First-Year Implementation of Comprehensive Review in Freshman Admissions: A Progress Report from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Comprehensive review was adopted by The Regents in November 2001 and implemented beginning with the Fall 2002 admission cycle by the six UC campuses that cannot accommodate all UC-eligible applicants. At the time of The Regents' vote, the Academic Senate promised to return to The Regents to report on the first year of implementation. This report summarizes the results of the review by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS). *(Page numbers in parentheses in the text below indicate those pages of the report and its appendices where additional detail can be found.)*

I.   Background and Rationale for the Adoption of Comprehensive Review

The BOARS recommendation on comprehensive review did not change either the University's overall eligibility criteria—which determine who is admitted to the University system—or the criteria by which campuses that cannot accommodate all eligible applicants choose their freshman classes. Rather, it effectively extended to the full applicant pool on selective campuses the process and criteria those campuses were already using to select up to 50% of their admitted students—students who have met the University's stringent eligibility requirements and can be expected to do well on any UC campus.

BOARS members recommended the extension of comprehensive review to the full applicant pool for many reasons—discussed at greater length in this report—but two were primary. First, BOARS members wanted to clarify that the faculty's definition of academic merit is not based on one or two narrow quantitative indicators, but rather on achievement and potential in a broad range of academically relevant areas. Second, BOARS recognized that evaluating achievement across a wider range of criteria would require a more thorough, in-depth review than existed on all campuses and that campuses would need to move, over time, toward implementation of different review processes. In adopting comprehensive review, the University acknowledged that the highly competitive admissions environment on most of its campuses demands the same kind of rigorous, individualized review that other highly selective institutions across the country have relied on for many years and that UC faculty employ in their selection of graduate students.

BOARS' definition of comprehensive review and the principles it put in place to guide implementation on the campuses are contained in the first section of this report. *(pages 2-9; Appendix A)*

II.   BOARS' Findings Regarding First-Year Implementation of Comprehensive Review

BOARS also recognized that the faculty, and particularly campus-level faculty admissions committees, would need to take a direct and active role not only in developing new policies, but also in implementing them. Accordingly, BOARS promulgated accountability principles to the campuses and spent a great deal of time prior to the beginning of the Fall 2002 admission cycle working with campus faculty representatives and admission staff. Following completion of the Fall 2002 cycle, BOARS initiated a review of the first-year implementation, the key findings of which are outlined below.

- BOARS' primary finding is that **all six selective campuses were successful in implementing comprehensive review within University policy and guidelines**. That is, they adopted policies and processes that conform with the BOARS principles, implemented these processes effectively, completed their admission decisions on time, and met their enrollment targets.

- BOARS' review of process design and implementation on each campus showed that **campuses went to great lengths to ensure the consistency of their admission decisions and the integrity of their processes**. All of them strengthened the procedures in place for hiring and training readers; all instituted multiple systems of checks and balances to ensure readers implemented faculty guidelines accurately and consistently; and all of them monitored outcomes of the reading process, both while it was under way and afterward, to ensure that decisions were correct and free of bias. In addition, several campuses plan to add additional procedures this year that will further strengthen the evaluation and scoring process. *(pages 9-12, Appendix B)*

- In reviewing the outcomes of campus admission processes, BOARS observed that **academic preparation, as measured by traditional indicators such as GPA and test scores, has remained quite stable**. Not surprisingly, measures that have recently been given greater weight, such as strength of the curriculum (as measured by number of courses taken and/or difficulty of courses) and SAT II scores in math and writing, have increased. And in the few cases where numeric indicators have declined slightly, the declines largely reflect either conscious policy changes (like a faculty decision to deemphasize ACT/SAT I scores relative to GPA) or changes in the applicant pool or the number of students the campus had room to admit. *(pages 12-14, Appendix C)*

- Similarly, **the degree to which the selective campuses are accessible to low income or educationally disadvantaged students has not declined and some campuses have seen increases**. Despite the increased degree of competition on virtually every selective campus, the percentages of admitted applicants from low-income or educationally disadvantaged families, geographically underserved areas, challenged

schools, and underrepresented racial and ethnic groups have generally not declined on the campuses. *(pages 14-18, Appendix C)*

Finally, BOARS observed that the rate at which applicants appeal their decisions—which might be viewed as a measure of "customer satisfaction"—did not increase substantially as a result of comprehensive review, even though rapid increases in the numbers of applications received mean more applicants were denied on individual campuses than ever before. *(page 18)*

III.   Areas Requiring Further Study

BOARS also identified several areas that require further study and discussion as comprehensive review is fully implemented on UC campuses. These include the following:

- The relationship between the selection process and later success. Because the students admitted to various campuses under the comprehensive review process have just begun their UC careers, it is not possible to examine data that help us understand the degree to which comprehensive review selected the "right" students for each campus. This question will be addressed in future years as data on academic success and engagement in campus life become available. BOARS members recommend that the nature of "success" be defined and studied broadly, in recognition that the purpose of the admissions process is not simply to reward past academic accomplishments or identify students who will earn high college GPA's, but also to find students who are a good fit to the campuses where they enroll, who will benefit most from their UC education, who will contribute to their campuses' intellectual life, and who will go on to success in later life. *(page 19)*

- The reliability of information used in the selection process. The accountability principles that BOARS developed for comprehensive review specify that campuses should "monitor the accuracy and reliability of data used in the [admission] decision-making process." Campuses already verify the accuracy of applicants' self-reported academic record. In addition, for the Fall 2002 process, two pilot processes were conducted to determine the feasibility of verifying other information contained in the application. For Fall 2003, the University will implement the initial phase of a systemwide verification process. This proposal has met with very positive responses from high school counselors and BOARS believes it will be helpful in reinforcing the message that applicants must complete the application truthfully or risk being removed from consideration for admission on any campus. Additionally, BOARS plans to investigate the possibility of requiring some form of letters of recommendation, which would also help corroborate application information. *(pages 19-21)*

- The role of "hardship" in the admission process. Recent commentary has suggested that the weight of "hardship" as a criterion in the UC admission process increased

with comprehensive review and has questioned whether this weight is appropriate. BOARS members note that the ability to overcome obstacles has been a factor in the admission process for decades and that special consideration for students who come from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds is an explicit component of Regental policy. The educational rationale behind this policy is clear: applicants who evidence an ability to succeed academically despite challenging circumstances have demonstrated personal qualities and a commitment to their own education that will directly affect their success in college.

Nonetheless, BOARS recognizes that in the intensely competitive college admission environment in which UC operates, we have an obligation to reassure the general public that the values implicit in our selection criteria and processes are appropriate. Based on a review of campuses that employ fixed weights for specific criteria, BOARS concludes that the weights assigned to "hardship" relative to other criteria are entirely appropriate. BOARS encourages those campuses whose admission systems are not based on fixed weights to conduct analyses that will illuminate the role of "hardship" in their processes and to communicate the results of these analyses broadly. *(pages 21-23)*

- Reconsideration of the application form and application processing. Comprehensive review encourages campuses to look more deeply into the application and to use all of the data contained therein to make the best admission decisions. In this environment, BOARS has recommended that the Office of the President review the current format of the application. This recommendation has been added to the charge of the Admissions Processing Task Force, which was established in the winter of 2002. A subcommittee of this group is re-examining the UC application to identify ways to direct applicants to provide the most relevant and helpful information, while at the same time reducing the possibility that they will submit personal statements substantially written by third parties. The Task Force is also looking at ways that technology can be used to make the application process both more accurate and more efficient and at ways that campuses can share resources in the evaluation of applications. *(pages 23-24)*

- Clarity and predictability of the admissions process. Members of the University community, as well as some external observers, have raised the question of "transparency" in the admission process: Is the process clear? Are the outcomes relatively easy to predict and understand? Historically, UC's eligibility and admission process has been highly transparent: the University's eligibility criteria set forth standards for academic preparation and all applicants who meet those standards are admitted. But today, several UC campuses function much more like the nation's most selective private institutions in terms of how many applicants they deny and the level of preparation of those applicants. This year, UCLA denied nearly 33,000 applicants—more than any other institution in the country—and UC Berkeley and UCSD denied roughly 28,000 and 24,000 respectively. Comprehensive review is a response to this unprecedented pressure. It moves UC campuses away

from the formulaic admissions model traditionally practiced by large, public institutions, and toward the more qualitative individualized review employed by highly selective public and private institutions.

