

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.79-110

## MEMORANDUM

To SENATE

From SENATE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS BOARD

Subject TOEFL STUDY - FOR INFORMATION

Date OCTOBER 1, 1979

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

## MEMORANDUM

To..... H.M. EVANS

From..... SECRETARY

..... SECRETARY OF SENATE

..... SENATE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS BOARD

Subject..... PAPER SUAB 85 - "TOEFL STUDY"

Date..... 1ST OCTOBER, 1979

The Senate Undergraduate Admissions Board submits  
the attached paper, SUAB 85 - "TOEFL Study" for  
information only.

*Alan C. McWilliam*  
*BF*

Encl.  
ACM:bc

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

## MEMORANDUM

SUAB 85

To: Senate Undergraduate Admissions Board

From: Lolita Wilson

Assistant to the Vice-President, Academic

Subject: TOEFL Scores and Foreign Students

Date: 22nd August, 1979

The effectiveness of the TOEFL as a way of evaluating an applicant's competence in English on admission to the University and the cut-off score of 550 used by Simon Fraser University has been questioned. There has also been considerable interest in the general performance of foreign students. These two concerns are the basis of a study which has recently been completed.

### TOEFL Test

TOEFL (a Test of English as a Foreign Language) was developed in 1963 to test "the English proficiency of non-native speakers of English applying for admission to United States colleges and universities." The initial work was financed by grants from the Ford and Danforth Foundations and the program was then taken over in 1965, by Educational Testing Service which is a non-profit organization.

The test has been revised in the last four or five years and now consists of three parts:

- 1) Listening comprehension - (the questions are taped in standard American English);
- 2) Structure and written expression; and
- 3) Reading comprehension and vocabulary.

All answers are recorded on multiple choice type answer sheets. No attempt is made to have students write essays. This is understandable from the test volume - 134,000 applicants in 1976-77, and the difficulty of providing some type of uniformity in the scoring of essays.

The Educational Testing Service recommends that the test not be used as the sole criterion for rejecting a student, but it is useful when there is some doubt about the student's general background. It is also recommended that each institution develop its own cut-off scores for admission of students.

With the cooperation of the Registrar's office, the transcripts of all students who were not Canadian citizens were examined, for the period of five semesters - 75/3 to 77/1 inclusive. There were 1,261 such transcripts.

The transcripts were then sorted by the country issuing the visa to the student. At this point it was obvious that many of the students came from countries in which the language of instruction would have been English.

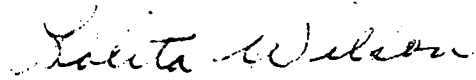
There were 558 students in this group, and there were 15 students who withdrew in the first semester and so had no academic record.

There were 688 students for whom English would be a second language. Their files were examined to determine whether or not they had taken the TOEFL. If they had, only the most recent score was used. Of this group 336 had TOEFL scores - for the remaining 352 the test had been waived. The test is not normally required of applicants who have attended a Canadian secondary and/or post-secondary institution for three years or more. In some instances the test was waived when the applicant, in personal interview, showed an acceptable level of spoken English. As the results of the study show, the grade point averages of those who had taken the TOEFL and those who had not were almost identical.

The flaw in this method of assessing the effectiveness of the test is that students who did not meet the cut-off score of 550 were not admitted to the University and there is no way of checking on their progress. However, the TOEFL average at Simon Fraser University is 581 which might lend some assurance to the admissions office in their selection methods.

An additional aspect of the study was the number of students making use of the English 010 course. Again, the results show only those students who received credit in the course, but not the number who had actually enrolled in the course, or the number who may have repeated it. Since so many of the students indicated Chinese as the primary language, a note was made of the numbers who took Chinese language courses as a possible way of enhancing the GPA. The number of courses taken by these students was not sufficient to influence the GPA significantly.

The conclusions of the study are that students for whom English is a second language are doing as well as the average Simon Fraser student and the use of the TOEFL is a reasonable way of determining the applicant's ability to cope with English as a language of instruction. No change in the cut-off score of 550 is recommended.



Lolita Wilson

:ams

att.

Students who are not Canadian  
Registered in semesters 75/3 - 77/1 inclusive N=1261

|                               |   |             |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------|
| English as a first language   | - | 558         |
| English as a foreign language | - | 688         |
| Records of students who with- |   |             |
| drew first semester           | - | 15          |
|                               |   | <u>1261</u> |

English as a first language - N=558

|                | <u>Males</u> | <u>Females</u> |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Australia      | - 7          | 22             |
| New Zealand    | - 5          | 6              |
| United Kingdom | - 118        | 92             |
| United States  | - 127        | 166            |
| Other          | - 9          | 6              |
|                | <u>266</u>   | <u>292</u>     |

Visa

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| Student   | - 87       |
| Immigrant | - 462      |
| Visitor   | - 9        |
|           | <u>558</u> |

