

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC SENATE  
BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS

Minutes of Meeting

July 7, 2017

Part 1: Joint Meeting with the Campus Admissions Directors

I. Welcome and Introductions

- Henry Sanchez, BOARS Chair
- Stephen Handel, Associate Vice President, Undergraduate Admissions

The annual joint meeting is an opportunity for faculty and campus administrators to discuss the relationship between UC admissions policy and practice and assess how well those policies and practices are serving the University and its students.

II. 2016-17 Admissions

State Budget: The 2017-18 state budget has significant implications for UC admissions. The budget withholds \$50 million from the University contingent on its demonstrating a “good faith effort” using “all possible means” to meet a 2:1 freshman to transfer student enrollment ratio on a systemwide basis and at all campuses except Merced by 2018-19. The budget also expects UC to enroll 1,500 more CA resident undergraduates in 2018-19 compared to 2017-18, with costs borne jointly by the state and UCOP.

Fall 2017 Admissions Update: Preliminary admission results released yesterday indicate that UC admitted nearly 70,000 California freshmen for fall 2017. Although this represents a 1.7 percent decrease compared to 2016, UC admitted a historically large number of new freshman residents last year to meet a state mandate to increase enrollment by 5,000. Taken in the broader context of UC’s more modest 2017 resident enrollment growth goal of 2,500, the 2017 number represents a 13.2 percent increase over 2015. In addition, despite a decrease in transfer applications, UC admitted 3.5 percent more California Community College transfers this year compared to 2016. Nonresident admission to the University also increased 4.5 percent this year; however, campuses must ultimately limit their enrollments of nonresident to adhere to the new Regents’ policy.

New Personal Insight Questions: The 2017 UC application required freshmen and transfer applicants to answer four of eight new “Personal Insight” questions developed by the admission directors in 2015. In general, feedback from admissions reviewers and counselors about the questions has been positive. Students also appreciated having a choice of questions. Directors say they created better results by providing more focused insight into applicants and more information directly aligned with the comprehensive review criteria. For the fall 2018 application, the directors have implemented small refinements to two of the questions.

Eligibility Study: The State is preparing its first study of UC eligibility since 2007. The Academic Senate will be asked to review the study and discuss the implications of difference policy choices. The University’s response to the study could have significant consequences for access and diversity, particularly if it asks UC to restrict admissions to meet the 12.5% target specified in the Master Plan.

*Discussion:* It was noted that campus admissions leaders balance admissions goals with campus enrollment targets and yield projections. Campuses respond to higher than anticipated yield with fewer overall admissions offers, and use wait lists to help manage enrollment more precisely. The Regents adopted the nonresident enrollment policy cap in May, adding another layer of uncertainty in the middle of the admissions cycle. UCOP's admissions communication plan should emphasize these and other points, beginning earlier in the cycle.

### **III. Augmented Review Policy**

The Assembly of the Academic Senate approved BOARS' Augmented Review Undergraduate Admissions Policy on June 14. BOARS Chair Sanchez, Senate Chair Chalfant, and Associate Vice President Handel will present the policy to the Regents Committee on Academic and Student Affairs on July 12. A positive vote by the Board will ensure its implementation as systemwide policy.

Senate Chair Chalfant noted that the policy enhances fairness by explicitly allowing application readers who are constructing a case for a student but who encounter specific gaps in the application to request additional supplementary information from a small group of applicants in the form of a questionnaire, seventh semester grades, or up to two letters of recommendation. He said the Regents have delegated authority over admissions policy to the Senate; however, asking the Regents to approve the policy increases transparency and the Regents' involvement in policy decisions. Individual campuses are free to decide which of the supplemental materials to request in an augmented review. BOARS will discuss outcomes from the policy in its Annual Report to the Regents on Comprehensive Review after consulting with admissions directors about different approaches.

