Office of the President

TO MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE:

<u>**DISCUSSION ITEM**</u>

For meeting of September 13, 2017

CAMPUS ADMISSION VERIFICATION PROCESSES AND POLICIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This item describes UC's policies and processes for verifying academic information supplied by high school and community college students who plan to attend a UC campus. It identifies the kinds of academic information to be verified for admissions purposes, describes processes by which campuses validate academic information that students provided in their application for admission, delineates the ways in which campuses notify students about the need and importance of supplying this information, and presents data on the number of students who are impacted by campus verification processes.

Last year, more than 210,000 students applied for undergraduate admissions to UC. All of the information on the UC application is self-reported. UC, like all colleges and universities in the U.S., uses official transcripts submitted by high schools and community colleges as well as official test scores from testing agencies, such as the College Board and ACT, to verify that students have completed all necessary requirements for admission to higher education. Every student who is admitted to a campus is informed that their admission is contingent on the completion of specific conditions, such as the submission of an official transcript and test score reports. The verification process is also used to help campuses plan for the fall term. The earlier a campus can confirm that a student is actually planning to attend in the fall – by meeting all conditions of admission – the more effectively it can plan for and deliver necessary academic offerings, and auxiliary programs and services.

UC's practices related to the verification of academic information were highlighted recently by actions at the UC Irvine campus, where serious mistakes have been acknowledged and are being investigated. The findings of an internal audit should be available to the campus on September 30th. Chancellor Gillman will provide preliminary information on the causes of the mistakes, as well as steps by the campus to ensure that similar mistakes will not reoccur.

This written item informs the Regents of campus practices in regard to academic verification and should support robust discussion about the ways in which these practices are meant to serve both the educational needs of admitted students and the University's obligation to maintain institutional integrity in its admission of students.

BACKGROUND

Last year, the University of California system received 210,384 applications for admission to its nine undergraduate campuses, admitting 132,860 students to enroll a combined class of 69,608 students. In reviewing and assessing the qualifications of the 210,000 plus students, all campuses rely on a single application. All of the information on the application is self-reported. That is, students are admitted to the University based on data provided by the applicant when the application is submitted during the fall submission period (primarily November 1-30).

Rationale for Academic Verification

Using self-reported information to make admissions decisions is a widely used practice of selective colleges and universities throughout the nation, especially those that review applications holistically. The time needed to review an application comprehensively is extensive. Since applications are read by multiple readers and Grade Point Averages (GPAs) and test scores are only one part of the broader review, institutions must begin the review process as early as possible. Nevertheless, UC applicants are advised that all self-reported academic information must be verified at a later time, should the student be admitted and choose to attend a UC campus. The University does not require an official transcript as a condition of application, understanding that such a transcript would be both incomplete and inadequate (since final term courses and grades would not be posted on a transcript issued early in the fall of the student's senior year of high school or the last year of community college). This "honor system" has worked well for UC and other universities. Although every year brings some applicants who have intentionally falsified their application or withheld pivotal academic information, the vast majority of admitted applicants submit needed documents on-time (97.5 percent in 2016).

Types of Academic Qualifications

Colleges and universities use official transcripts submitted by high schools and community colleges as well as official test scores from testing agencies, such as the College Board and ACT, to verify that students have completed all necessary requirements for admission to higher education. For example, this information is used to verify that any given freshman applicant has successfully earned a high school diploma, completed necessary "a-g" course requirements for admission, completed and successfully passed necessary standardized examinations, and maintained at least a C average in all senior year courses (both fall and spring grades are not available to application readers because the application must be submitted by November 30, before the fall term is completed).

Transfer students enrolling at a UC campus in advanced standing are also required to submit official transcripts from all colleges attended. This information is used to verify that students have earned the necessary college GPA for the majors they plan to enter, have completed all lower-division pre-major courses that may be necessary for admission to a specific major, and have completed sufficient college credits to enter UC as a junior. In addition, the transcript will verify whether the student has completed the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum at the community college, an important academic milestone because successful

completion means that the student will not have to complete the general education requirements of the UC campus he or she is planning to attend.

Although the verification of academic data is central to the integrity of the admissions standards set by the Regents and the Academic Senate, it is vital for students as well. Receipt of official transcripts and test scores allows the University to waive students from certain requirements or introductory course requirements based on superior prior performance in high school or college, which, of course, helps students to advance to their degree more quickly. For example, UC requires all first-year students to satisfy the entry level writing requirement by earning a sufficient score on the Analytical Writing Placement Examination (AWPE). However, students who can demonstrate proficiency via standardized test scores or prior completion of college-level work are not required to take the AWPE. This waiver, cannot be granted unless the University receives an official notification from the testing agency of the student's performance in English composition or an official college transcript.

