

Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY:

ACTION ITEM

For Meeting of February 4, 2009

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

PROPOSAL ON ELIGIBILITY REFORM

RECOMMENDATION

The President recommends that the Committee on Educational Policy recommend to the Regents that they

1. Adopt changes to the University's Policy on Undergraduate Admissions Requirements generally consistent with the recommendations of the Academic Senate originally presented to the Regents in July 2008 (**Attachment A**).
2. Rescind the existing policy establishing the Eligibility in the Local Context program (**Attachment B**: same document as A) because this policy will now be incorporated in the Undergraduate Admission policy referenced above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following more than two years of intensive study and discussion, the Assembly of the Academic Senate in June 2008 adopted proposed changes to the University's current freshman eligibility policy based on recommendations from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools and the Academic Council. The goals of this proposal are to increase the quality of the students admitted to the University and the fairness of the process by which they are identified and selected. The proposal will accomplish these goals by:

- Extending an offer of guaranteed admission somewhere within the University of California to a slightly smaller group of students than is currently guaranteed; on average students in this group would have significantly higher grades and ACT/SAT scores than students who are currently guaranteed.
- Identifying a larger group of students who are eligible for consideration by the campuses to which they apply. Campuses would admit only those they considered best qualified, based on local comprehensive review criteria and policies. This larger pool of potential applicants would be more diverse than UC's current eligibility pool. Students in this

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group who were not admitted would not receive offers through the referral pool but would simply be denied.

These proposed changes were presented to the Board of Regents in July 2008 and have since been discussed at three special meetings of the Committee on Education Policy held in September and October of 2008. They have also been presented to high school counselors, members of the Legislature and their staffs, and other interested parties.

Based on this consultation and discussion, the President now recommends the adoption of the Senate recommendations as presented in July 2008 with one change, as described below. Specifically, the President recommends changes that will allow the University to:

1. Expand the opportunity to be *considered* for freshman admission to all California students who:
 - complete at least 11 of UC's 15 required college preparatory courses by the end of their junior year in high school
 - achieve a GPA of at least 3.0 (weighted with additional grade points for up to eight semesters of honors-level courses) and
 - take either the ACT Plus Writing or the SAT Reasoning Examination.

These students, who would be considered "Entitled to Review" (ETR), would receive a full comprehensive admissions review on any campus to which they apply but would not be guaranteed admission at another campus if they were they turned down. Students would still be required to complete the full set of required courses by high school graduation. *The proposed GPA of 3.0 (weighted) represents a change from the Senate recommendation of a minimum GPA of 2.8 unweighted.*

Prospective students would no longer be required to take additional SAT subject examinations, although applicants could still submit scores from these examinations as part of their credentials to be considered during campus-level admission processes.

2. Provide a *guarantee* of admission to at least one campus to all California high school graduates who meet the requirements above for admissions consideration *and* who rank in the top nine percent of students either in the state (as determined by an index of grades and ACT/SAT scores in which higher grades compensate for lower test scores and vice versa) or within their own high schools (as determined by GPA ranking at the end of the 11th grade among students from their schools who successfully complete a prescribed set of a-g courses). Applicants who meet the requirements to be considered in the top nine percent in the statewide or local context and who are not admitted to any UC campus to which they apply will be offered admission through the referral pool to an alternate campus with available space.

As is the case now, students will submit applications to each campus they wish to attend. Each campus will review every application it receives according to its own comprehensive review policy and without regard to the category of eligibility into which the applicant falls. Following

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this campus review and selection process, students described in paragraph 2 who are not admitted will be offered admission to at least one campus somewhere in the system.

Analyses based on the 2007 California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) Eligibility Study data indicate that roughly 21.4 percent of California public high school graduates would meet the criteria to be considered for admission (Entitled to Review). Just under half of these (10.1 percent of all public high school graduates) would be eligible for guaranteed admission to at least one campus as a result of ranking in the top nine percent of graduates statewide or from their own schools.

BACKGROUND

Overview of Current Policy and Proposed Changes

UC's current undergraduate admission policy has two components:

- (1) University-level eligibility. Under UC and state policy, UC establishes criteria that define the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of California public high school graduates. These students are deemed "UC eligible" and UC has historically guaranteed that all eligible students who apply will be offered admission to the University, though not necessarily to the campus or major of their choice. Students who do not meet UC's eligibility criteria may apply, but are not guaranteed admission and on some campuses they may not receive a full application review. UC policy on Admission by Exception limits to six percent of new students the number of ineligible applicants who may be enrolled on any campus.