BOARS recognizes that UC is held to a higher standard when it comes to "transparency" than the private institutions its admission processes most resemble and will continue to address these issues. Initially, BOARS plans to broaden the scope of its review to include both systemwide and campus-level publications and to focus on clarity, consistency, and the tangible relationship between campus policy, practice, and likely outcomes for particular applicants. BOARS also observes that broadening the number of high school personnel involved in the reading process will increase understanding of those processes and recommends that admissions staff encourage applicants and their families to consult the tables included in campus publications that provide probabilities of admission at each campus, based on traditional academic indicators. *(pages 24-27)*

- Making the best use of admissions readers. Campuses differ somewhat in their use of admissions readers to evaluate various aspects of applicants' files. BOARS had anticipated that due to differing levels of resources and readiness, as well as different campus admission climates and philosophies, not all campuses would use readers in the same way. In general, BOARS concluded that campus processes employed this year were appropriate, given local conditions. However, BOARS recommends that campuses continue to review and refine their use of readers, focusing on three specific areas: number of reads per file, increasing the level of attention given to applicants on the "border" of admission, and extending the reading process to the full applicant pool. *(pages 27-28)*

These issues are discussed at greater length in the body of BOARS' report, which follows. As the implementation of comprehensive review moves forward, BOARS will continue to report back on these and any other issues that may emerge.

First-Year Implementation of Comprehensive Review in Freshman Admissions: A Progress Report from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools

In October 2001, acting upon a recommendation from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), the Academic Senate recommended to the Board of Regents a change in the method by which UC campuses that cannot accommodate all UC-eligible applicants select their freshman classes.   This change essentially extended to all applicants the processes campuses had previously used to select up to 50% of their admitted students. BOARS termed this process "comprehensive review" and defined it as follows:

> *The process by which students applying to UC campuses are evaluated for admission using multiple measures of achievement and promise while considering the context in which each student has demonstrated academic accomplishment.*

Comprehensive review was adopted by The Regents in November 2001 and implemented by the six campuses that cannot accommodate all UC-eligible applicants beginning with the Fall 2002 cycle. At the time of The Regents' vote, the Academic Senate promised to return to The Regents to report on the first year of implementation. This report summarizes the results of the review BOARS has undertaken on behalf of the Senate. It is organized as follows:

- Section I (pages 2-9) provides (a) background on the rationale for adoption of comprehensive review, including a description of admission policy prior to comprehensive review; (b) a summary of the reasoning on which BOARS based its recommendation; (c) the principles BOARS adopted to guide implementation of comprehensive review; and (d) a description of the accountability process BOARS recommended to provide oversight for implementation of comprehensive review.

- Section II (pages 9-18) summarizes BOARS' findings regarding implementation of comprehensive review and addresses three key areas: (a) process design and integrity; (b) outcomes in terms of academic preparation of the applicants selected under comprehensive review; and (c) outcomes in terms of maintenance of access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and underserved regions and populations.

- Section III (pages 19-28) addresses "next steps" in the implementation and evaluation of comprehensive review, summarizing several areas where BOARS recommends campus faculty committees, as well as BOARS itself, need to engage in further study and discussion. These areas include (a) the relationship between the selection process and later success; (b) the reliability of information used in the selection process; (c) the role of "hardship" in the selection process; (d) reconsideration of the application form and application processing; (e) the clarity and predictability of the admission process; and (f) making the best use of admissions readers.

In addition, this report contains several appendices that include the key policy documents relevant to the adoption of comprehensive review and provide additional detail on admission processes and outcomes at the campus level.

In transmitting this report to the Academic Senate and The Regents, BOARS notes two caveats. First, it is important to remember that, at this juncture, our ability to evaluate the full impact of comprehensive review is limited. Several campuses planned their full implementation to take more than one year and all of them expect to continue to make changes in the next several years. Perhaps more important, it will be at least a year before we can begin to assess the true outcome of the change: that is, how the students admitted in the fall of 2002 are faring on their campuses—their academic successes, their contributions to their campuses, and the degree to which they are productively engaged in campus life.

Additionally, comprehensive review is being implemented at the same time that a number of educational initiatives instituted over the past several years are beginning to bear fruit. Among these are the unprecedented investment of the State and the University in improving performance of students in California's most disadvantaged schools through educational outreach; changes in UC eligibility requirements, including the Eligibility in the Local Context program; and changes in our philosophy toward admissions tests that are reflected in changes in weight given to the SAT I/ACT in the Eligibility Index and the proposed move toward tests that measure achievement in the context of the college preparatory curriculum. Teasing out the different effects of these changes will take time and more experience than campuses currently have.

I. BACKGROUND ON ADOPTION OF COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

A. Previous University Policy on Admissions

The qualifications of high school students who wish to enter the University of California are evaluated in a two-stage process. The first step of this process determines academic *eligibility*. Potential applicants must complete the "a-g" pattern of required college preparatory coursework; must achieve a minimum grade point average (GPA) in these courses; and must take a battery of five standardized admissions tests and earn scores that, when paired with their GPA, meet the minimums specified in the UC Eligibility Index. In addition, California students who have completed a minimum number of a-g courses and rank in the top four percent of their high school class, based on their UC-computed GPA, are deemed Eligible in the Local Context (ELC). A small number of students are also granted eligibility based on test scores alone. UC applicants who meet the requirements of one of these three paths to eligibility are guaranteed admission to at least one campus of the University, if they apply. Because UC eligibility guarantees freshman admission to the University, it is these eligibility requirements that fundamentally determine who is admitted to the University as a system**.**

At present, the University's Riverside and Santa Cruz campuses are experiencing sufficient growth to accommodate all UC-eligible applicants. On the remaining six campuses, where demand from UC-eligible applicants exceeds the number of admission spaces available, applicants are evaluated in a second process, known as *selection*. The University's <u>Guidelines for the Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions</u> (see Appendix A) specify fourteen criteria that selective campuses may use to choose among UC-eligible applicants. These criteria were adopted by the Academic Senate in 1996 and have been revised once, to add Eligibility in the Local Context status as a criterion.

Prior to the implementation of comprehensive review, the fourteen selection criteria were divided into two groups, considered "academic" and "supplemental." Campuses were required to select between fifty and seventy-five percent of their applicants using only the first ten "academic" criteria. The remaining portion of the admitted class was to be selected using all fourteen criteria.

The methods that campuses used to identify these two groups, or "tiers," of students evolved over time. Traditionally, those in Tier 1 ("academic" criteria alone) were selected based on a relatively narrow band of numeric criteria such as grades and test scores, generally combined into a linear index. As campuses have been forced to deny more and more of their applicants (as many as seventy five percent at Berkeley and Los Angeles), some broadened the Tier 1 review to include more of the ten academic criteria (for example, numbers of courses taken, rigor of the high school curriculum, and strength of the senior year program). Some also modified their processes to rely less on quantitative evaluations and more on an individualized review of the applicant's academic record. (Both Berkeley and Los Angeles had made these changes prior to the elimination of the two-tier system.)