English as a foreign language - N=688

|            | <u>Total</u> | <u>N=336</u><br><u>Toefl</u> | <u>N=352</u><br><u>No Toefl</u> |
|------------|--------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Sex</u> |              |                              |                                 |
| Male       | - 374(54%)   | 177                          | 197                             |
| Female     | - 314(46%)   | 159                          | 155                             |

Visa

|            |            |     |     |
|------------|------------|-----|-----|
| Student    | - 298(43%) | 230 | 68  |
| Immigrant  | - 369(54%) | 97  | 272 |
| Visitor    | - 7( 1%)   | 2   | 5   |
| Diplomatic | - 14( 2%)  | 7   | 7   |

Toefl

|                        |       |
|------------------------|-------|
| Scores Available       | - 336 |
| Scores Waived          | - 101 |
| Scores not applicable- | 31    |
| Scores not available - | 60    |
| Special, Qual. etc. -  | 39    |
| Attended Canadian      |       |
| Sec. Post/Sec.         |       |
| Institutions           | - 121 |

|                                        | Total    | N=336<br>Toefl | N=352<br>No Toefl |
|----------------------------------------|----------|----------------|-------------------|
| <u>Admission - Clear - N=628 (91%)</u> |          |                |                   |
| Canadian GR. XII & XIII -              | 186(27%) | 113            | 73                |
| Can. Coll. & Univ. -                   | 154(22%) | 78             | 76                |
| U.S. Coll. & Univ. -                   | 35( 5%)  | 17             | 18                |
| Mature Student -                       | 39( 6%)  | 6              | 33                |
| Qualifying -                           | 61( 9%)  | 12             | 49                |
| Teaching Certificate -                 | 12( 1%)  | 2              | 10                |
| Other -                                | 141(21%) | 80             | 61                |

Admission - Special Entry - Appeals - N=60 (9%)

|                      |         |    |    |
|----------------------|---------|----|----|
| Can. Gr. XII -       | 7( 1%)  | 6  | 1  |
| Can. Coll. & Univ. - | 33( 5%) | 14 | 19 |
| U.S. entries -       | 8( 1%)  | 5  | 3  |
| Other -              | 12( 2%) | 4  | 7  |

Number of Appeals

|                 |          |    |    |
|-----------------|----------|----|----|
| One appeal -    | 23(3.3%) | 10 | 13 |
| Two appeals -   | 10(1.5%) | 5  | 5  |
| Three appeals - | 3( .4%)  | 2  | 1  |

|                      |      |       |      |
|----------------------|------|-------|------|
| High School GPA -    | 2.78 | 2.77  | 2.80 |
| Transfer Hours -     | 33.6 | 32.3  | 35.2 |
| Semester Regist. -   | 3.5  | 3.7   | 3.2  |
| SFU Hrs. Regist. -   | 38.1 | 45.4  | 31.1 |
| SFU Hrs. Credit -    | 37.1 | 43.3  | 31.2 |
| Total Credit Hours - | 54.8 | 62.36 | 47.6 |
| SFU Sem. GPA -       | 2.46 | 2.44  | 2.47 |
| SFU Cum. GPA -       | 2.51 | 2.51  | 2.51 |

Total Toefl Score Average 581.4 (s.d. 37.9)

No. of Chinese Language Courses

|         |    |    |    |
|---------|----|----|----|
| One -   | 85 | 68 | 17 |
| Two -   | 43 | 36 | 7  |
| Three - | 24 | 20 | 4  |

English 010 - Credit - 63 40 23

Academic Category - Clear

|                 |     |     |     |
|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Current -       | 445 | 217 | 228 |
| SFU Grad. -     | 53  | 36  | 17  |
| Withdrew -      | 63  | 25  | 38  |
| Completed PDP - | 9   | -   | 9   |
| Other -         | 3   | 1   | 2   |

|  |              | N=336        | N=352           |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
|  | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> | <u>No Toefl</u> |

Academic Category - In Academic Difficulty

|                     |   |    |    |    |
|---------------------|---|----|----|----|
| Probation           | - | 76 | 42 | 34 |
| Requir. to withdraw | - | 17 | 7  | 10 |
| Perm. withdrawal    | - | 2  | -  | 2  |
| Withdrew            | - | 9  | 2  | 7  |

| <u>Faculty</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Arts           | 454(66%)     | 238          |
| Science        | 133(19%)     | 69           |
| Education      | 58(9%)       | 12           |
| FIDS           | 43(6%)       | 17           |

| <u>Departments</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <u>Arts</u>        |              |              |
| English            | - 14         | 8            |
| History            | - 9          | 6            |
| Languages, etc.    | - 18         | 7            |
| Philosophy         | - 6          | 2            |
| Archaeology        | - 2          | 1            |
| Economics          | - 56         | 29           |
| Commerce           | - 155        | 101          |
| Geography          | - 4          | 1            |
| Political Science  | - 8          | 1            |
| Psychology         | - 11         | 5            |
| Soc/Anthropology   | - 12         | 8            |
| Arts Undeclared    | - 161        | 75           |

