen, Bernie Valento, Tom Nugent, Peter Dowe

RE: Final Report

In October 2005, this committee was charged to investigate the issue of program enrollment caps at SUNY College at Brockport and to develop a set of recommendations for College Senate consideration. This committee's work is also responsive to Strategic Plan II, Committee 1 recommendations on student quality and the College's Memorandum of Understanding II (draft 6.1) with regard to transfer success. The draft MOU states that transfer admission standards will be raised to require a 2.5 GPA and that programs regularly enrolling more than fifty transfers a year will be permitted, when possible, to impose an admissions cap or to institute special requirements for transfer acceptance and admission.
(p. 15).

This report discusses our efforts to understand departments' efforts to manage their enrollments through a variety of mechanisms, the impact on students in a selected number of departments whom we have surveyed, and our recommendations. Accompanying our report are three documents: a matrix outlining program enrollment management strategies, our survey of departments, and procedures regarding limiting enrollment in an undergraduate program.

It is important to note that the committee recognizes that there are multiple mechanisms that departments currently use to manage their enrollments, both at the entry point through numerical caps and entrance requirements **and** through program completion requirements that impact students' decisions about continuing in specific programs. In addition, entrance requirements are used by some programs to assure that students have the performance skills to be successful in the major. These program enrollment management strategies are outlined in the accompanying Program Enrollment Management Strategies chart.

To better understand the impact at the programmatic level, the committee surveyed nine departments which already have some mechanisms for restricting enrollment or which are considering implementing restrictions. In selecting the departments that were included in the survey, the committee consulted with the three school deans for their recommendations. The committee does not view this as an exhaustive list of departments which may request to limit enrollments. Rather, it was intended to provide a quick, but thorough, understanding of the various dimensions of the issue. The results of the survey are also included as a separate document.

This report is organized as a response to each of the seven charges to the committee.

Charge to the Committee

The Enrollment Cap Ad Hoc Committee should consider the following items among their review of this important issue:

- *Development of an analysis of the issues related to any given program/department request for enrollment caps. Among these could be: accreditation requirements; limits on student placements for student teaching internships, etc.; increasing numbers of students interested in the major; and available faculty resources compared to student demand.*

The departments of Education and Human Development, Nursing, Social Work, and Physical Education currently have enrollment caps on one or more programs. Without exception, these caps are a result of accreditation or state education department requirements. The School and Community Health Education program in Health Science is also governed by the SED teacher education program regulations (50% of courses taught by full-time faculty), but demand has not exceeded the current number of seats available.

These same departments listed above also have the challenge of identifying sufficient clinical placements for their students.

While the specific enrollment management mechanisms vary, beyond accreditation or SED requirements, the issues of program quality and lack of faculty resources to adequately meet student demand are the primary reasons for the implementation of enrollment restrictions. In some instances, student interest is increasing and in other instances there has been a persistent lack of adequate resources. Several areas need further examination if there is to be consistency in addressing requests to limit enrollment.

First, the College has no clear definition of what an appropriate advising load should be for a faculty member. Several departments point to lack of effective advisement as a reason for limiting enrollment. Establishing a college-wide standard for the faculty/student advising ratios would be helpful.

Second, Strategic Plan II sets a goal of 70% of student credit hours to be taught by full-time faculty. The question of how this goal relates to enrollment cap requests needs further examination.

Third, as student quality improves, students' expectations for internship opportunities, independent study opportunities, and collaborative work with faculty beyond the classroom are increasing. These critically important out-of-class learning opportunities require more from faculty. All of these activities require faculty involvement that needs to be considered.

The question of available resources compared to student demand and appropriate resource benchmarks for high quality academic programs needs to be addressed.

- *Review steps that have been or could be taken to try to manage enrollment related issues before enrollment caps would be requested for implementation, including mechanisms to meet additional student demand, and potentially reducing required courses for the major.*

The most common steps that have been taken to manage enrollment issues are to establish a minimum GPA requirement or minimum course grade requirements for admission into the program. Other mechanisms that have been used are to limit the number of transfer students accepted, requiring auditions or portfolio reviews, and interviews.

Reducing transfer enrollment at the program level has been somewhat effective, but is an imperfect strategy because students can enter the College under a different major and then change majors once they are enrolled.

For the most part, departments have met additional student demand by adding extra sections taught by adjunct faculty or by increasing class size. There is no evidence that departments have reduced requirements for the major in response to increased student demand. Likewise, there has been no decrease in the College's general education requirements which would be another way to redirect faculty resources.

