

**Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)
Systemwide “Compare Favorably” Report for 2019
July 2020**

In June 2011, BOARS adopted a policy¹ that requires nonresident domestic and international students admitted to a UC campus to be at least as qualified, on average, as California residents admitted to the same campus. BOARS also established procedures² that ask the nine undergraduate campuses to report annually to BOARS on the extent to which they are meeting this “Compare Favorably” standard. Each year, to help it assess both campus and systemwide outcomes for the Compare Favorably policy, BOARS reviews detailed information about each campus’s admissions activities and outcomes along with data from the UC Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning.

The following is BOARS’ summary assessment of UC’s Compare Favorably outcomes for 2019. Also note that BOARS conducted a more comprehensive assessment of the policy three years ago in response to a request from President Napolitano, and BOARS’ report to her includes additional analyses related to the University’s efforts to monitor compliance.³

The table below summarizes systemwide data for average high school unweighted grade point average (GPA) and SAT score for California residents, domestic nonresidents, and international nonresidents admitted in fall 2019; average first-year UC GPA for students who enrolled in fall 2018; the persistence rate of UC students who completed the 2018-19 academic year and re-enrolled in fall 2019; and the probation rate of students with a first-year GPA below 2.0.

	Average High School GPA⁴	Average Total SAT Score⁴	Average First Year UC GPA⁵	Persistence⁶	Probation Rate⁷
CA Residents	3.68	1282	3.17	93.0%	3.6%
Domestic Nonresidents	3.80	1412	3.36	90.2%	2.0%
International	3.75	1399	3.30	93.4%	3.1%

The data show that on a systemwide basis, average SAT score and average high school GPA are higher for admitted domestic and international nonresidents. Domestic nonresidents’ incoming GPAs are about 0.12 points higher than California residents, and their SAT scores exceed that of residents by about 130 points (international scores fall in the middle on both measures).

BOARS also considers how well admitted students in each residency category perform at UC in terms of average first-year UC GPA and first-year rates of persistence and probation. Data from

¹ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/boars/BOARS-NR-Principles-June-2011.pdf>

² https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/reports/RMA_MGYreBOARSresolutiononevalofresidents_non-residents_FINAL.pdf

³ <http://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/boars/Compare-Favorably-Report-to-President-July-2017.pdf>

⁴ Academic indicator for students admitted for fall 2019. ACT equivalents are factored into this analysis for students who completed the ACT exam.

⁵ UC grade point average for students first enrolling in fall 2018.

⁶ Percent of students who completed the 2018-19 academic year and re-enrolled in fall 2019.

⁷ Refers to the percent of students at UC with a first-year GPA below 2.00.

the 2018-19 academic year entering class indicate that domestic nonresidents and international students performed somewhat better academically at UC than California residents. Domestic nonresidents earned first-year UC GPAs of 3.36, compared to 3.30 for international students, and 3.17 for California residents. Data also show that domestic nonresidents have a lower academic probation rate (2.0 percent) than California residents (3.6 percent), and that the probation rate for international students is slightly better than Californians (3.1 percent). However, California resident students, despite their slightly lower academic performance, were somewhat more likely to persist to a second year, which is not surprising given the additional financial, social, and logistical burdens faced by nonresident students.

The policy also requires individual UC campuses to meet the Compare Favorably standard. Appendix A of this report provides campus-by-campus information on average high school indicators and college outcomes by residency group.

The campus-specific data for 2019 show that campuses generally comply with the Compare Favorably policy, although there are anomalies that require additional discussion. The high school GPA results varied by campus, with nonresident domestic students admitted with higher mean GPAs than California residents at four campuses and international students admitted with higher mean GPAs than California residents at six campuses.

The SAT results are compelling. The average score difference between residents and domestic nonresidents is 58 points and between residents and international students is 74 points. BOARS recognizes that as a limited and imperfect measure, the SAT is a standardized benchmark that allows direct comparison between California residents and students from other states and countries, which have differing standards for grading and coursework.