### **IV. Transfer Admission Issues**

Associate Vice President Handel noted that the 2:1 freshman-to-transfer enrollment ratio is the dominant transfer admission topic facing the University. UCR and UCSC are under specific pressure to meet the target, but 2:1 is a shared problem that the UC system must address as a whole. The University is committed to the transfer admission path and the Master Plan mandate to reserve a sizable portion of enrollments for transfers. However, the University has to balance the mandate for transfer enrollment growth with the much higher demand for access at the freshman level.

*Discussion:* BOARS members and directors noted that the University is committed to meeting the 2:1 target through positive measures such as increasing transfer outreach and recruitment and strengthening student support services to ensure the success of admitted transfers. However, there are concerns that campuses may be forced to implement less positive measures such as lowering admissions standards and reducing access for California resident freshmen. UCR and UCSC, for example, have developed specific plans for increasing the number of qualified transfer applicants and meeting 2:1 over one, two, and five years, but each plan projects negative consequences for the access and diversity of resident freshmen. There are also concerns that the mandate is not in the best interest of transfer students themselves, in terms of their ability to succeed academically at UC. Some campuses are seeing a larger than normal number of transfers who do not meet the conditions for admission. UCR admitted down to the 2.4 GPA minimum this year and other campuses are feeling pressure to bypass the UC Transfer Pathways and other established preparation standards. The University must support the whole transfer student experience—their academic success, retention, and timely graduation—not just an arbitrary enrollment ratio.

It was noted that the majority of transfers apply to a handful of popular majors, some of which are capped by campuses, making it even more challenging to meet 2:1 and denying admission to excellent students who apply to majors with no room. Another challenge is the weak pipeline from the California Community Colleges, where enrollments have been falling and fewer students are adequately prepared to transfer to UC. UC also faces competition from CSU and online providers, and campuses like UCR have other regional competitors that are attractive to transfers.

The 2:1 mandate has also raised concerns that the state is intruding into the faculty's prerogative to set transfer admission standards. The University should communicate to the public and elected leaders its commitment to access, diversity, and academic quality, as well as the Senate's purview over admissions.

It was noted that the University should increase the profile of the UC Transfer Pathways and the transfer admission guarantee programs in place at six campuses, promote the cost benefit of a UC degree compared to a CSU degree, and communicate the career options associated with less popular majors. It was noted that the UC Academic Senate has been working with its CCC faculty colleagues on a pilot for Associate Degrees for Transfer to UC. It was noted that high school students who earn an Associate's Degree jointly with their high school diploma through the early college, middle college and dual enrollment programs want to enter UC as transfers, but UC policy requires their admission as freshmen.

## **V. Nonresident Admission**

BOARS Chair Sanchez noted that BOARS' 2017 Report to the President on the Compare Favorably Policy describes the numerous analyses BOARS performed over the past year to analyze the complex issues associated with comparing residents and nonresidents and to determine if other metrics might better reflect UC's efforts to monitor compliance with the policy. The report concludes that the existing policy provides appropriate flexibility for campuses while maintaining the University's primary responsibility to California students and ensuring that campuses are admitting nonresidents who perform at least as well as California residents.

*Discussion:* Admissions directors noted that campuses look beyond GPA and test scores in comprehensive review; and similarly, the Compare Favorably assessment should consider multiple factors in addition to GPA and test scores, including the success of admitted students at UC. Directors noted that the financial incentives associated with nonresident enrollment influence campus enrollment targets, but not specific decisions. In addition, because the yield rate for admitted nonresidents is low at the less selective campuses, those campuses must admit a higher proportion of nonresidents to achieve a given yield. It was also noted that some of the public criticism about nonresident admission and enrollment centers not on whether nonresidents can succeed at UC, but that nonresidents are taking seats from CA residents. BOARS members noted that it is important to report GPA and SAT outcomes despite the limitations of those measures in the compare favorably context, which the report discusses in detail.

## **VI. Non-traditional Transcripts**

Admissions directors noted that a handful of elite private high schools and some public high schools are considering a move to competency-based transcripts that do not include a list of courses taken or grades earned. UC campuses have processes in place to review the applications and credentials of

home-schooled students and other populations who present non-traditional transcripts, but it would be difficult for UC to accommodate such transcripts on a large scale. Riverside Unified School District has been discussing the issue, so the trend has the potential to extend beyond elite private institutions, and underscores the need for UC to participate in the dialogue.