Campus Planning, Timing, and Deadlines

The verification process is also used to help campuses plan for the fall term. Course offerings, housing commitments, dining services, orientation programs, and other student services are predicated on the number of students who plan to attend the campus in the fall. The earlier a campus can confirm that a student is actually planning to attend in the fall – by meeting all conditions of admission – the more effectively it can plan for and deliver necessary academic offerings and co-curricular programs and services. For example, at many UC campuses the demand for affordable housing has emerged as a critical issue and has resulted, at times, in wait lists for campus-sponsored offerings. Students not planning to actually attend in the fall remain on wait lists, preventing other students from accessing such services. To the extent a campus can confirm a student's presence in the fall, the better it can serve actual as opposed to anticipated campus needs.

The verification process for UC begins when campuses admit students in early spring. Every student who is admitted to a campus is informed that his or her admission is contingent on the completion of specific conditions. First-year students, for example, must satisfactorily complete their senior year with at least a C average, a requirement that most high school counselors believe is essential to curb "senioritis." Some students have additional provisions linked to their admission. For example, a campus may wish to admit a student who shows exceptional potential, but is missing one "a-g" course. In such cases, the campus will inform the student that UC admission is contingent on the satisfactory completion of this requirement before matriculation to the campus.

Admitted students who are interested in attending a specific UC campus must submit, via a campus web portal, a Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) by May 1 for freshman students and June 1 for transfer students. (These are nationally-established deadlines that are followed by almost all selective colleges and universities in the U.S.) Part of the process of submission requires that students read and agree to meet all conditions of admission, including the submission of official transcripts and test scores. Students also acknowledge that failure to meet

these requirements can lead to either holds on registration for course enrollment or withdrawals of admission offers.

July 1 is UC's deadline for receipt of all official final transcripts and July 15 is the deadline for receipt of official test scores. These deadlines correspond with the availability of information from high schools, community colleges, and testing organizations, and also provide sufficient time for UC campuses to review these documents and clear students for fall enrollment. For example, by July 1, most high schools and colleges have finished their spring terms and can produce an official transcript for their students. Similarly, testing organizations such as the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge A-Levels, and Advanced Placement Programs have sufficient time to post official test score results and forward that information to colleges and universities.

High schools and colleges occasionally may have difficulty producing official documents by the deadlines noted above. For example, two California Community Colleges are on the quarter system, meaning their spring terms do not end until well into the month of June. The Office of the President regularly informs UC campuses of high schools, community colleges, or other organizations that may have trouble generating a transcript in time for these deadlines and instructs them to hold harmless students from these schools until the problems generated by the later than usual submitted documents can be resolved.

These deadlines also serve students, especially those whose conditional admissions are jeopardized by poor academic performance in the final term of high school or community college. For example, campuses may be willing to defer a student's admission to a later term if the student agrees to repeat a course with a better grade. It is also possible that the campus may be willing to admit the student in the fall term, provided that the student completes a specific course at the University that demonstrates mastery of the subject or skills in question. These conversations cannot be initiated, however, unless the student sends the campus an official transcript. Student and institutional options become more constrained as the fall term approaches.

Verification Scope and Outcomes

The vast majority of students who intend to enroll at UC supply needed documentation by the stated deadlines. In 2015 and 2016, the University requested documents from approximately 62,000 and 71,000 students, respectively. Of these students, about 2.5 percent in each year chose not to submit transcripts or other documents. Although the 2017 admissions cycle is still active, campuses are currently reviewing transcripts from about 69,500 students and, as of August 15, 2017, about 6.5 percent of the students have chosen not to submit documents. It is anticipated that this percentage will continue to decline as campuses clear additional applicant files. Moreover, most of these students will not have their admissions withdrawn as campuses continue to work with students to secure the required documents.