Other campuses continued to consider such additional academic factors only in the Tier 2 portion of their processes: Tier 1 was selected based on GPA and test scores alone. In order to select those to be admitted in the second (Tier 2) stage of their process, all campuses reviewed full files of a portion of the applicants not selected in Tier 1, looking for additional academic accomplishments. as well as evidence of qualities such as leadership, initiative, persistence, special talents, and commitment to the community. These two developments—the use by some campuses of a greater number of academic criteria and the establishment on all campuses of reader processes to evaluate non-quantitative information (both academic and supplemental) contained in the application—laid the groundwork for extension of comprehensive review to the full applicant pool.

B. Rationale for Adoption of Comprehensive Review

BOARS based its recommendation to adopt comprehensive review on many factors, principal among which are the following.

1. <u>The desirability of employing a broad range of academic criteria for all applicants</u>. As noted above, although University policy specifies ten different academic criteria, under the two-tier process campuses often assessed the qualifications of a portion of their applicants based on a narrow set of numerical indicators—e.g., a combination of grades and test scores that did not differentiate among applicants in terms of the rigor of the curriculum they studied, trends in their achievement over time, strength of the senior year program, or the relative level of achievement that a particular GPA or test score represented in the context of the applicant's own high school. Particularly as campuses have grown increasingly selective, these practices meant in some cases that small differences in a single indicator could have substantial effects on admission outcomes.

   At the same time, the University's message to students, communicated through counselors' conferences, publications, and recruiting visits, is that students should take the most rigorous curriculum they can, including a strong program in the senior year, and should demonstrate achievement and accomplishment in a broad range of areas. BOARS concluded that a focus on test scores and GPA as measures of academic accomplishment contradicts this fundamental message and may not always identify the strongest students. For example, a review of the transcripts of two students with similar GPA's and test score totals might reveal different curricular patterns or upward or downward trends in grades that made the student with slightly lower overall grades and test scores the clearly better qualified. Faculty on campuses using more intensive reviews reported that they were making better decisions in terms of applicants' academic qualifications.

2. <u>The difficulty of distinguishing between "academic" and "supplemental" qualifications and the educational value of applying the full range of criteria to all applicants</u>. As campuses began reading the full files of greater numbers of applicants, they reported that the distinction between "academic" and "supplemental" criteria was increasingly difficult to maintain and that many aspects of students' qualifications previously considered only in the Tier 2 review were in fact directly relevant to students' academic qualifications, potential, and likely success. For example, a knowledge of, and intellectual passion for, Shakespeare reflected in a student's creative work in playwriting or directing could arguably be treated under the University guidelines as an "academic" accomplishment or a "special talent."

   When BOARS members reviewed the full list of criteria, they noted that with the exception of criterion #14 (geographic location of the applicant's secondary school and residence), all of the criteria have an academic component and can be directly related to the likelihood of success in college and beyond. For example, criteria #11 and #12 assess talents and accomplishments demonstrated outside the classroom. Many of these—e.g., study abroad, achievement in debate, internships, special research projects, or other academic support and enrichment programs—are academic in nature. Others (for example, community service or leadership in student government) identify qualities and experiences that are directly related to

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the contributions an applicant is likely to make to campus life while in college and to society after graduation. Criterion #13 credits students who have demonstrated persistence, tenacity, and commitment to educational success and it acknowledges the role of context in helping campuses to understand the significance of an applicant's <u>academic</u> achievements and potential. BOARS members concluded that there was considerable overlap among the academic and supplemental criteria and that an admission process that considered all of these factors in the review of every applicant would yield a stronger freshman class.

BOARS members also noted that, despite the substantial overlap among the different criteria, the two-tiered process created the impression that students admitted in the "second tier" were somehow less qualified when in fact they had been admitted based on more factors and on a more thorough review of their qualifications than those in the "first" tier.

3. <u>The desirability of moving, over time, toward more nuanced approaches to evaluation of applicant qualifications</u>. BOARS members appreciate the benefits of quantitative approaches that lend themselves to machine-based evaluation. They can be fast and efficient—critical advantages as the number of applications campuses receive grows dramatically—and they can yield highly predictable outcomes. At the same time, many of the criteria that the faculty value highly—for example, an upward trend in grades, special accomplishments outside the classroom, or an intellectual curiosity and spark revealed in the personal statement—cannot be assessed by machine and are not easily quantified.

As campuses must make ever-finer distinctions among highly qualified applicants, the ability to assess all of the information contained in the application becomes increasingly important. Thus, it is not surprising that all of the country's most highly selective institutions use a more qualitative review process, nor that UC's two most selective campuses, Berkeley and UCLA, are also those that had already moved toward processes that rely more heavily on individualized review and evaluate factors that cannot be reviewed in a mechanical process. BOARS concluded that the combination of increasing selectivity and a move toward using a broader range of criteria, some of which require qualitative review, necessitates an incremental move toward review processes that rely at least in part on human evaluation of individual applications.

At the same time, BOARS members acknowledged several challenges associated with adopting a more comprehensive approach. For example, campuses are differentially situated in terms of their experience with qualitative processes and the resources needed to implement more complex admissions systems. Underlying these differences perhaps is the existence of quite different admissions contexts on different campuses. A campus that admits three quarters of its eligible applicants does not need to focus the same level of attention or resources on its admission processes as one that admits only one quarter. On the other hand, for campuses that deny a significant majority of their applicants, it may be relatively easy to identify applicants who are unlikely to be

admitted, but quite difficult and time-consuming to distinguish among thousands of very highly qualified applicants, many of whom are fully "deserving" of admission but will nonetheless be denied at that campus.

C. BOARS' Principles for the Adoption of Comprehensive Review

Based on the considerations described above, BOARS recommended the following principles on which adoption of comprehensive review should be founded.

1. *The admissions process honors academic achievement and accords priority to students of high academic accomplishment. At the same time, merit should be assessed in terms of the full range of an applicant's academic and personal achievements and likely contribution to the campus community, viewed in the context of the opportunities and challenges that the applicant has faced.*

2. *Campus admissions procedures should involve a comprehensive review of applications using a broad variety of factors to select an entering class.*

3. *No fixed proportion of applicants should be admitted based solely on a narrow set of criteria.*

4. *Campus policies should reflect continued commitment to the goal of enrolling classes that exhibit academic excellence as well as diversity of talents and abilities, personal experience, and backgrounds.*

5. *Faculty on individual campuses should be given flexibility to create admission policies and practices that, while consistent with Universitywide criteria and policies, are also sensitive to local campus values and academic priorities.*

6. *The admission process should select students of whom the campus will be proud, and who give evidence that they will use their education to make contributions to the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of the State and the Nation.*

7. *The admissions process should select those students who demonstrate a strong likelihood that they will persist to graduation.*

8. *Campus selection policies should ensure that no applicant will be denied admission without a comprehensive review of his or her file.*

These principles were added to the University's <u>Guidelines For Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions</u> (see Appendix A) in November 2001, following The Regents' approval of the faculty's recommendation.

D. BOARS' Oversight Process For Comprehensive Review

The comprehensive review policy differs fundamentally from other admission policies developed by the University in recent years in that it deals specifically with <u>selection</u> from among UC-eligible applicants, which means it operates primarily at the campus level. Traditionally, BOARS has allowed campuses latitude in designing and implementing selection policies and has left oversight of these policies up to campus faculty.