## **VII. Strategies for Expanding Student Diversity**

BOARS and the admissions directors discussed strategies for maintaining and increasing student diversity in the context of increasing selectivity. The directors noted that all campuses are concerned about diversity. They meet regularly with a variety of constituencies, community-based organizations, and admissions colleagues to discuss strategies and best practices that will have the biggest impact. They also know it is also important for the University and the state to take a longer term view of diversity initiatives such as LCFF+.

BOARS members noted that it is important for campuses to document their efforts to increase diversity and to provide empirical explanations for positive outcomes to the extent possible. They also noted that the diversity problem cannot be solved solely through admissions policy or by admitting more students. The problem also relates to campus climate and the need to build a critical mass of enrollments and stronger academic and social support systems that produce higher graduation rates. It was noted that UC's 2015 systemwide study of African-American student yield discussed these issues and recommended several changes to policy and practice.

## **PART II: BOARS Meeting**

### **I. Consent Calendar**

- Approval of BOARS July 7, 2017 agenda
- Approval of BOARS June 2, 2017 draft minutes

**ACTION: BOARS approved the consent calendar.**

### **II. Letters of Recommendation Study**

- **Jesse Rothstein, Professor of Public Policy and Economics UC Berkeley**

Professor Rothstein joined BOARS to present his 2017 analysis of the impact of letters of recommendation (LORs) on UC Berkeley admissions during the fall 2017 cycle.

The study examines the differential effect of LORs on applicants from underrepresented groups, to determine whether the inclusion of LORs in the 2017 admissions process affected the relative admissions chances of Berkeley freshman applicants from any of four underrepresented groups (defined collectively as low-income students, students from low performing high schools, first-generation college students, and students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups). The study looks at the effect of 1) the invitation to submit LORs and 2) the LOR on readers' evaluations to determine whether LORs hurt disadvantaged students unable to secure good letters or allowed them to show strengths that quantitative indicators do not reveal.

Professor Rothstein also joined BOARS in November 2016 to discuss his earlier study of fall 2016 admissions, which focused on how the addition of LORs affected the admission of underrepresented students.

For the 2017 study, Berkeley applicants who received the ranking of "possible" based on an initial human or computer-generated read (R1) in December 2016 were invited to submit a LOR. In January/February 2017, a second set of readers with access to the LORs conducted a second evaluation (R2). Final admission decisions were based on scores from the two reads. In April, supplementary readers were hired to re-read applications without LORs to test how readers evaluated a given application with and without a LOR. The study compared scores from those unofficial reads to the official read with LORs. (The third set of readers had access to the R1 scores, but their scores had no effect on the final admission decision.)

The study used a predictive value (the "admissions index" [AI]) generated from the quantitative indicators on the application, to predict the probability of admission in the 2015-16 cycle compared to actual outcomes. The AI is strongly predictive of 2016-17 admissions outcomes. Berkeley's applicant pool is dominated by students with low AIs, and underrepresented applicants are more likely to have low AIs. LOR invitations were similar for underrepresented and non-underrepresented students with the same AI.

The study found that applicants with higher AIs were more likely to submit LORs than those with low AIs. It found that in 2016, a smaller proportion of applicants from underrepresented groups (70 percent) submitted letters when invited compared to non-underrepresented students (89 percent). For no clear reason, this effect was larger in 2016 compared to 2015 (85 percent and 90 percent respectively). The study found that the invitation to submit LORs may have reduced the share of admitted students from underrepresented groups by no more than two percent. Importantly, non-

responses were more concentrated among applicants whose chances of admission were already very low.

The study also found that R2 readers with access to LORs gave applications higher scores, on average, than R3 readers scoring the same applications without access to LORs, and that the positive net impact of LORs was larger for underrepresented students and concentrated among applicants with moderate likelihoods of admission. 37 percent of actual Berkeley admits were from underrepresented groups, while their projected proportion without LORs was 33 percent, a positive four percent difference that more than offsets the negative effect of two percent of the failure to submit letters.

