

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.81-49

## MEMORANDUM

To SENATE

From SENATE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS BOARD

Subject REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Date FEBRUARY 5, 1981

Action taken by the Senate Undergraduate Admissions Board, at its meeting of January 27, 1981, gives rise to the following motions:

MOTION 1: "That Senate approve that the minimum score required in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for admission of international students be revised from 550 to 570, effective for admission into the 1981-3 semester.

MOTION 2: "That Senate approve that exceptions to the 570 TOEFL score may be made by the Office of Admissions for students applying directly from third world countries, or for students holding scholarships through CIDA, for example."

### Rationale

During discussion at SUAB, several additional factors were identified, which relate to the question of English proficiency among foreign students. They include the following:

- a) The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as an instrument for measuring English language competence has certain weaknesses. However, it is also recognized that TOEFL is the best measuring device presently available.
- b) A deficiency in English creates a greater problem at this institution as a result of the emphasis on oral communication in tutorials and seminars.
- c) The recent provincial government task force on international student enrolments recommends that institutions monitor their international student enrolments. It further suggests that "a university re-examine its policy should the enrolment of international students approach eight percent."

Foreign students (visa) have formed 8% of the undergraduate population in both the 1979 and 1980 Fall semesters.

The Provincial Task Force on International Student Policy reported the following data:

|                         | U.B.C.<br>(1979-80) | U.VIC<br>(1979-80) | S.F.U.<br>(Jan. 1980) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Undergraduate           | 258                 | 141                | 709                   |
| Percent of U/G          | 1.2                 | 1.9                | 7.8                   |
| Graduate                | 546                 | 79                 | 151*                  |
| Percent of G.           | 16.6                | 10.0               | 12.7*                 |
| Percent of all students | 3.3                 | 2.9                | 8.4                   |

\* Fall, 1979. Sources: K. Young (UBC)  
G. Smiley (U.Vic)  
R. Brown (SFU)

In 1977-78, 5.3% of all students in Canadian universities were international students.

d) As a result of our admission policies and geographic location, we will be directly affected by the growing number of private schools catering to foreign students.

We are aware of several new private schools in the lower mainland. These schools will enrol primarily foreign students.

One of the values in raising the TOEFL admission score is that it will raise the awareness of these schools to our concern of English language competence. Over time, therefore, it could be expected that applicants will have an improved competence in this area.

e) The University should continue to encourage foreign applications, however, reasonable restraints must be implemented in a time of limited resources.

The recommendations, if approved at the March meeting of Senate, are to be effective for admission to the 1981 Fall semester.

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

## MEMORANDUM

To..... SENATE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS.....  
..... BOARD.....  
Subject..... SUAB 90A.....

From..... ALAN C. McMILLAN.....  
..... DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS.....  
Date..... 23RD JANUARY, 1981.....

### INTRODUCTION

The Task Force on International Students met on Wednesday, January 21st, to reconsider the recommendations contained in Paper, SUAB 90, which were not accepted by the Admissions Board on November 19th, 1980.

The Task Force discussed the issues raised by SUAB. In considering the issues raised, the Task Force continues to recognize the TOEFL test as a test of language proficiency and not of academic ability. The Task Force submits the following information in support of the recommendations being made:--

### RATIONALE:

1. Preliminary information on TOEFL policies at Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions has been obtained from a report which is in progress by the Canadian Bureau of International Education.

The report, "Canadian Institutional Policies and Practices Regarding Foreign Students", surveyed Canadian post-secondary institutions in Fall, 1980. One of the questions in the survey was: "What evidence of English competence do you require from foreign students?"

Of the 65 English-speaking institutions responding:--

- 70% accept TOEFL as proof of proficiency in English.
- Other methods include the Michigan English Language Test, the English Proficiency Test and language proficiency examinations conducted by the institutions themselves.
- The minimum acceptable TOEFL score for most post-secondary institutions (84%) is 550.
- Of the remaining 16% - 12% require 600 and 4% are willing to accept scores lower than 550.

2. The increasing number of private schools in B.C. and Canada that cater to international students will result in more international applicants.

3. Raising our norm will have the desired effect of encouraging these schools and colleges to improve their English language programs.
4. Simon Fraser University's TOEFL requirement should be higher than that in many other post-secondary institutions. International student enrolment at this University is concentrated in particular disciplines where the learning environment in classes would be adversely affected if a substantial proportion of students do not have adequate English language skills.
5. The SAT is an examination given to high school graduands. Since a large proportion of our international students come from post-secondary institutions, SAT is not a relevant examination.

This University and a majority of Canadian institutions have found the TOEFL to be the best instrument available for testing English language proficiency. As the test is designed to evaluate the candidates' level of proficiency in English, a higher score suggests that a greater level of English proficiency has been achieved. The TOEFL test is not intended as a predictor of academic success.

The Task Force feels strongly that the following recommendations will have the desired effect and, therefore, requests SUAB to reconsider its earlier decision.

#### RECOMMENDATION ONE

The Task Force recognizes that the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as an instrument for measuring English language competence has certain weaknesses. However, it is also recognized that TOEFL is the best measuring device presently available and, therefore, the Task Force recommends that the minimum score required for the admission of international students be raised from 550 to 570, effective for admission into the 1981-3 semester.

#### RECOMMENDATION TWO

Exceptions to the 570 TOEFL score may be made by the Office of Admissions for students applying directly from third world countries, or for students holding scholarships through CIDA, for example.

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