BOARS remains convinced that campus faculty admissions committees are by far the best situated to evaluate and monitor the outcomes of their local admission processes. Nonetheless, BOARS is also committed to ensuring that, in the course of the next several years, comprehensive review is fully and effectively implemented on all campuses and to reporting back on that implementation process to the Academic Council and The Regents. Thus, the faculty oversight process for comprehensive review represents a multi-level review in which campus admissions committees retain primary and ultimate authority for their own selection policies and BOARS plays a direct and active role in monitoring these policies. The key elements of BOARS' oversight process are described below.

1. <u>Process design</u>. BOARS set an ambitious goal for the timing of implementation of comprehensive review: the next admission cycle, which would officially open on November 1, 2001. To meet this deadline, BOARS worked with admissions directors throughout the summer of 2001 to clarify the expected parameters of the new policy and campus admissions committees met over the summer to write new policies to be implemented if The Regents approved the new process. In September 2001, BOARS held a joint meeting with the admissions directors, at which each director presented plans for extending comprehensive review to the full applicant pool. The full membership of BOARS discussed and commented on each campus's proposal, in some cases suggesting alternative approaches. Campus admissions committees then submitted new draft policies to BOARS in October. Each of these was reviewed and discussed at length and BOARS sent written comments back to each campus. By November 30, the end of the application filing period, all campuses had final policies and had begun training staff to implement them.

2. <u>Accountability principles</u>. As noted above, at the time that The Regents accepted the faculty's recommendation for comprehensive review, they stressed the importance of faculty accountability for the process. In December 2001, BOARS began drafting written accountability principles, which were finalized in February 2002 (see Appendix A). These principles emphasize (1) the need for clearly stated goals and alignment between goals and policies; (2) campus faculty responsibility for both the integrity of campus processes and their outcomes; (3) the need for ongoing monitoring, review, and modification of campus policies and practices by faculty admissions committees on the campuses. In other words, comprehensive review is, and should remain an evolving process that adapts to changing campus conditions and new information about the effects of campus practices.

3. <u>Post-hoc review</u>. This report represents the culmination of a review process that began in March 2002, when campuses were asked to submit policy documents and descriptions of their processes to the Office of the President. In June, admissions directors on each campus were interviewed to collect additional information about their experiences with the first year of comprehensive review and to clarify questions regarding their written materials. The information gathered in these interviews was summarized in a series of matrices presented to BOARS in July. Also in June, campuses were asked to submit extensive data regarding the characteristics of their applicant pools and admitted classes for Fall 2001 and Fall 2002[1]. These data were reviewed by Office of the President staff and summarized into campus profiles that were also submitted to BOARS in July.

On July 25, 2002, BOARS and the Admissions Directors held a joint meeting in which each campus's experience was reviewed and discussed. At that meeting, each admissions director made a presentation of campus-specific processes and outcomes and BOARS members questioned directors about areas where the process was unclear or warranted further discussion. In addition, BOARS members and admissions directors had a lengthy, open discussion about the value of the process as well as issues that need further work—many of which are raised in this report. In addition, staff from the Office of the President have made follow-up visits to a number of campuses and are working with them on specific aspects of their processes.

It should be noted that one of the positive impacts of the implementation of comprehensive review is that because of the review process described above, all campuses are much more aware than they have been in the past of each other's policies and practices. Both admissions directors and BOARS members report that this increased awareness has led to greater borrowing of "best practices" and better understanding of the reasons that lead to different outcomes for the same student at different campuses. Eventually, this sharing should contribute to greater similarity among the campuses—recognizing that different campus environments and values will continue to call for distinct admissions practices among the different campuses. BOARS strongly supports this increased sharing and the greater consistency it should produce.

4. <u>Data analysis</u>. BOARS' review of the implementation of comprehensive review has focused largely on policy and process. However, as noted above, BOARS also asked campuses to create and submit detailed data on the outcomes of their processes and subsequently asked OP staff to create similar data from the University's systemwide database. These data profile applicants and admitted students at the selective campuses for the past four years, looking at a specific set of academic and other

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[1] The initial BOARS data review was based on campus-supplied data because the Office of the President's systemwide database is usually not complete until September. Since July, the systemwide database has been updated and new data, compiled from this source, are contained in this report. Though obtained from a different source, these data are quite consistent with those that BOARS reviewed in July.

factors, and calculate admit rates across a range of characteristics (See Appendix C). These data were then analyzed to observe (1) trends within a specific campus—e.g., sudden or unexplained changes in admission patterns; and (2) patterns across campuses, particularly those that appear anomalous. These trends were discussed extensively by BOARS at the July meeting and in subsequent meetings with specific campus representatives. Various data findings are described in the remainder of this report as appropriate.

The findings of BOARS' review of the Fall 2002 implementation of comprehensive review are described in the following section.

II. BOARS' FINDINGS REGARDING FIRST-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

BOARS' overall finding regarding the first year of comprehensive review is that all six selective campuses were successful in implementing the new policy. Despite increased workload and an accelerated timeline, all were able to complete their review processes on time, meet their enrollment targets, and admit classes that reflect the goals of their own campus policies and are consistent with systemwide policy and implementing guidelines.   Given the substantial increase in applications for Fall 2002, BOARS members believe this is a significant accomplishment for which campus admissions directors, faculty committees, and staff are to be commended. BOARS' specific observations in a number of key areas are discussed below.

A. Process Design and Integrity

At the time that BOARS recommended adoption of comprehensive review, its members were fully confident that the process could be, and would be, implemented with the utmost care. Nonetheless, to the degree that review processes rely more on human judgment and qualitative evaluation, they present greater challenges in terms on ensuring consistent outcomes. BOARS members were impressed with the lengths that campuses went to ensure the integrity and consistency of their processes. In particular, BOARS noted the following areas where campuses instituted new processes and strengthened others to ensure that readers were well qualified and well trained, scoring across readers and applicants was consistent and without bias, and final decisions were appropriate.

1. Reader selection and training. Campus practices with regard to selection and training of application readers are fairly similar, although campuses with more elaborate reading processes tend also to have more intensive training programs.

   All campuses rely on a combination of internal staff and external volunteer or paid readers, some of whom may come from other campus units. The primary qualification for readers from outside the admission office is that they have experience with the curriculum and academic operations of California high schools.

Most campuses employ high school counselors and teachers as readers; this arrangement is mutually beneficial in that high school personnel gain first-hand knowledge of the UC admission process that they can take back to their students and schools, and UC staff and other readers gain valuable insight into the curricula and educational environments of the schools. Several campuses also avail themselves of staff from campus academic support programs to serve as part-time readers. Typically these staff are college graduates who are highly knowledgeable in the college preparatory curriculum; many also work directly with students in local high schools. All campuses have procedures in place to ensure that all readers —including outreach or high school staff—who have direct contact with high school students do not review the applications of students in their own programs or schools, nor of any applicants they may know or have heard of.

Campuses differ in the formality of the process they use to recruit readers. All rely as much as they can on people who have previous reading experience. Some may issue relatively informal calls for resumes and letters of interest. Others operate full-fledged personnel processes. All campuses review resumes and interview potential readers, as well as vetting them carefully during the training process.

All campuses conduct formal training programs that involve a review of University and campus policies (presented, in some cases, by members of the faculty), familiarization with the application form and processes, and ample practice time reviewing applications. Most campuses conduct several multi-hour sessions over the course of a number of days. Campuses like Berkeley and UCLA, that rely on readers to conduct evaluations of all of the information included in the application, including the academic record, have the most rigorous processes. For example, Berkeley's process involves forty hours of training and requires that readers score eighty training files before they are allowed to read actual applications. Once the reading cycle has begun, readers are required to commit to three hours of additional practice scoring sessions weekly. All campuses assign team leaders to serve as resources for small groups of readers. In addition, at both UCLA and Irvine, the initial batches of applications that readers scored were re-reviewed by high-level admissions staff, who continued to work with individual readers until they were certain that their scores accurately and consistently reflected the campus faculty's policy.