UC's current eligibility criteria encompass three academic areas: completion of a required set of UC-approved college preparatory courses (the 'a-g' courses); achievement (grades earned) in those courses; and scores earned on a prescribed set of admissions tests that includes two SAT subject examinations. Students can become eligible via three paths: achieving grades and test scores that place them in the top 12.5 percent of all graduates statewide; achieving grades that place them in the top four percent of their high school's graduates and completing the University's test requirements ("Eligibility in the Local Context" or ELC); or achieving above a specific combination of scores on the required admissions tests ("Eligibility by Examination Alone"). Both the statewide and ELC paths require students to achieve a minimum GPA of 3.0 (weighted) in their a-g courses.

- (2) Campus-specific admission selection. When selecting which applicants to admit, individual campuses apply the University's "comprehensive review" policy. This policy specifies a broader range of fourteen academic and non-academic criteria and instructs campuses to review all eligible applicants *in the context* of opportunities and challenges they have experienced. UC-eligible students who are not admitted to any of the campuses to which they apply are admitted to other campuses that have room for them in a process known as "referral." Currently, UC Merced and UC Riverside accept referral applicants.

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This proposal retains most of the key elements in the University's current eligibility and admission policy:

- Prospective students must complete UC's full a-g course pattern, achieve a GPA in these courses of at least 3.0, and submit scores from either the ACT with Writing or the SAT reasoning exam.
- To be admitted to a specific campus to which they apply, students are evaluated according to the campus' comprehensive review policy, which places greatest weight on academic qualifications but also considers achievement in other areas and examines all achievements in light of the student's educational and personal context.
- Students whose combination of GPA and test scores place them among the highest achieving in the statewide context or whose GPA places them among the best in their local context are guaranteed admission somewhere in the system if they are not selected through comprehensive review at any of the campuses to which they apply.
- Students who meet current requirements for Eligibility by Examination alone would be guaranteed a review (ETR).
- University policy on Admission by Exception would remain unchanged.

The proposal differs from current policy in three principal ways:

- *The proposal eliminates the requirement that all students take two SAT Subject Examinations.* UC is the only public university in the country to require students to take two subject examinations; in fact, very few private universities have such a requirement. As a result, many otherwise well qualified students do not take the subject tests and are therefore ineligible, regardless of how well prepared they are in other respects. Research indicates that the subject examinations add little to the University's ability to identify students who are likely to be successful, beyond what can be learned from their GPAs and ACT/SAT scores. The Academic Senate concludes that UC's ability to draw from and identify the best qualified students will be enhanced when this barrier is removed.
- *The proposal expands the pool of students who will be **considered** if they apply to UC while at the same time slightly reducing the number who are **guaranteed** admission.* Removing the requirement that all applicants take the SAT subject examinations expands the number of students who qualify to be considered for admission. *However, under this proposal, not every student in this expanded pool would be guaranteed admission if not selected through comprehensive review.* Rather the *guarantee* of admission would be restricted to a smaller group of students whose academic qualifications would be higher than those of the students currently guaranteed admission.
- *Within the smaller subset of students who are guaranteed admission, the proposal changes the balance between those considered highest-achieving among California's full graduating class and those who achieve most highly relative to students within their own schools (ELC).* Under the new proposal, the statewide guarantee group would be narrowed from 12.5 to 9 percent and the ELC group would be expanded from 4 to 9 percent. (Because these two groups overlap substantially, their combination yields

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10.1 percent of graduates.) As is the case now, students in the ELC group would still need to complete the a-g courses, achieve at least a 3.0 GPA, and take the ACT or SAT. As noted above and described in greater detail below, this guaranteed group would be smaller and would present higher grades and test scores than the currently guaranteed group.

The Academic Senate recommended, and the President concurs, that these changes be implemented beginning with students who apply for admission for fall 2012. This lengthy lead time gives students and schools ample time to understand and prepare for the new requirements and allows campuses adequate time to consider any adjustments to their local comprehensive review policies and procedures they may wish to make. The Senate also proposes, and the President agrees, that the Academic Senate would be required to report annually on implementation of the new policy and to prepare a comprehensive evaluation of the academic and fiscal impacts of the changes after five years, recommending further changes, if needed.

