

## CEPC Green Sheet 06/07-6

At the April faculty meeting CEPC will move the approval of a policy on selectively admitting students to on-campus courses.

Proposed Selective Admission Policy: Departments and programs that seek to institute selective admission procedures for advanced (Level II or III) on-campus courses must first obtain CEPC approval do so.

CEPC will consider new selective admissions cases when a department or program submits a written application to the chair of CEPC no less than one year prior to registration for the term in which the course will be taught. The written application shall consist of

- (a) a rationale,
- (b) a detailed plan for implementation, including a timetable and the means for selecting and admitting students to such courses, and
- (c) a revised catalog description that designates the use of selective admission procedures.

Selective admission procedures may be appropriate if:

- The course features a performance or group project that is intended for public view or that will be presented before an external audience, and the completion and quality thereof depends upon the combination of the unique gifts of individuals and their ability to interact cooperatively. (Courses in which students earn credit for performing or participating in a musical production would be one example.)

OR

- The pedagogy of the course depends upon a high level of interaction among a small group of capable and committed students. (A course requiring peer review of written work would be one example.)

CEPC will consider the merit of such proposals using the following guidelines.

1. Enrollment pressure alone does not serve as the justification for instituting a selective admission policy.

2. The desire to teach a course to the very best majors or concentrators in a department or program is not sufficient justification for instituting a selective admission policy.
3. Departments must explain and justify why specified course prerequisites are not sufficient preparation for students who might wish to enroll in the advanced course(s) under consideration.
4. The admission procedure must be clearly stated and well publicized in the appropriate college and departmental documents or web resources. Students must be informed of selective admission procedures at least two months in advance of registration for the advanced course.
5. The selection process must ensure fairness to all students who apply to take the course; standards of evaluation shall be applied consistently.
6. Parallel learning opportunities may exist for students who are not admitted to selective admission courses.

Comment on the motion:

This policy, to be included in the Faculty Handbook, will go into effect only after the Faculty of the College approves it. It will not be applied retroactively to extant courses that currently use selective admission procedures. It applies only to on-campus courses since off-campus courses are governed by a completely different system that includes IDOCS rather than CEPC.

Rationale for the motion:

In considering recent proposals to implement selective admission for advanced courses, CEPC found that the college currently has no policy on this issue. This prompted us to reflect on the appropriateness of selective admission to advanced classes and on the impact that selective admission practices might have on individual students and on the curriculum as a whole.

Selective admission is an important matter of educational policy that raises fundamental questions about fairness and the values of the college. Our current lottery system provides equal opportunities to all students who satisfy the prerequisites, regardless of their talents. It thus affirms important values of St. Olaf College and is consistent with its historic mission. These values include fairness and an egalitarian ethos that is distrustful of honors programs and any other means by which students might be tracked into separate and unequal courses. To the extent that selective admission courses violate these values, they should be discouraged.

However, there are good reasons not to rule out selective admission courses altogether. Existing courses with selective admission have served students and the college well without compromising our values. New courses of the type specified in the proposal would create new learning opportunities, like those that already exist, in which special talents can be developed and nurtured. It would not be fair to deny the students who are in a unique position to benefit from such courses that opportunity out of a concern for abstract fairness or merely because, as a matter of historical fact, the course that would serve them best was not approved before some policy went into effect.

The proposed policy tries to insure that we continue to affirm our traditional values of fairness in the allocation of scarce educational resources and equality of educational opportunities, without lowering the quality and variety of those resources and opportunities. We have proposed a single set of principles that can be applied across departments and programs to determine whether selective admission is warranted for an advanced course. In this way, all departments and programs are treated as equals. In addition, this policy insures that the procedures for selecting students will be fair and transparent. Moreover, by placing the responsibility for approving selective admission procedures with CEPC, we insure that the impact of selective admission courses on the College as a whole can be monitored.