- *Determine the criteria that are proposed for enrollment caps. Among them could be seniority, College GPA, major GPA, completion of required courses, or extraordinary scholarship.*

As indicated above and more fully outlined in the "Program Enrollment Management Strategies" chart, minimum GPA requirements and required grades in specific courses have been the most common criteria for program entrance and continuance. **Therefore, this committee recommends that the College Senate rescind the Senate resolution restricting departments from setting programmatic GPA requirements (#41, 2003-2004).**

The "Procedures Regarding Limiting Enrollment in an Undergraduate Program" document outlines a range of supplemental admissions criteria that departments could consider in developing a limited enrollment proposal.

- *Consider the impact on our current students if these criteria are implemented for enrollment caps. Determine the numbers of students with interest or intents to major in a program that could be prevented from continuing in the program. Determine alternative programs that these students might be able to switch to without extensive additional coursework/time required for completion. Determine the number of students that are likely to leave the College because of the inability to enter the program.*

The potential impact on students could be the delay of their entry into programs and subsequent delay in their program completion and graduation. There is some indication that this is occurring. In addition, students could find themselves with significantly reduced choices if they are closed out of programs that meet their academic and career interests. Students could end up spending additional time bouncing between programs, essentially being advanced level students without an academic major. In most cases it appears that students who are not able to enter a professional program are being advised to enter a liberal arts program, either a liberal arts track within the department or in another liberal arts department.

It is very difficult to estimate the specific number of students who could be affected and which program(s) they might switch to without looking at a specific program. This is true for the question about the number of students who are likely to leave the College. Reliable information on this is problematic for a number of reasons. Formal exit interviews, which we do not do, suffer from a variety of limitations. However, we have collected some information through a mail-in exit survey. Response rates are low, however, and coding student answers is difficult. Anecdotal information supplied by our Separations Director indicates that there are a small

number of students who left because they could not enter a program. Furthermore, some are surprised that they can be accepted into the program at another institution but not here.

- *Consider the impact on our potential transfer students. Review the mechanisms proposed for enrollment caps to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that recently enrolled transfer students will not quickly be advised that they will not be able to enter their chosen program of study.*

This is a particularly complex issue as transfer students have a shortened time to complete major and degree requirements. Also, transfer GPAs are not considered to be comparable to Brockport GPAs so the transfer GPA is not a good indicator for program admission. **The College's policy on allowing students to change majors is very liberal; the College may need to consider limiting the option of changing majors into a limited enrollment program once transfer students are enrolled. The College should examine expanding the policy of admitting transfer students to a specific academic program with limited enrollment rather than general admission to the College.** The committee agrees that it would be preferable to refuse transfer students admission to a specific program rather than admitting them only to learn that they are not able to enter their preferred program.

- *Working with the Divisions of Administration and Finance and Enrollment Management, determine the financial impact on the College that would result from these proposed enrollment cap mechanisms. This would include the number of new transfer students that would likely not enter the College and potential enrollment declines in other areas that might be considered as candidates for additional program enrollment caps. The financial impact should include tuition and required fees, the number of residential students that would leave the residence halls and no longer pay either room or board cost since these are part of the College all funds budget. Potential increases in students into programs that could handle additional enrollment should be examined similarly to determine the net financial impact.*

Information provided by the Bursar's Office shows that the budgetary impact of losing 10 FTEs totals \$144,230 (\$96,430 in tuition and fees; \$47,800 for room/board). Much harder to estimate, of course, are the exact numbers of students we might lose because of limited enrollment policies. It is also difficult to gauge the financial impact from other programs that could handle increased enrollment. We are not aware of any evidence that there have been increases in programs that could handle additional enrollments as a result of students being closed out of other programs. Programs that propose to limit enrollments will need to address the financial implications in their limited enrollment proposal.

- *The Chair, Dean, and Provost will be consulted concerning the impact on the accreditation status of an academic program, or the impact on student learning outcomes, associated with the decision to implement or not implement requested enrollment caps.*

The committee has concluded that a clearly defined process needs to be created for the review and action on proposals to limit enrollment that would include the representatives from all three divisions of the College to assure that academic, enrollment, and financial issues are addressed. We recommend the Academic Priorities Committee which includes College Senate representation be responsible for review of limited enrollment proposals with recommendations for action made to the President's Cabinet. The

procedures for requesting limited enrollment are addressed in the “Procedures Regarding Limiting Enrollment in an Undergraduate Program” document.