The GPA results are more nuanced. As BOARS noted in our 2017 detailed report to President Napolitano⁸, the campus-specific differences are often minor – some are as small as one or two one-hundredths of a point (0.01 and 0.02), trivial variances when one considers that the difference between the letter grade of “A” and “A-” is three-tenths of a point (0.3). Among the campuses that do not meet the Compare Favorably standard for GPA in 2019, the largest difference between California residents and domestic or international nonresidents is 0.13. BOARS does not wish to ignore such differences, but also does not wish to suggest that such differences express widespread or willful disregard of the policy. To a fair-minded judge, BOARS believes that such differences would be seen as measurement noise inherent in any metric used to measure human behavior and institutional accountability. Moreover, evaluating the grades of students from other states and countries can be particularly challenging because campuses lack the kind of detailed, contextual information about schools that they can bring to bear while assessing California residents.

Taking these data collectively, all UC campuses meet one or both standards for the Compare Favorably policy. The degree of compliance across the University is very high, especially when one considers both the volume of applications received by the University, the extraordinary level of achievement presented by virtually all applicants, and the difficulty of meeting the exacting Compare Favorably standard within the context of a competitive, internally-dynamic admissions process.

⁸ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/boars/Compare-Favorably-Report-to-President-July-2017.pdf>

Variances do concern BOARS and suggest a need for further examination, although BOARS does not consider them *necessarily* to be violations of the Compare Favorably policy for several reasons. First, while a comparison of the average GPAs and test scores of admitted students can provide a first indication of whether a campus has met the policy, such narrow academic indicators are imperfect measures for the assessment, given the use of comprehensive review on all campuses, which requires campus admissions professionals to consider 14 factors in the broad assessment of merit they use to admit students. GPA and SAT are important components of this assessment, but are only two components, and as such they provide an incomplete picture. Furthermore, educational context also is a key component of comprehensive review, but admissions personnel do not, in general, have access to the same information about educational context for nonresident applicants that they have for California residents.

BOARS also recognizes difficulties in comparing students' outcomes after they matriculate to UC. Overall campus GPAs, while relevant, for example, do not account for the campus climate (or environmental factors) and different grading standards across UC colleges and departments and any tendencies for international students to become over-represented in certain majors. Persistence rates are also a problematic comparative tool because they are influenced by factors other than the "quality" of the student, a problem particularly acute for international students who must try to succeed in school while adjusting to a new culture and campus climate.

BOARS established the Compare Favorably policy to communicate a clear message to campuses about its expectation that nonresidents have stronger qualifications than residents. BOARS allows campuses to focus on aspects of the evaluation process they feel are most relevant to meeting the policy, and BOARS is confident that all campuses are making a concerted effort to do so. BOARS understands that campuses may establish enrollment targets for California residents and nonresidents based on major, capacity, space, state funding, and other considerations; however, enrollment targets do not preclude campuses from having to meet the Compare Favorably standard and BOARS expects these targets not to influence the quality or outcome of campus's Compare Favorably assessment. BOARS includes the attached tables to provide a transparent, objective, quantitative assessment of the policy. The data make clear to campuses what BOARS will measure and what steps, if any, they need to take to overcome any deficiencies and improve future outcomes. BOARS will be working with campuses on strategies for further refining their processes and ensuring a fair assessment.

The Compare Favorably policy provides flexibility for campuses while ensuring that the University's responsibility to California students remains paramount. BOARS states unequivocally its absolute commitment to maintaining admissions standards that favor California residents, to preserving access for Californians under the University's Master Plan obligation to state-funded residents, and to preserving the University's comprehensive review policy, which has served the state extraordinarily well in terms of access for low-income and first-generation California residents. As always, BOARS will continue to monitor campus compliance with this policy, report outcomes on an annual basis, and as data warrant, suggest adjustments to the policy that maximize fairness to residents and that enable UC to admit and enroll the most deserving, diverse, and academically strong group of students who can go on to thrive and succeed at UC.