| <u>Departments</u>  | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <u>Science</u>      |              |              |
| Biochemistry        | - 17         | 8            |
| Biological Sciences | - 36         | 14           |
| Chemistry           | - 9          | 5            |
| Mathematics         | - 18         | 11           |
| Physics             | - 6          | 4            |
| Science Undeclared  | - 32         | 19           |
| <u>Education</u>    |              |              |
| P.D.P.              | - 17         | 1            |
| Education           | - 22         | 7            |

Interdisciplinary Studies

|                      |      |    |
|----------------------|------|----|
| B.G.S.               | - 11 | 3  |
| Centre for the Arts- | 1    | -  |
| Computing Science    | - 15 | 3  |
| Communications       | - 20 | 15 |
| Criminology          | - 5  | 2  |
| Kinesiology          | - 5  | 1  |
| FIDS Undeclared      | - 3  | -  |

Countries (by passport designation)

|                   | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> |                       | <u>Total</u> | <u>Toefl</u> |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <u>Group 1</u>    |              |              | <u>Group 2</u>        |              |              |
| 1. Ethiopia       | - 4          | 1            | * 1. Tanzania         | - 17         | 1            |
| 2. Ghana          | - 2          | -            | * 2. Uganda           | - 11         | -            |
| * 3. Kenya        | - 27         | 4            | 3. Mexico             | - 3          | 1            |
| 4. Mauritius      | - 1          | -            | 4. West Indies        | - 4          | -            |
| 5. Nigeria        | - 8          | 1            | 5. Barbados           | - 4          | -            |
| 6. Rhodesia       | - 2          | -            | 6. Dominican Repub.   | - 1          | -            |
| 7. South Africa   | - 7          | 1            | 7. Jamaica            | - 5          | -            |
| 8. Zaire          | - 1          | 1            | 8. Netherlands Ant.   | - 6          | 1            |
| <u>Group 3</u>    |              |              | <u>Group 4</u>        |              |              |
| 1. St. Vincent    | - 1          | -            | * 1. Hong Kong        | - 358        | 250          |
| 2. Trinidad       | - 6          | -            | 2. Cyprus             | - 1          | -            |
| 3. Argentina      | - 4          | 1            | 3. Iran               | - 7          | 2            |
| 4. Chile          | - 5          | -            | 4. Israel             | - 2          | 1            |
| 5. Colombia       | - 1          | 1            | 5. Jordan             | - 1          | -            |
| 6. Guyana         | - 2          | 1            | 6. Lebanon            | - 4          | 1            |
| 7. Brazil         | - 3          | 1            | 7. Turkey             | - 1          | 1            |
|                   |              |              | 8. Sri Lanka (Ceylon) | 2            | 1            |
| <u>Group 5</u>    |              |              | <u>Group 6</u>        |              |              |
| * 1. India        | - 25         | 4            | 1. China              | - 9          | 4            |
| 2. Pakistan       | - 7          | 2            | 2. Japan              | - 2          | -            |
| * 3. Indonesia    | - 10         | 7            | 3. Sth. Korea         | - 2          | 1            |
| * 4. Malaysia     | - 17         | 14           | 4. Taiwan             | - 7          | 6            |
| * 5. Philipines   | - 16         | 3            | * 5. Denmark          | - 10         | 1            |
| 6. Singapore      | - 6          | 2            | 6. Finland            | - 3          | -            |
| 7. Thailand       | - 1          | 1            | * 7. France           | - 14         | -            |
| 8. Sth. Vietnam   | - 1          | -            | 8. Netherlands        | - 6          | -            |
| <u>Group 7</u>    |              |              | <u>Group 8</u>        |              |              |
| 1. Norway         | - 5          | 2            | 1. Italy              | - 3          | 1            |
| 2. Sweden         | - 3          | -            | 2. Portugal           | - 2          | -            |
| 3. Austria        | - 1          | -            | 3. Spain              | - 3          | 2            |
| 4. Czechoslovakia | - 1          | 1            | 4. Yugoslavia         | - 2          | -            |
| * 5. W. Germany   | - 27         | 6            | 5. Fiji               | - 8          | 1            |
| 6. Poland         | - 1          | -            | 6. Belgium            | - 1          | -            |
| 7. Switzerland    | - 9          | 3            | 7. Hungary            | - 2          | -            |
| 8. Greece         | - 7          | 3            | 9. Other              | - 7          | 3            |

Total            N = 64

\*10 or more      N = 11

Lolita Wilson  
Assistant to the Vice-President, Academic  
May 28, 1979