Table 1 shows variation among the campuses with regard to the number of students whose admission is withdrawn. Differences *among* campuses are due, in general, to differences in campus admissions selectivity. For example, Berkeley and Los Angeles historically withdraw the admission of relatively few students compared to the rest of the UC system (see also Table 4). As the most popular universities in the US (as measured by cumulative application volume), students admitted to these campuses almost always submit needed documents on-time. Relatively less popular UC campuses are more often the second or third choice of many students who, by not submitting a transcript, signal their intention to enroll elsewhere. Campuses such as Merced, Riverside, and Santa Cruz withdraw the admission of relatively more students because these campuses have a larger number of students who decide not to attend those campuses and thus do not submit their documents. These campuses also have greater variation in the academic profile of admitted students. Although it is not possible to say definitively that more students from these campuses fail to complete the conditions of admission (since the campus never receives the transcript in question), it is nonetheless true that these campuses generally admit students at lower range of selectivity than the other campuses.

Year-to-year fluctuations in the number of admission withdrawals initiated by a single campus are often the result of changes in overall enrollment. As Table 1 shows, for five campuses the differences reflect significant enrollment growth that occurred across the system between 2015-16 and 2016-17. During 2016-17, new undergraduate student enrollment grew by about 15 percent and the number of students who did not submit documents increased about 11 percent. For the current cycle, in a year in which overall enrollment is anticipated to be lower than 2016-17, the number of students who have not submitted transcripts or test scores is down about 60 percent (as of August 15, 2017). It is anticipated, however, that this figure will decline by the time the current admissions cycle has closed.

Finally, differences between numbers of withdrawals between California residents and nonresidents reflect relative differences in the proportion of students who attend the University from these residency groups. Differences among campuses also reflect variations in the relative size of the resident and nonresident populations locally. For example, Table 1 (and Table 4) shows that Merced withdrew the admission of a very small number of nonresidents, reflecting that campus' history of enrolling few students from outside of California.

Table 1: Admission Withdrawals

		Number of Admission Withdrawals Due to Missing Documents and/or Test Scores (Freshman + Transfer)	
		CA Residents	Nonresidents
Berkeley	2016	0	0
	2015	0	0
Davis	2016	146	116
	2015	68	95
Irvine	2016	40*	26*
	2015	51*	34*
Los Angeles	2016	29	33
	2015	29	34
Merced	2016	169	6
	2015	not available	not available
Riverside	2016	382	63
	2015	241	128
San Diego	2016	188	301
	2015	119	188
Santa Barbara	2016	46	22
	2015	25	17
Santa Cruz	2016	122	79
	2015	404	154

* Includes total number of admission withdrawals for missing documents and not meeting conditions of admission.

What are some of the reasons why students do not turn in documentation? The most egregious circumstance is when a student misrepresents credentials on the application. Believing that this misrepresentation will not be discovered before enrollment, some students will wait until the last minute before submitting final documents. Another reason students do not submit transcripts is because they have not performed well academically in their final high school or community college terms and are reluctant to send proof of low performance.

The most common reason students do not provide transcripts or other documents is related to a phenomenon called "summer melt." As college has become increasingly important and the desire to attend selective colleges and universities becomes more competitive, students apply to multiple institutions as a way of hedging their educational bets to attend a good school in the fall.

According to the National Association of College Admission Counseling, the number of students who apply to seven or more institutions has doubled in the past decade.

Although colleges and universities discourage students from making a commitment to more than one college, many students pay multiple deposits to ensure admission to several colleges. (For UC alone, the number hovers around 400-500 students who initially commit to more than one campus.) Thus, the failure to supply a transcript may not necessarily be because the student wishes to hide a bad grade or has forgotten the deadline, but is the student's attempt to signal – obliquely – an intention to attend another institution. The lack of notification makes fall planning more difficult for institutions and disadvantages other students. For example, a student who does not plan to attend a particular institution and has failed to inform that institution prevents *other students* from moving up wait lists for housing, orientation, or course registration.

Campus Practices for Withdrawing Admission Offers for Non-receipt of Verification Documents

Campuses would prefer not to withdraw the admission of a student it has spent many months wooing to enroll in the fall. UC's comprehensive review admissions process involves an intensive and thorough evaluation, designed to make a match with a student who will thrive at a particular campus. Following the admission offer, the campus spends considerable time to convince students to make a commitment to attend in the fall. If the student signals an intention to register in the fall, the campus makes additional investments scheduling the student for orientation, providing guidance concerning course selection and academic planning, and helping her secure housing. To prevent that student from attending undoes that investment, and it also deprives the campus from the benefits the student would bring to the classroom.

Campuses also do not wish to withdraw an admission because of the effect such an action will have on other elements of the student's participation. For example, students whose admission is rescinded may be dropped from orientation programs or housing. Should a student then appeal and be reinstated, the campus would be required to find a new orientation slot or a new housing option, which may be less available the later it is in the summer. None of this, of course, is easy either for the institution or for the student. It is always better to know as early as possible whether a student plans to actually attend a UC campus in the fall.

