

Office of the President
July 1, 2004

TO MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY:

ITEM FOR ACTION

For Meeting of July 14, 2004

**ACADEMIC SENATE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS**

The President recommends that the Committee on Educational Policy recommend to The Regents that changes in the requirements for freshman eligibility recommended by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) and adopted by the Assembly of the Academic Senate on June 30, 2004 be approved as follows:

- (1) Effective for students entering UC as freshmen for Fall 2005, the calculation of the GPA for determining Eligibility in the Statewide Context shall reflect grades earned in all "a-g" courses taken in the 10th and 11th grade, consistent with current requirements for students Eligible in the Local Context. Students identified as Eligible in the Local Context shall complete the University's course and test-taking requirements by the end of their senior year to be deemed fully eligible, consistent with current requirements for students Eligible in the Statewide Context.
- (2) Effective for students entering UC as freshmen for Fall 2007, the minimum GPA required for students Eligible in the Statewide Context and Eligible in the Local Context shall be increased to 3.1. Additional adjustments shall be made to the Eligibility Index or other factors as needed to bring UC's eligibility rate to 12.5 percent of California public high school graduates.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the University of California establishes its freshman eligibility standards such that the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of the graduating public high school class will be deemed UC-eligible each year. These eligibility criteria determine who is admissible to the UC system as a whole. Selection for enrollment on an individual campus is based on additional criteria and the comprehensive review process. Changes to eligibility criteria do not affect either campus-level selection or comprehensive review.

The actual percentage of UC-eligible applicants fluctuates from year to year, and CPEC conducts periodic studies to estimate the percentage of students who meet the University's eligibility criteria in a specific year. In May 2004, CPEC published its study of eligibility rates for June 2003 California public high school graduates. This study, which found that 14.4 percent of public high school graduates are achieving UC eligibility, was presented to the Regents on May 19, 2004. Also at that meeting, Academic Council Chair Pitts and BOARS Chair Sawrey presented to the

Board a set of principles to guide the development of revised eligibility criteria that were developed by BOARS and adopted unanimously by the Academic Assembly on May 12, 2004. Based on these principles, BOARS developed recommendations for proposed changes to the University's eligibility criteria to return the size of UC's eligibility pool to the Master Plan target of 12.5 percent. These recommendations were approved by the Academic Council on June 23, 2004 and adopted unanimously by the Academic Assembly on June 30, 2004.

Students currently have three paths to gain eligibility for admission to UC: Eligibility in the Statewide Context, Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC), and Eligibility by Examination Alone. UC's eligibility criteria rely on five measures of academic preparation: completion of the "a-g" required course pattern that is also used by the California State University; the grade point average (GPA) achieved in the "a-g" courses taken during the sophomore and junior years; scores on standardized tests; UC's Eligibility Index (a sliding scale that allows applicants to balance higher grades with lower test scores, and vice versa, to achieve eligibility); and a student's ranking within his or her high school class, based on the UC-computed GPA in "a-g" courses. To arrive at its recommendations, BOARS simulated a range of changes in each of these eligibility programs and criteria and looked at the effects of each.

The Senate's recommendations focus on preserving high academic achievement and likely success at UC, while also maintaining access for high-achieving students from a breadth of different backgrounds. Overall, the simulations conducted by BOARS showed that changes to the GPA required of students were effective in increasing the academic quality of the eligibility pool and the expected academic performance of students enrolled at UC. Raising the GPA also had the least negative impact on populations that are already underserved at UC (e.g., students from schools with high concentrations of low-income, first-generation college students and students from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in UC eligibility pool).

In developing its recommendations, BOARS also considered several factors beyond the academic preparation of UC-bound students. These included:

- the desire to maintain and/or increase the clarity and simplicity of UC eligibility requirements;
- the need to identify changes that can be effected quickly with relatively less disruption for students already in high school; and
- the likely impacts of changes to UC's admission test requirements already approved for implementation in Fall 2006.

Based on all of these factors, the Academic Senate recommends that the following changes to UC freshman eligibility requirements be implemented in a phased plan over the next three years.

1. The GPA calculation for statewide eligibility should be changed so that a student's GPA reflects his or her performance in all "a-g" courses completed in the tenth and eleventh grades. Since this change was made for ELC-eligible students two years ago, this recommendation provides greater consistency between these two paths to eligibility.

2. The ELC program should be revised to:
 - a) require that, to achieve final UC eligibility, graduates identified as ELC at the beginning of their senior year complete UC's course and testing requirements by the end of their senior year (also consistent with statewide eligibility); and
 - b) increase the minimum GPA required from 2.8 to 3.1, consistent with the change for statewide eligibility (#3 below).
3. The minimum high school GPA required for UC Eligibility in the Statewide Context and for ELC should be increased from 2.8 to 3.1. This recommended GPA of 3.1 may ultimately be slightly different depending on the outcome of studies that will be available for the entering class of 2006, done after the adoption of the new SAT I and ACT tests.
4. The Eligibility Index and/or other factors for students Eligible in the Statewide Context be adjusted as necessary to bring UC's overall eligibility rate to 12.5 percent, given all of the above changes.

Recognizing the success of the current ELC program, and to ensure broad access to UC for high-achieving students, the Academic Senate also recommends that BOARS conduct a study of the effects of increasing the percentage of graduates from each California high school who are identified as Eligible in the Local Context.

With regard to timing, the Academic Senate recommends a three-year plan that is designed to (1) bring eligibility rates substantially into compliance with the statewide target within the first year; (2) provide adequate notice to students regarding significant changes such as the increase in minimum GPA; and (3) allow final adjustments to the Eligibility Index or other factors to be made based on the best data available regarding scores from the new admission tests, which may change significantly beginning with the class entering in 2006.

Under this proposal, the changes described above would be phased in as follows:

- **Students Entering in Fall 2005:** Adjustments to calculation of the GPA for students Eligible in the Statewide Context (#1 above) and course and test requirements for students identified as ELC (#2a above) would be put in place. These changes are projected to bring UC's eligibility rate from 14.4 percent to 13 percent. The Academic Senate supports early implementation of these changes because they provide immediate advantages in terms of returning the size of the pool closer to the 12.5 percent target and of increasing the clarity and consistency of UC requirements.
- **Students Entering in Fall 2007:** Increase to 3.1 the minimum GPA for both statewide eligibility (#3 above) and ELC students (#2b above). Making these changes effective for students entering Fall 2007 provides time for UC to inform students of the changes at the beginning of their sophomore year in high school. Based on data currently available from the CPEC Eligibility Study, these changes would bring the size of the eligibility pool to

12.7 percent. The Eligibility Index also would be adjusted as needed to bring UC's eligibility rate to 12.5 percent. In Fall 2006, UC's new admission test policy, which uses the new versions of the ACT/SAT I that will first become available in 2005 and changes the required pattern and weighting of SAT II subject examinations, will become effective. At that time, students will be required to take the revised ACT/SAT I examination as well as two SAT II subject examinations in different "a-g" subjects. Because this already-approved modification of the testing requirements doubles the choice which students have regarding which subject exams to take, BOARS currently has insufficient data to model accurately the effects of this new admission test policy. Deferring implementation of a new Index until 2007 will allow UC to use new data on student performance on the new pattern of required examinations and, therefore, more accurately determine the Eligibility Index needed to reach the Master Plan target. It is also possible that, based on these new data, BOARS could recommend other, minor adjustments in the GPA as well.

These recommendations and the rationale and data underlying them are discussed in greater detail in the [attached report](#).

(Attachment)