



WARTBURG AAUP

"Committed to Academic Excellence"

NEWSLETTER

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EPC TO REVIEW ADMISSIONS POLICIES/PROCEDURES IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS

Faculty concerns about recruitment and retention have been stimulated by the revelation that 69 applicants who failed to meet Wartburg's basic admissions criteria were admitted as freshmen this fall and that more than half of these "committee cases" were not reviewed by the Admissions and Scholarship Committee.

These concerns, expressed in a number of venues, include questions about (1) the ethics of admitting such a large number of at-risk students without providing special means of addressing their educational needs; (2) the impact of this action on retention, the college's academic reputation, and recruitment of new students; and (3) the apparent circumvention of the faculty's proper role in the admissions process. As a result of these concerns, the Educational Policies Committee will be undertaking a comprehensive review of admissions policies and procedures.

Faculty interest in admissions was initially heightened by the news, released in October, that the ACT composite average and class-rank percentages for the incoming class had declined for the second year in a row. Since 1994, the ACT composite average has dropped a full point from an all-time high of 24.6, and the percentage of students graduating in the top decile of their high-school class has fallen from 42 to 33. (See "Wartburg Breaks Enrollment Record, But Academic Profile Sags Again" in the November issue of the *AAUP Newsletter*.)

Responding to their constituents' interest in the causes of this decline, members of Admissions and Scholarship and Faculty Council attempted in the fall to obtain pertinent information from the appropriate college offices. Their efforts, however, were largely frustrated.

But two facts did eventually emerge on the Admissions and Scholarship Committee: First, that the number of first-year students who failed to meet Wartburg's basic admissions standards was 69 (or 16% of the incoming class). Second, that only 33 of these 69 "committee cases" had been reviewed by the committee.

It should be pointed out that some of these students were admitted in the summer when the committee does not meet. However, former committee members question why the admissions office did not follow its past practice of asking available committee faculty to review cases.

It should also be noted that the admission of 36 committee cases without some form of committee review appears to deviate not only from past practice but from Wartburg's published admissions policy (on page 211 of the 1996-98 college catalog). This policy stipulates that applicants who (1) did not graduate in the upper half of their high school class or (2) did not score 19 or above on the ACT composite "will be reviewed by the Admissions [and Scholarship] Committee for a final decision."

Bill Shipman—a member of Admissions and Scholarship as well as Faculty Council—reported on faculty concerns about these issues at the December 16 Faculty Council meeting. According to committee minutes, Shipman also recommended that Faculty Council undertake a "comprehensive review" of admissions criteria, policies, and procedures. But when a motion to that effect was put to a vote, it was narrowly defeated by committee members who argued that such a review was more

appropriate to the function of the Educational Policies Committee (EPC). Faculty Council then approved a motion referring the matter to EPC.

At the next Faculty Council meeting (according to the January 9 minutes), Dean Mary Margaret Smith reported that EPC would consider two questions in its review of admissions policies and procedures: (1) Are the current admissions criteria appropriate? and (2) Are the current procedures appropriate relative to the criteria?

She also reported that the sought-after information about this year's committee cases would now be supplied both to Admissions and Scholarship and to EPC. This information, she said, would include the high-school GPA, high-school class rank, and ACT distribution for the 69 committee cases as well as data about their academic performance and retention at Wartburg. (No data about the amount of financial aid disbursed to these students has been released.)

A comparison between this information and comparable information from the fall of 1994 suggests that faculty may have cause for concern.* In the fall of 1996, the college admitted 12 first-year students who scored below 16 on the ACT (the 5th percentile nationally); in 1994, only 1 such student (with a 15) was admitted. In 1996, 6 students who ranked in the bottom quartile of their graduating classes were enrolled, compared to 1 such student in 1994. In the fall term of 1996, 1 former committee case earned a GPA of 0.00 (still enrolled); in 1994, there was only 1. And after the fall term of 1996, 24 of the 69 committee cases have been placed on academic probation, compared with 5 of 28 in 1994.

* While 1994 was unusual for its small number of committee cases, it is the only year for which sufficient comparable data was readily available. It should also be noted that 1994 was our best year ever for first- and second-year retention.

STUDENTS CITE ACADEMIC REPUTATION AS #1 REASON FOR CHOOSING WARTBURG

A survey of new students conducted by the Career Development Center indicates that most decided to attend Wartburg primarily because of its academic reputation. In response to the question "Why did you choose Wartburg College?" respondents could select only one of seven answers: "academic reputation," "close to home," "family influence," "financial aid," "social reputation," "sports," and "other." Of 190 new students, 56% cited academic reputation. The remaining items ranked as follows: financial aid (13%), sports (9%), family influence (8%), other (6%), close to home (5%), and social reputation (3%).

TIAA-CREF WEB SITE

TIAA-CREF has a web site—<http://www.tiaa-cref.org>—and a gopher site—[//gopher.tiaa-cref.org](://gopher.tiaa-cref.org)

AAUP PRESIDENT WILL ADDRESS IOWA AAUP ON APRIL 5

AAUP President James E. Perley will be the featured speaker at the spring 1997 meeting of the Iowa Conference of the AAUP, to be held in Iowa City on Saturday, April 5. Perley, a professor of biology at the College of Wooster in Ohio, was re-elected in June to an unprecedented second term as AAUP's chief elected officer.

The last time Perley spoke to an Iowa gathering was in the fall of 1994 when he keynoted the Iowa Conference meeting here at Wartburg College.