Before withdrawing the admission of any student, campuses may rely on other markers of student participation. For example, a campus may check to see if the student is planning to attend summer orientation, has signed up for student housing, or has attempted to enroll in classes. None of these circumstances – alone – are determinative. A student may not attend orientation, for example, because of a summer job. Collectively, however, a positive indication of these factors provides insight that a student is making plans to enroll in a specific institution that fall. Conversely, students who have not demonstrated such affirmative behavior – and who have also not submitted official documents – may be signaling that they do not intend to enroll in the fall.

Communication to Students

Campuses remind students of the need to submit official documents by the deadline. These reminders begin when the student submits the SIR on the web portal and agrees, as a function of commitment of the SIR, to submit all needed information. Campuses then send reminders during the spring term, especially as the July 1 deadline approaches.

All campuses communicate important dates and deadlines in their online student portal, as well as on admissions websites and publications, and during admitted student yield events. The student portal displays key tasks, deadlines, and messages prominently. Students are reminded to contact campus admissions offices with questions. Following the deadline, campuses continue to send postal and email reminders (Table 2).

Table 2: Campus Outreach to Admitted Students Regarding Document Submission

Campus	Communication with Admitted Students
Berkeley	• Reminder emails (to all active SIRs) sent ahead of transcript deadline, during May and June. Two emails sent to freshmen; average of three to transfers. • Following a 2-week grace period, individual emails sent to students without transcripts. Two emails sent to freshmen and transfers.
Davis	• 1 postcard deadline reminder via U.S. mail (May/June) • 1 deadline reminder email (May/June) • 1 rescind warning email (late July) • 1 withdrawal notice email (mid-late August) • 1 withdrawal notice letter via U.S. (mid-late August) • Follow-up phone calls to students with missing documents (late July-early August)
Irvine	• Reminder emails to students prior to the July 1 and July 15 deadlines • Student Portal messages throughout July and August regarding pending "to do" items • Follow-up telephone calls to students who have not yet submitted documents • Grace periods for missing documents granted upon request
Los Angeles	• Reminder email sent prior to July 1 deadline • Registration hold email sent in mid/late July
Merced	• Reminder message prior to July 1 • Two weeks after July 1: warning email message to all applicants missing a document requiring a response • 48 hours before the response deadline: reminder email message to those who have not submitted a response • Those that respond to the deadline are given an extended deadline via email to submit documents; usually August 7-10.

Campus	Communication with Admitted Students
	• Last week of July - middle of August. Those that did not respond and are enrolled in courses are given a call/text to work out the missing document issue.
Riverside	• Reminder emails (to all active SIRs) sent ahead of transcript deadline. Students are asked to contact the office if they anticipate having challenges meeting the deadline; extended deadlines are provided if requested. • Reminder emails are sent to students post-July 1 reminding of required deadline. • Admission Counselors call students who are signed up for orientation or who have attended orientation and are still missing documents to find out if the student is still planning on attending UCR. If so, an extended deadline is given to the student.
San Diego	• Five transcript deadline reminder emails are sent to students from May - July 1 reminding of July 1 transcript deadline. • Missing Documents warning emails are sent after July 1 with grace period depending upon circumstances of student. • Follow up email to international freshmen requesting A-Level Results • Follow up phone calls by Operations staff to domestic freshmen who have submitted some but not all transcripts to confirm who is planning to enroll and status of transcript request
Santa Barbara	• Students are sent a list of expected documents with the SIR acknowledgement (via U.S. mail). • Email reminders go out in May and June (typically 3). • A paper (U.S. mail) reminder is sent in early August for students still missing records. • A second paper letter is sent after two weeks if records are still not received.
Santa Cruz	• Missing test score students begin receiving email reminders in March, which continues through mid-July. A total of four communications are sent. • After the SIR deadline, email reminders are sent to the missing records students reminding them of the July 1 deadline. A total of three messages are sent prior to July 1. • About 7-10 days after July 1, when all on-time records are processed, students that still owe records are identified, and are normally given a grace period (short extended deadline) of early August to submit the record. • Additional email/portal communication is done with that cohort as needed.

In late July, campuses that still have significant numbers of students with incomplete files may begin calling students to find out if they still plan to attend the campus or if they are having difficulty submitting needed information. This process continues throughout the summer.