2. <u>Checks and Balances in the Scoring Process</u>. Campuses have also instituted multiple, overlapping procedures for monitoring the reading and scoring process to ensure that it remains consistent and bias-free. The most common approach to this process is blind double reads: most campuses have files read by multiple readers, whose scores must agree in order to be used. Typically, if two readers disagree by more than one point (on a scale of one to five, six, seven, or eight points) on the correct score for a particular file, it will be sent to a third, more experienced reader. At UCLA, which gives each application three different scores, the sub-scores for different parts of the process are assigned by different readers, so that no single reader's judgment determines the overall score a file receives. Most campus

processes are also designed to mix different _types_ of readers in the scoring of a single file, so that at least one of the scores is assigned by a professional admissions staff member. All campuses reported that the incidence of readers assigning different scores to the same file (the "third read rate") was quite low.

Several campuses also developed extra processes for applications that are particularly difficult or where the admit/deny decision is a close one. For example, at UCLA, which assigns applicants to cells in a matrix depending on their combination of scores, and then, based on guidance from the faculty, admits or denies all applicants within a particular cell, all of the files in the "borderline" cells were reread to ensure that they had been correctly scored. At Berkeley, where applicants are ranked linearly depending on their read scores, if the campus's enrollment targets do not allow for all applicants with a particular score to be admitted, all with that score will be reread by two readers before anyone is admitted.   Students close to the borderline who are denied fall admission are also re-read for possible admission to the spring term.

Additionally, at Berkeley, readers may refer challenging files and cases they feel to be borderline (up to six percent of the total applications) to an augmented review process, in which students are asked to provide additional information (such as seventh-semester grades) and where the files will be given two additional reads. In this system of multiple, overlapping reading processes, it is not uncommon for borderline students to be reviewed by four, five, or even six readers before being admitted or denied. (For example, this year Berkeley faculty who checked the case of an applicant whose denial had been questioned in a newspaper article discovered that, because of these safeguards, the file had been read by six different readers, each of whom assigned it the same score, which the faculty member auditing the case also agreed was the appropriate score.)

3. <u>Monitoring of the process during and after the admission cycle</u>. Campuses employ various techniques for monitoring the reading and scoring process, both while it is under way and after the fact. Virtually all of the campuses create computerized reports of scores that allow them to track individual readers and identify unusual scoring patterns (e.g., readers who tend to score "easy" or "hard" and those whose scores tend to differ from other readers reviewing the same file). Readers with such patterns are counseled and may be removed from the process. In addition, several campuses created quality control batches of applications that were read (blindly) by multiple readers to assess interreader reliability and identify outliers. UCLA sent one group of applications through every one of its readers, while at Davis, 200 different applications were each read by at least ten readers whose scores were then compared.

Finally, all campuses conduct annual reviews of their processes after the completion of the cycle. Typically, these involve surveying and interviewing managers to determine their views on areas in need of further work, bringing together all application readers to discuss those aspects of the process that they found most

challenging and most worthwhile, and analyzing outcomes to determine conformance with campus goals. On several campuses, faculty admissions committees prepare written reports that are delivered annually to the Academic Senate. (For example, in May 2002, Berkeley's faculty admissions committee prepared an 85-page report on the admission process which was presented to the full Senate at their Spring meeting and is now posted on the campus website.) Under the guidance of faculty admissions committees, campuses also periodically seek outside review of their processes. For example, this year institutional researchers at Davis are conducting a statistical analysis of interreader reliability and the Berkeley campus has commissioned an outside evaluation of its reading process by researchers in the Graduate School of Education. The results of internal and external reviews are shared extensively with the faculty and form the basis for refinements to policy and process for the subsequent admission cycle.

B. Maintenance of Academic Quality and Primacy of Academic Considerations

Viewed from a systemwide perspective, the academic qualifications of UC students are not in question: virtually all admitted applicants meet the University's eligibility requirements—which place them among the top one-eighth of students in the state—and all eligible applicants are admitted. Thus the overall qualifications of the University's admitted class are not affected by changes in campus selection policies. However, BOARS' principles for comprehensive review emphasized that academic criteria should continue to dominate campus selection processes and that the consideration of academic criteria should be strengthened, both by considering more factors and by considering these factors in a more complete and thorough way.[2]

Outcome data for the comprehensive review process are included in Appendix C and summarized in Table 1. These data show traditional academic profiles that are quite similar to those admitted under the two-tier process. In fact, BOARS was struck by the stability of the indicators. In most cases, academic factors edged upward or stayed flat. Declines were very small and often accompanied by declines in the same indicator in the campus's applicant pool. For example:

1. <u>GPA</u> went up slightly on three campuses, stayed flat on one, and declined slightly on two. But across all six selective campuses, the total change registered in GPA of the admitted students was .05 grade points—from an increase of .03 to a decrease of .02.

2. <u>Test scores</u> showed slightly more volatility, reflecting both slightly different weighting schemes (with the SAT I/ACT carrying slightly less weight compared to other academic factors such as grades and SAT II scores) implemented on a few

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[2] At the same time, in order to avoid reducing access to the most selective campuses to students who had not been exposed to a rich array of academic resources, BOARS instructed that academic factors should be considered in the context of opportunity—for example, additional consideration of the rigor of a student's academic program should recognize that opportunities to benefit from a rich curriculum vary among and even within high schools.

campuses and a decline in average SAT I/ACT scores in the applicant pool. On four of the selective campuses (two of which saw increases and two of which saw decreases), the change was inconsequential: no more than seven points out of a total of 1600.

Two campuses saw slightly larger, but still minor changes: a decline from 1234 to 1222 at Santa Barbara and from 1308 to 1286 at San Diego. In both cases, average scores in the applicant pool had declined, but by fewer points than among the admitted students. Additionally, each of these campuses admitted nearly 700 more students in 2002 than in the previous year (the largest increases among the selective campuses) and some BOARS members observed that it is difficult to maintain score levels when the number of students admitted increases sharply. (An additional factor that affected the academic profile of admitted students at UCSD—the sharp drop in admit rate for out-of-state students—is discussed in section C.)

SAT II scores in both Writing and Math went up on all but two campuses.

3. <u>Other Academic Factors</u>. Finally, BOARS noted that, not surprisingly, factors given more weight in this year's selection process than in previous years tended to go up. For example, the numbers of <u>honors courses</u> taken went up on every campus and numbers of <u>a-g courses</u> taken increased on three campuses, stayed flat on two, and declined by .1 on one. Similarly, the proportion of admitted students who are <u>ELC</u>-eligible increased on every campus and in some cases the increase was substantial. (These changes reflect increases in the size of the ELC pool overall, as well as increases in admit <u>rates</u> for these applicants.)

Based on their review of campus documents, their discussions with campus faculty and admissions directors, and their review of the academic profiles of admitted students, BOARS members concluded that campuses did an excellent job of broadening the academic factors they consider, while enhancing or maintaining academic quality as measured by traditional indicators.

		Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	San Diego	Santa Barbara
Mean number of a-g courses, 7-12th grade	2002	50.7	47.6	47.1	50.0	48.7	47.5
	2001	50.6	47.4	47.0	50.0	48.8	47.5
Mean HSGPA[1]	2002	4.30	3.91	3.92	4.22	4.13	3.93
	2001	4.27	3.91	3.91	4.21	4.15	3.94
Mean SAT I	2002	1337	1227	1220	1322	1286	1222
	2001	1332	1226	1223	1329	1308	1234
Mean SAT II Math (1C and 2C)	2002	687	629	626	679	664	619
	2001	681	625	623	678	672	622
Mean SAT II Writing	2002	672	608	601	663	643	609
	2001	663	599	595	660	649	608
ELC Students (percent of admits)	2002	47.2	22.0	26.8	40.3	38.0	20.9
	2001	38.8[2]	19.2	24.3	35.7	30.8	18.2

1 HSGPA is honors-weighted GPA in A-G coursework

2 ELC 2001 counts at Berkeley artificially low due to data anomalies.

C. Maintaining Access

Although BOARS' primary emphasis is on academic preparation of the entering class, it is also cognizant of the University's role as a public institution and the explicit statement in UC policy that,

> *"Mindful of its mission as a public institution, the University of California...seeks to enroll, on each of its campuses, a student body that, beyond meeting the University's eligibility requirements, demonstrates high academic achievement or exceptional personal talent, and that encompasses the broad diversity of cultural, racial, geographic, and socio-economic backgrounds characteristic of California."*

Historically, the admission processes at selective institutions have tended to privilege students from families with higher socio-economic levels—both because they are more likely to be familiar with higher education and the admissions process, and because they will most likely have been exposed from a young age to a richer array of educational resources. If not implemented carefully, a policy that encourages campuses to consider a broader range of academic factors (for example, the number of honors and AP courses taken), could work to systematically disadvantage students from schools or personal environments with fewer academic resources. Thus, BOARS' principles for comprehensive review balance these values by stating that "merit should be assessed in terms of the full range of an applicant's academic and personal achievements and likely contribution to the campus community, viewed in the context of the opportunities and challenges that the applicant has faced."

In its review of campus criteria and policy documents, BOARS noted that all campuses' policies for 2002 included explicit consideration of educational context—either by considering students' performance relative to others from the same school (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara) or by giving extra consideration to students from schools with relatively low rankings on the state's Academic Performance Index (API) or from families with no previous history of college attendance (Davis, Irvine, San Diego).

In terms of outcomes, BOARS noted that various indicators of socio-economic, geographic, and other kinds of diversity remained roughly the same on most of the six selective campuses, though some campuses experienced more substantial shifts. For example, as Table 2 indicates, BOARS looked at data on three indicators related to socio-economic status and educational disadvantage: previous family experience with higher education, family income, and whether the applicant attends a particularly challenged high school (as measured by API scores). On a systemwide basis, applicants with one or more of these background indicators have been increasing slightly as a proportion of both the applicant and the admitted student pool. At the campus level, students with these characteristics remained at roughly the same proportion of the admitted student pool as in the previous year at Berkeley, Davis, Irvine, and Santa Barbara: that is, on each of these campuses, proportions for some factors go up while others go down and none of the changes is substantial.

Patterns for these factors on the Los Angeles and San Diego campuses showed greater changes. On both of these campuses, all three indicators were up relative to the previous year and some changes were noticeable—for example, at San Diego, applicants who are both low-income and first-generation to attend college increased from 8.6% of the admitted class to 11.6% in one year. Although these factors also increased in UCSD's applicant pool, the increases among admitted students are larger. On the other hand, neither the UCLA nor UCSD outcomes are substantially different from those on other selective campuses. Historically, Los Angeles—presumably because of its geographic location—has had relatively high proportions of low-income applicants and admitted students. And although UCSD showed noticeable increases this year, it has historically admitted lower proportions of low-income or first-generation college students than the other selective campuses, so these changes bring it more toward the average.

In terms of geographic diversity, BOARS noted that rural students have been increasing slowly as a proportion of the applicant and admitted student pools, though they still represent a relatively small percentage of both. On the selective campuses, there was very little change in 2002. Percentages of rural students among the admitted students stayed virtually flat on four campuses and increased slightly at San Diego and Santa Barbara.

BOARS also looked at the relative proportions among campuses' admitted students of applicants who are California residents versus those who are from other states or countries. In general, these proportions also showed very little change. California

residents represent the vast majority of both applicants and admitted students. Although out-of-state applicants tend to have stronger academic profiles (partially because of the higher UC standards for non-residents and partially because most out-of-state applicants come from high-income families), they are far less likely to be admitted because of strong preferences for in-state students built into campus policies. (For example, at the Berkeley campus, where the overall admit rate was 23.9% for 2002, only 16.1% of out-of-state and 10.9% of international applicants were admitted.)

BOARS observed one interesting exception to the relative stability in this indicator across the selective campuses. At San Diego, the admit rate for domestic out-of-state applicants dropped sharply, from 25.4% in 2001 to 10% in 2002[3], while the proportion of California residents among admitted students rose from 93.4% to 97%. San Diego representatives explained that this was a consequence of the removal of the two-tier system. Extension of criteria such as ELC, achievement in UC-approved academic enrichment programs, and being from a disadvantaged school (as calculated by the California API) to the full applicant pool favored applicants who had attended California schools. As a result, non-residents who had previously been admitted (without consideration of these factors) in Tier 1 tended to be replaced by California students. UCSD officials speculate that this shift may also be reflected in other changes in the characteristics of their admitted student pool (including a slight decline in academic indicators).

The final measure of educational access that BOARS looked at was the proportion of students from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups admitted to the selective campuses. As with some of the other indicators discussed above, the proportion of underrepresented students has been growing slowly in both the applicant pool and the admitted students on all campuses. Trends for this indicator were generally similar to those described above for socio-economic factors and measures of educational disadvantage. Proportions of underrepresented students among admitted applicants remained relatively stable at four campuses, increasingly slightly at Berkeley and Santa Barbara and decreasing slightly at Davis and Irvine. Both Los Angeles and San Diego experienced somewhat larger increases, from 15.6% to 17% of admitted applicants at Los Angeles and from 11.1% to 14.2% at San Diego. As with low-income and educationally disadvantaged students, these shifts should be considered in context. In the case of UCLA, the proportion of underrepresented students in the campus applicant pool is increasing more rapidly than for any other campus; in fact, although underrepresented students increased as a proportion of the admitted students, the campus admit rate for these applicants actually <u>decreased</u>. At UCSD, the increase was the result of increases in both the pool <u>and</u> the admit rate. However, the proportion of underrepresented students among UCSD's admitted students remains lower than for all of the other selective campuses except Davis.

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[3] Data on campus admit rates for different categories of applicants are included in the tables in Appendix C.

All measures are given as percent of admitted students

		Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	San Diego	Santa Barbara
First Generation College	2002	23.8	28.1	29.3	27.6	28.8	27.5
	2001	23.1	29.0	29.7	24.7	24.0	26.5
Low Family Income[1]	2002	16.5	16.6	17.7	20.0	19.1	15.9
	2001	17.0	16.9	18.2	17.8	15.0	15.3
Low SES[2]	2002	10.1	10.9	10.8	12.8	11.6	9.9
	2001	10.5	11.4	11.6	11.5	8.6	10.0
Students from CA Low API Schools	2002	17.2	15.2	17.6	19.3	16.7	16.2
	2001	15.8	14.6	17.1	16.8	12.2	15.0
California Residents	2002	87.7	94.7	95.3	90.3	97.0	92.2
	2001	87.9	93.8	93.6	90.1	93.4	91.3
Domestic Out-of-State Students	2002	10.3	4.7	3.8	7.9	2.0	7.0
	2001	10.1	5.3	4.6	7.8	5.2	7.4
California Rural Students	2002	6.2	9.4	5.9	4.5	7.1	9.0
	2001	6.3	9.4	5.9	4.6	6.7	8.8
Underrepresented Minorities[3]	2002	16.5	14.1	15.4	17.0	14.2	17.9
	2001	16.3	14.6	15.6	15.6	11.1	17.5

1 Low Family Income is defined as combined parental income less than or equal to $30,000 annually

2 Low Family Income AND First Generation College

3 American Indian, African American, Chicano or Latino. Following longstanding UC reporting practice, this measure has been calculated as a fraction of domestic admitted students only. All other indicators have been calculated as a fraction of all admitted students, international and domestic.