Impacts of the Proposed Plan on the Composition of the Eligibility Pool

When this proposal was first introduced to the Regents in July 2008, data from the 2007 CPEC Eligibility Study were not yet available. As a result, the impacts of the changes on the composition of UC's eligibility pool were projected using 2003 data. One of the President's principal reasons for extending the time in which to consider the proposal was the desire to study its impacts using more recent and more reliable data.

CPEC's results were released in December 2008 and have been used to update the previous analyses. These new data essentially confirm the previous projections, with some small changes. For example, using the 2003 data, the Academic Senate had estimated that the ETR requirements would capture approximately 21.7 percent of California high school graduates, that the mean GPA (weighted and capped at 8 honors points) of these students would be 3.55, and that the subset of these students who qualified for an admissions guarantee would include 9.7 percent of all graduates and have an average GPA of 3.84. Using the new data and the revised minimum GPA recommended by the President, we estimate that 21.4 percent of 2007 graduates meet the ETR requirements and that their mean GPA will be 3.62. The subset who are guaranteed admission will include 10.1 percent of graduates and will have a mean GPA of 3.90 (this compares to 13.4 percent of graduates who met our current requirements for guaranteed admission and whose mean GPA was 3.73).

The table below compares the size, racial/ethnic composition, and academic indicators of students in our current eligibility pool with those in the proposed ETR pool and the subset of that pool that would be guaranteed admission somewhere in the system. It should be noted that this comparison is based on the characteristics of students who graduated from high school in 2007; *the characteristics of those graduating in 2012 will obviously not be the same*. This table indicates that if the ETR requirements were in place in 2007, the demographic characteristics of students in the guaranteed portion of the pool would remain roughly similar to those of the current pool, although, as noted above, academic indicators would increase substantially. In the

larger ETR pool, both African American and Chicano-Latino students would increase as a proportion of the total.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Students Currently Eligible and Entitled to Review

(Based on 2007 CPEC Eligibility Study)

Characteristics	Currently Eligible Under Existing Policy	Projected Entitled to Review Pool ¹	
		Total Students In Pool	Students Guaranteed Admission ²
TOTAL	46,795	76,141	35,475
% of CA Public High School Graduates	13.4%	21.7%	10.1%
Mean High School GPA (weighted, capped)	3.73	3.62	3.90
Average SAT Reasoning Score: Critical Reading + Math + Writing	588	551	605
Ethnic Group (% of Total)			
African American	3%	4%	3%
Chicano/Latino	19%	21%	18%
Native American	<1%	<1%	<1%
Asian American	33%	25%	30%
White	43%	47%	47%
Other/Unknown	2%	2%	2%
Percent Disadvantaged Schools (State rank on Academic Performance Index-API of 1, 2, or 3)	17%	18%	17%

Relationship to the Master Plan

The 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education called on UC to set standards for admission corresponding to the top 12.5 percent of California public high school graduates (with the same standards applied to California residents attending private high schools). Responsibility for determining admissions criteria is left to UC. The Master Plan and UC policy have been amended to specify that California residents who meet these standards will be guaranteed admission to the UC system, though not necessarily to the campus or program of their choice. UC currently implements this guarantee by granting referral pool offers at campuses that have remaining admissions space to UC-eligible students not admitted on any of the campuses to which they apply.

The new proposal would define the top 12.5 percent differently than in the past. Students who fall in either the top nine percent in the state or the top nine percent of their class—together representing just over ten percent of the high school graduating class—would be guaranteed as

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they are now. The rest of the admissions spaces needed to meet the Master Plan target and the state's access goals would be admitted from the larger ETR pool.

The new policy thus adopts the reasonable position that about ten percent of California's high school graduates should be guaranteed an offer of admission somewhere within the system, based solely on their very high test scores and GPAs, while requiring more information (via the application for admission and comprehensive review) to determine the balance of the admit pool.

Implications for Application Volume and Processing Costs

One goal of this proposal is to strengthen the applicant pool on each campus by encouraging more high-achieving students to apply. The magnitude of this change is difficult to project, but Office of the President staff estimate that total applications to UC could increase by 14-19 percent. Increases at individual campuses might range from 6 percent to 20 percent.