Campus Appeal Processes

What is a student's recourse should admission be withdrawn? Every campus has a process for addressing such situations, as described in Table 3. Every campus has pathway for students to follow should they be inadvertently or incorrectly impacted by UC's processes for academic verification.

Table 3: Campus Appeal Processes for Admission Withdrawal

Campus	Description of Process after Admission Withdrawal Occurs
Berkeley	Appeals considered on a case-by-case basis.
Davis	Students are asked to call Undergraduate Admissions for one-to-one discussion, typically referred to the Director of Evaluations, Operations and Advising.
Irvine	Applicants may submit appeals online (or paper) at any time. Appeals are reviewed by the appeals committee.
Los Angeles	Appeals considered on a case-by-case basis.
Merced	Students submit a letter of appeal to admissions@ucmerced.edu for review.
Riverside	Students can appeal via their MyUCR portal.
San Diego	Students are provided a link to an online appeals form within their withdrawal notice which can be submitted if they have new information warranting additional consideration. A committee reviews and determines whether to reinstate or maintain admission withdrawal. Senior admissions leadership is consulted when appropriate/needed. Missing documents must be submitted and undergo an evaluation by the Associate Director for provisions met for reinstatement of admission. Students are urged to call if actions are taken in error.
Santa Barbara	When transcripts are received with poor or unexpected grades, students are given the opportunity to write a letter of explanation. The letter and circumstances are reviewed by a committee. For missing records, each case is reviewed prior to admission withdrawal to see if UCSB admissions is in touch with the applicant and if he or she is making attempts to obtain the records.

Santa Cruz	For missing records: students may submit a letter of appeal with all missing official records. The committee bases its decision based on new and compelling information as well as contributing factors outside of the student's control, documentation indicating the student's timely request of other institutions for missing information prior to the deadline, and any error on the part of the Office of Admissions.

Preliminary Analysis of 2017 Verification Outcomes

As of this writing, UC campuses continue to request and review thousands of transcripts and test scores as they prepare students for the fall term. (In fact, by the time of the September Regents' meeting, Berkeley and Merced students will have been in classes several weeks.) Table 4 provides a snapshot regarding outcomes at each campus as of August 15.

Table 4: Admission Withdrawals for 2017

Note: data are as of August 15, 2017	Number of Admission Withdrawals Due to Missing Documents and/or Test Scores (Freshman + Transfer)		Number of Students With Offers *Not Withdrawn*, But Still Missing Documents and/or Test Scores (Freshman + Transfer)	
	CA Residents	**Nonresidents**	**CA Residents**	**Nonresidents**
Berkeley	33	21	81	73
Davis	90	123	415	235
Irvine	none as of 8/15*	none as of 8/15*	346	239
Los Angeles	none as of 8/15	none as of 8/15	51	54
Merced	134	5	13	0
Riverside	none as of 8/15	none as of 8/15	457	89
San Diego	118	93	188	224
Santa Barbara	none as of 8/15	none as of 8/15	618	259
Santa Cruz	21	10	286	336

* 290 CA residents and 19 nonresidents were withdrawn but have since been reinstated.

Table 4 reflects a dynamic process that changes daily, as campuses continue to clear students' records upon receipt of transcripts and scores. Columns 2 and 3 in Table 4 reflect a single day in time – August 15 – when campuses were polled regarding the number of students for whom they had withdrawn an admissions offer. Columns 4 and 5 reflect the number of applicants – on the same day – for whom the campus had not yet received all necessary documents. *The figures in columns 3 and 4 do not represent numbers of students whose admission has been withdrawn; in fact, campuses continue to contact these students to solicit needed information.* The number of

open files at the Riverside and Santa Cruz campuses reflects what was described earlier; campuses that are often viewed by students as second or third choices receive fewer needed documents than more popular campuses, although these campuses continue to conduct outreach to these students. Other campuses, such as Davis and Santa Barbara, have put in place local procedures to address specific campus needs. For example, Santa Barbara prepares a "new student profile" for each incoming student that delineates a pathway toward a student's degree. To prepare this profile – and advise students appropriately – the campus requests additional documentation, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge A-Level scores. The campus does not withdraw the admission of students who fail to provide these materials, but continues to solicit this information knowing that it is key to helping students plan their program appropriately for the fall.

Key to Acronyms

AWPE	Analytical Writing Placement Examination
GPA	Grade Point Average
SIR	Statement of Intent to Register