The study ran a regression discontinuity analysis to determine the overall net impact of LOR invitations on the probability of admission which also suggests a positive effect of the invitation on the relative enrollment of students from underrepresented groups.

In the future, Professor Rothstein plans to examine whether specific characteristics of LORs (identity of writer, length, content) lead to different reader scores and outcomes, as well as the long-term academic outcomes of LOR admits to determine if LORs lead to better decisions.

The study recommends increasing transparency and communication about when and in what circumstances LORs will be requested; requesting LORs in time for the R1 evaluation or else putting more weight on the R2 evaluation; and addressing concerns about the diversity impact of LORs through better outreach and communications.

*Discussion:* It was noted that the study may overestimate the positive effects of LORs by not counting students displaced by other students who moved up in the R2 review and were admitted with a LOR; this pool may have included some underrepresented students. It was also noted that the positive effect of LORs on recruitment and enrollment may not be limited to LORs, but shows the broader “reaching out” effect of any University request for additional information. BOARS members expressed concern about the potential burden of LORs on both students and counselors, and recommended that the non-response to the LOR request be investigated more closely to determine whether the failure to respond may be associated with the student attending a lower resourced school with fewer counselors and other LOR-writers. It is unclear what information a LOR will provide that cannot be gathered another way, such as on the application, that does not increase barriers or burdens.

### **III. Compare Favorably Reports**

#### **1. Report to President Napolitano on the Compare Favorably Policy**

**ACTION: A motion was made and seconded to approve the report and forward it to Council Chair Chalfant for transmittal to the President. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **2. Systemwide Compare Favorably Report for 2016**

**ACTION: A motion was made and seconded to approve the report for posting on the BOARS website. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **IV. Area D Work Group Recommendations**

BOARS reviewed the Work Group’s proposed policy revisions to the area “d” (laboratory science) requirement that are intended to align UC’s expectations for high school science preparation more closely with the expectations for high school science curricula based on California’s adoption of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for K-12. They key revisions to Senate Regulation 424.A.3 include:

1) Increasing the minimum area “d” requirement from 2 units (3 recommended) to 3 units, while continuing to require 2 units of coursework that “provide basic knowledge in at least two of the fundamental disciplines of biology, chemistry, and physics.”

2) Changing the name of the area “d” subject requirement title from “Laboratory Science” to “Science”

The Work Group also proposed several changes to the area “d” course criteria that broaden options for science disciplines that can fulfill the third year area “d” requirement, so that in addition to taking a third course from the three core laboratory science disciplines listed in the regulation, students could select a third course from other disciplines reflected in the NGSS, including earth and space science, interdisciplinary sciences, computer science, engineering, and applied sciences.

UC will require any area “d” course, including options for the third year of science, to meet the nine specific UC faculty-approved course criteria and eight NGSS science and engineering practices articulated in the A-G Guide. UCOP analysts will review individual courses against the criteria.

*Discussion:* It is important to clarify that BOARS will maintain the requirement that area “d” courses include a laboratory component, and that laboratory activities will still be required of all area “d” courses. Some BOARS members expressed support for renaming area “d” to “Science and Engineering” or “Physical Science and Engineering,” to align with the NGSS more closely; others felt that “Science” sends a more inclusive message to high schools.

**ACTION: A motion was made and seconded to accept the work group’s recommendation to change the area “d” title from Laboratory Science” to “Science.” The motion passed 7-5.**

**ACTION: A motion was made to approve the other work group recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.**

## **V. Global Politics HL International Baccalaureate Exam**

BOARS reviewed faculty content expert recommendations for granting University elective credit for a score of 5, 6, or 7 on the new International Baccalaureate HL Global Politics exam. UCOP received responses from two faculty members who both made positive recommendations.

**ACTION: A motion was made and seconded to approve the recommendation to grant UC elective credit for a score of 5 or higher. The motion passed unanimously.**

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Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm  
Minutes Prepared by Michael LaBriola, Principal Committee Analyst  
Attest: Henry Sanchez