This larger applicant pool from which to select prospective students means campuses will incur additional processing costs. However, applicants are charged fees for each application they submit, so the University will also see increased fee revenues proportionate to the increase in workload. Office of the President staff are currently reviewing the allocation and distribution of application fee revenues to ensure that campuses receive sufficient revenue to cover their increased costs. In addition, campus admissions offices are actively working with the Office of the President, and in consultation with the Academic Senate, to identify opportunities for reducing costs by sharing some of the processing tasks associated with campus review of applications.

Estimated Admission Impacts

Estimating the potential impact of this proposal on the academic and demographic profile of students admitted to the University is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the proposal is not scheduled to be implemented until fall 2012, but the University has only 2007 data on which to base projections. Additionally, it is highly likely that campuses will make refinements to their local policies over the next few years and these will change the projected outcomes. Finally—and perhaps most importantly—students will no doubt adjust their behavior in terms of both preparation and application in response to these changes, and the University cannot reliably predict the nature of these behavior changes. *For all of these reasons, projected admissions impacts must be considered highly imprecise.* Nonetheless, questions about the likely admission impacts are reasonable and Office of the President staff have attempted to address them. The results of these very preliminary projections are displayed below.

These estimates are based on data from the 2007 CPEC Eligibility Study and UC applicant and admission outcomes in the same year (including an assumption that UC would admit the same number of applicants that it admitted in 2007). They assume (1) that all students who actually applied in 2007 and meet the ETR criteria would apply under the new policy; (2) that some students who did not apply but are now in the larger ETR pool would apply; and (3) that newly-eligible students in the “guaranteed” portion of the pool would be more likely to apply than those

who are ETR but not guaranteed. They also assume that the general patterns of admission that pertain now would continue, and that all guaranteed applicants would be admitted somewhere in the system. *As noted above, they cannot estimate the impacts of any changes in campus or applicant behavior in response to this proposal.* Because of the inherent imprecision in such projections, the percentages of students from different groups are expressed as ranges.

These projections show that the average academic characteristics of students admitted to UC will remain very high: average GPA is estimated in the range of 3.70 – 3.73 and average test scores for each component on the SAT would range from 571-576 on an 800-point scale. Representation of students from different racial and ethnic groups would also be relatively stable, with small increases projected for African American and Chicano-Latino students, and moderate declines for Asian Americans and increases for Whites. *It should be noted that these data reflect simulated admissions, not enrollments, and that student behavior will affect the final enrollment levels.* For example, the University knows that Asian American students are more likely than students from other groups to accept admission offers and white students less likely. Therefore, it is likely that final enrollment numbers will be closer to current levels than projected in these data.

Because CPEC data do not include family income, our best measure of socio-economic diversity is the schools attended by students who are projected to apply and be admitted. This measure shows the most significant change: even though average grades and test scores remain stable, the proportion of students from California's most challenged schools (defined as API 1-3—those whose Academic Performance Index scores place them in the lowest three deciles of California schools) would increase substantially.

TABLE 2
Entitled to Review: Preliminary Projection of Admitted Students

Characteristics	ACTUAL ADMITS 2007-08	PROJECTION OF 2007-08 ADMITS	
		Total Admits LOW	Total Admits HIGH
Mean High School GPA (weighted, capped)	3.75	3.70	3.73
Average SAT Reasoning Score: Critical Reading + Math + Writing	581	571	576
Ethnic Group (% of Total)			
African American	4%	4%	5%
Chicano/Latino	19%	19%	22%
Native American	1%	<1%	<1%
Asian American	36%	29%	32%
White	34%	41%	44%
Other/Unknown	6%	2%	3%
Percent Disadvantaged Schools (State rank on Academic Performance Index-API of 1, 2, or 3)	14%	18%	21%

Potential Impact on the Number of Enrolled Students

The Eligibility Reform proposal is not expected to have any direct impact on the *number* of students the University enrolls. UC's short- and long-term enrollment plans and targets are determined based on general demographic patterns, the access goals of the state, state and University financial resources available to support academic programs and campus services, and campus physical capacity and planning.

(Attachments A and B are in the same document)