BOARS also observed that these outcomes with respect to access are affected by other policy changes that have been implemented in recent years—including expanded outreach programs (which are targeted to low-income, first-generation college students and those attending disadvantaged schools) and the ELC program (which was expected to increase the number of applicants from rural areas). Therefore, our ability to attribute modest gains in the measures of access noted above cannot simply be attributed to comprehensive review. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that campuses were successful in implanting a more rigorous academic evaluation without reducing access to students who may traditionally have fewer opportunities for, or less experience with, higher education.

D. Appeal Rates

As a final measure of the relative success of the first-year implementation of comprehensive review, BOARS looked at the rates at which denied applicants appealed campus admission decisions—a sort of rough measure of "consumer" confidence in the process. As Table 3 below indicates, the percentage of denied applicants who appeal the deny decision is low and increased only slightly (from 4.0% to 4.2%) in 2002 from the previous year. Such an increase would be expected as campuses become increasingly selective and, therefore, the academic profile of the denied students rises. BOARS noted declines in appeal rates at two campuses (Berkeley and Los Angeles) and a substantial increase on one, UC Davis. Davis representatives believe the 2002 number is anomalous and is related to the campus's 2001 decision to admit a larger number of appeals than usual in order to meet enrollment targets—thereby increasing expectations that appeals would be successful. BOARS noted that, had the anomalous numbers from Davis been excluded from these counts, the appeal rate would have been identical in 2002 and 2001.

Table 3: Appeals at the Six Selective Campuses from 2001-2002[1]

		Berkeley	Davis	Irvine	Los Angeles	San Diego	Santa Barbara	Total[2]
Appeals	2002	1,000	754	530	1,309	797	941	5,331
	2001	1,250	310	300	1,257	681	893	4,691
Applicants	2002	36,466	28,739	30,595	43,448	41,367	34,711	215,326
	2001	36,106	27,916	29,165	40,744	38,188	34,018	206,137
Denials	2002	27,757	10,595	13,252	32,926	24,308	17,009	125,847
	2001	27,196	10,389	11,946	29,788	21,798	17,005	118,122
Appeal Rate (Appeals/Denials)	2002	3.6%	7.1%	4.0%	4.0%	3.3%	5.5%	4.2%
	2001	4.6%	3.0%	2.5%	4.2%	3.1%	5.3%	4.0%

1 Duplicated counts of applicants, denials, and appeals.

2 Total for the six selective campuses implementing comprehensive review.

III. AREAS REQUIRING FURTHER STUDY

Notwithstanding its overall satisfaction with the first year of implementation of comprehensive review, BOARS identified a number of areas where BOARS and the campuses need to engage in further study and discussion. These are discussed below.

A. Relationship Between the Selection Process and Later Success

Of necessity, this report is limited to the study of process design and short-term outcomes—that is, the overall profile of applicants admitted under the new process. Because these students have only just matriculated at the University and will not have completed any coursework for several months, we are unable at this point to address more far-ranging questions, such as how the students perform academically on their chosen campuses, how well they become integrated and engaged in campus life, the kinds of contributions they make, and, ultimately, whether they graduate and what paths they take after graduation.

BOARS believes that these kinds of studies must be undertaken at every campus and should be integrated into the analysis of the admission process. BOARS also recommends that this analysis consider a broad range of factors beyond simple academic outcomes. A benefit of the discussion of comprehensive review has been that it brings into focus our lack of full understanding and consensus about the goals of the admission process. Many applicants and their parents may feel that admission to a particular campus should simply reward students for their accomplishments in high school; in this view, factors such as academic potential are less valued. Campus faculty, on the other hand, may focus on prospective questions: not only what students have achieved in the past, but their likely successes in college and the contributions they will make to the classroom, to the learning experiences of their peers, and to the campus community as a whole. From an even broader perspective, as a public institution, we should be concerned with the degree to which students will benefit from their experiences and with the long-term contributions they will make to their communities and to the overall welfare of the State.

BOARS is aware of recent research initiatives that offer promise for measuring the success of enrolled students in more complex ways than previously possible and believes these will be quite illuminating in understanding the long-term effects of more comprehensive admission processes.

B. Reliability of Information Used in the Selection Process

Like all college admissions, UC's freshman selection process relies heavily on information that applicants report. With the exception of ACT and SAT I and II test scores, which are transmitted directly from the testing agencies, every piece of information on the application is self-reported. UC's admission process is founded on the assumption that applicants report information honestly. However, given the

increasing competition associated with college admissions, the question of the reliability of the information on which these decisions are based has been raised both nationally and in California. In the University's case, these questions have intensified because of the perception that greater weight in the admission decision is being placed on information contained in the personal statement and list of supplemental honors and activities that students provide.

In this regard, by far the most important information in the application is the high school record—not simply the GPA, but also the listing of specific courses taken, honors-level work, etc. UC campuses already verify this information for every admitted applicant who indicates an intention to enroll. Admitted applicants who intentionally misrepresent their records or who fail to carry through with their projected senior year course of study are at risk of having their admission decision canceled—and every year, campuses do in fact cancel the admission of a small number of students. (Preliminary counts for Fall 2002 indicate that fewer than 400 freshman admission offers were canceled and only nine of these were for falsification.) This practice is well known throughout California high schools and counselors report that it serves as a powerful deterrent for students tempted to embellish their academic records.

Additionally, BOARS observes that the concern about applicants misrepresenting themselves seems based in part on misperceptions about how comprehensive review has changed the admissions process. Applicants are not asked to provide any additional information concerning their achievements or experiences beyond what they had been required to submit under the previous two-tier process. For example, UC applicants have always been required to submit a personal statement and explicitly invited to describe, if they choose, circumstances in their lives that have affected their academic experiences and accomplishments. To the extent that students chose to do so, these factors were considered in the "Tier 2" review and, in some cases, information of an academic nature was considered in Tier 1 as well. Since applicants have never known whether they were going to be considered in Tier 1 or Tier 2, the actual (as opposed to perceived) incentives for students to inflate either accomplishments or obstacles have not changed.

These caveats notwithstanding, BOARS agrees that this issue is very important. As the perceived stakes associated with admission to particular campuses rise, some counselors have reported that potential applicants fear that others will embellish their records and they will be relatively disadvantaged as a result. In this environment, the University is obligated to do whatever it can to ensure applicants and the general public that the information on which admission decisions are based is accurate. Thus, one of BOARS' accountability principles for comprehensive review states that "campus practices should include processes to monitor accuracy and reliability of data used in the decision-making process."

This work has already begun. For the Fall 2002 process, admissions staff conducted two pilot verification processes, one at the system level and one at the campus level.

This year the San Diego campus, which has experimented with verifying information for the past several years, verified self-reported family income for a sample of 137 admitted applicants who had stated their intention to enroll. The campus also randomly selected 300 applicants who had listed honors and achievements, community service, or participation in academic enrichment programs on their application that resulted in the awarding of points as part of San Diego's comprehensive review process. These applicants were required to document the specific activities for which they had been awarded points. Out of 437 admitted San Diego applicants selected for some form of verification, all but one were able to provide documentation of the information they had submitted in their application.

