

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Ad Hoc Committee for Graduate School Test Preparation

DATE: January 9, 2006

RE: Committee Recommendations

Committee Members include: Quentin Kidd (GOVT), Lori Underwood (PHIL), Don Hicks (BUSN), Costa Gerousis (PHYS), Mary Wigginton (Financial Aid), Anita Teiman (Career & Counseling), Bobbye Bartels (CLAS), and Connie Gianulis (International Initiatives and Fellowships).

Background:

At an early November 2005 meeting with the Senate Executive Committee, President Tribble asked Provost Summerville and Senate President Tracey Schwarze to put together an ad hoc committee of faculty and administrators to develop a plan whereby CNU would offer prep courses on campus for students studying for the various graduate entrance exams. The president wanted courses to begin no later than Fall 2006, and eventually wanted courses available for all of the major prep tests offered (as needed) during each long term. The major prep tests include: Graduate Record Exam (GRE), Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT), Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), and the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT).

Private companies (such as Kaplan) offer prep courses. There are two problems with this arrangement. First, we have so far been unsuccessful in convincing any of these private companies to offer courses on campus. They currently offer courses at William & Mary and Hampton University, and fear that those courses would not make (they need a minimum of 20 apparently to be profitable) if they also started offering them at CNU. Secondly, the cost of these for-profit courses runs around \$1,400.

Research:

Committee members conducted research to look at several things:

- Do colleges and universities offer their own prep courses;
- If so, how were these courses structured, where were they housed within the institution, and what variety of courses were offered; and

- If so, what were the costs of courses offered.

Findings:

First – many colleges and universities offer their own prep courses. We found prep courses offered by small liberal arts schools and major research universities. We found prep courses offered by schools in rural settings and those in major metropolitan areas.

Second - the overwhelming majority of these prep courses were managed by offices of career services and housed within that administrative unit. The “normal” prep course consisted of 6-8 sessions with a pre-test and post-test. The sessions were divided between the major parts of the test (verbal, analytic, and quantitative, for example). The prep courses were designed around major texts such as the Kaplan or Princeton Review study guides. Subject matter experts were contracted to teach the individual sessions, and the career services office handled administrative management of the course. The most commonly offered prep course was for the GRE, which is the common graduate school entrance exam. The larger (and the wealthier, we assume) the school, the more variety we found in course offerings. Larger universities tended to offer prep courses in all major areas while smaller schools were obviously limited in their offerings. These courses were almost never offered for college credits.

Third – we found a wide range of prices, from as high as \$800 at Boston-area universities to as low as \$75 at a private rural university in Texas. The average cost was around \$400 per course, and this included administrative costs (such as photocopies, etc.), textbooks, and honorarium for subject matter experts.

Recommendations:

We believe that CNU can support graduate school prep courses and thus recommend that CNU conduct a trial run during fall 2006. Specific recommendations include:

- Career & Counseling Services manage the administrative matters. Dr. Tieman has indicated that the new Director of Career Services will be able to manage this responsibility. In addition, the Provost indicated that additional staff support could be made available to Career Services for this function if that is needed.
- At minimum a trial running of the GRE prep course should be offered in the fall of 2006.
- Costs of the prep courses should be such that the courses are accessible to students with varied financial situations. The

committee recommends financial aid of some sort for students with demonstrated financial need. It should be noted that state and federal financial aid cannot be used for courses such as these and so any financial assistance must be built into the overall cost. The chart below outlines a variety of tuition levels. The course administrator would obviously have to adjust these costs as factors dictate.

	# of hours	#of sessions	cost of instructors ¹	Materials ²	Min #of students	Cost per student
A	15 hours	6	3000	50	15	\$203.33
B	24 hours	8	4000	50	15	\$270.00
C	15 hours	6	3000	50	20	\$152.50
D	24 hours	8	4000	50	20	\$202.50
E	15 hours	6	3000	50	10	\$305.00
F	24 hours	8	4000	50	10	\$405.00
G	15 hours	6	3000	50	25	\$122.00
H	24 hours	8	4000	50	25	\$162.00

Notes:

¹Assumes a \$500 honorarium per session

²Barron's How to Prepare for the GRE costs \$29.99 at the CNU bookstore. Students could use on-line resources to find a less expensive copy. Some places use materials in addition, hence the \$50