To complement the San Diego verification effort, which did not include information from the personal statement, the Office of the President conducted a pilot this summer of a small sample of students admitted to one or more selective campuses, who were asked to verify factual material from their personal statements. This study also found that applicants were able to provide documentary evidence supporting the statements made in their applications.   Additionally, earlier this fall, the Office of the President conducted focus groups with high school counselors to gauge their reaction to systematic verification of application information. All were quite supportive and many reported that they felt students would welcome the procedure as a means of discouraging others who might be tempted to inflate their experiences.

With these initial positive experiences to draw from, the directors of admission this summer formed a work group to design a process of verification that will be implemented for the Fall 2003 admission cycle.   Exact specifications for this process have not been finalized, but the proposal calls for selected items of information from a random sample of applications to be verified at the systemwide level <u>prior to</u> final admission decisions. Applicants who are not able to provide acceptable documentation will not be admitted to any campus until the verification materials have cleared. The verification process will be conducted in January so that applicants' status can be resolved prior to the April 1 deadline for admission decisions.

In addition, BOARS will continue to study the feasibility of other processes that would confirm the veracity of information provided in the admission application. These include requiring some form of recommendation from a high school teacher or counselor and revising the format of the personal statement (discussed under D.).

C. The Appropriate Role of Consideration of Hardship in the Admission Process

Recent commentary on comprehensive review has suggested that the weight given to "hardship" as a criterion in the UC admission process increased with comprehensive review and has questioned whether this weight is appropriate. In reviewing campus policies, implementation plans, and admission outcomes, BOARS found no evidence to indicate that the role of hardship had increased substantially, nor that is used inappropriately in the admission processes.

BOARS members note that the ability to overcome obstacles has been a factor in the admission process for decades and that special consideration for students who come from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds is an explicit part of Regental policy on admission. Section 4 of Regents Resolution SP-1, on which our current selection criteria were based, specifically mandated development of criteria that give consideration to individuals who,

> "*despite having suffered disadvantage economically or in terms of their social environment (such as an abusive or otherwise dysfunctional home or a neighborhood of unwholesome or antisocial influences), have nevertheless sufficient character and determination in overcoming obstacles to warrant confidence that the applicant can pursue a course of study to successful completion...*"

This recommendation is reflected in the University's admissions criteria (unchanged since they were adopted in 1996) in criterion #13:

> "*Academic accomplishments in light of the applicant's life experiences and special circumstances. These experiences and circumstances may include, but are not limited to, disabilities, low family income, first generation to attend college, need to work, disadvantaged social or educational environment, difficult personal and family situations or circumstances, refugee status, or veteran status.*"

The educational and policy justifications for this recommendation are clear. Students who evidence an ability to succeed academically despite challenging circumstances have demonstrated personal qualities and a commitment to their own education that will directly affect their success in college. In the words of one BOARS member,

> "*What is important in our admission process is not that someone has suffered hardship or faced an obstacle per se, but rather how they have succeeded in overcoming it or persevering in spite of it. We look for evidence that the student has reflected on the experience and attained a degree of maturity and insight as a result. These considerations do not amount to some kind of misery index, but attempt to gauge how and with what maturity and determination the student dealt with and overcame obstacles and achieved their goals. Students who have shown such determination are students who are likely to do well.*"

In addition, as a public institution, UC has a responsibility to maintain access for students from all backgrounds—especially, one might argue, for those for whom a UC degree will open doorways not typically available in their families or communities. UC, for example, is a national leader in educating low-income students and these students can be expected to go on to contribute both economically and socially to their communities and the state as a whole in ways that are materially enhanced by their UC education.

Nonetheless, BOARS recognizes that in the intensely competitive college admission environment in which UC operates, we have an obligation to reassure the general

public that the values implicit in our selection criteria and processes are appropriate. With respect to the role of "hardship," we can begin this process by looking empirically at the weight of hardship-related factors at those campuses that assign fixed weights to various criteria.

For example, both Davis and San Diego admit applicants using a linear ranking of points assigned using fixed weights. In UCSD's formula, 8,500 (76.6%) out of the total 11,100 possible points are based on strictly academic factors (grades, test scores, courses completed, and ELC status), another 1,200 (10.8%) are based on achievements outside the classroom (leadership, community service, etc.), and 1,400 (12.6%) are based on factors that could be construed as related to hardship (for example, coming from a family with no previous college experience). This ranking clearly assigns greatest weight to academic factors. For students whose academic preparation levels are relatively similar, points assigned for various kinds of disadvantage could be a deciding factor. But students admitted as a result would also have to have very strong academic foundations. Moreover, UCSD staff report that the average points students receive for these factors is small. Only 17,713 (43%) applicants were assigned any points at all for "hardship" factors, and the average number of points assigned was 241 out of the maximum 1,400 points allowable in these categories. Indeed, only 63 applicants (0.15%) out of more than 41,000 received the maximum 1,400 points possible for these factors.

Similarly at Davis, 9,750 (75%) of the 13,000 total possible points are based on measures of academic achievement (GPA, test scores, a-g courses, ELC status, and marked improvement in the 11th grade), 1500 (12%) are based on achievement outside the classroom, and 1,750 (13%) are based on factors that could be considered related to hardship (e.g., graduating from a high school in the bottom quintile as ranked by California API score).

While campuses like Berkeley, Irvine, and Los Angeles balance various criteria without using fixed weights, a review of the data from the previous section of this report indicates that their outcomes (for example, the academic profile of the incoming classes and the admit rate for disadvantaged students) are quite similar to those of the campuses that do use fixed weights. BOARS sees no evidence that would lead one to conclude that the effective weights assigned in their processes are substantially different. Nonetheless, BOARS encourages those campuses whose admission systems are not based on fixed weights to conduct analyses that will illuminate the role of "hardship" in their decisions and to communicate the results of these analyses broadly.

D. Reconsideration of the Application Form and Application Processing

As noted throughout this report, comprehensive review represents a subtle, but fundamental, shift in the philosophy underlying UC's admission process. Although the University's selection criteria have not changed, campuses are encouraged to look more deeply into the application and to use all of the data contained therein to make the best admission decisions.

In this environment, BOARS has recommended that the Office of the President review the current format of the application. This recommendation reinforces the conclusion of the systemwide Task Force on the Future Delivery of Student Services, which last year made a number of recommendations regarding new approaches to student service delivery—the first of which was that the University appoint a task force to study admissions application processing. The Admissions Processing Task Force was established in the winter of 2002 under the leadership of BOARS then Vice-Chair and current Chair Barbara Sawrey and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Michael Young of the Santa Barbara campus. Its work is well under way and has focused thus far on three areas of substantial relevance to this report.

The first of these is to look at ways that technology can be used to make the application process both more accurate and more efficient. This fall, electronic applications for roughly 25,000 seniors whose records were evaluated for the ELC process were "pre-populated" with academic information taken directly from their electronic transcripts—information that we know to be highly reliable because it has been supplied directly by the schools and vetted by trained evaluators for compliance with UC eligibility requirements. Additionally, the Task Force is encouraging campuses to consider ways that they can share resources in the evaluation of applications and several campuses are actively working together to develop options that would presumably lead not only to a slowing of the increase in the cost of application processing, but also to greater consistency in decisions across campuses. Finally, a subcommittee has been charged with re-examining the UC application to identify changes to the prompt and format for the personal statement that will direct applicants to provide the most relevant and helpful information and reduce the possibility that they will submit personal statements substantially written by third parties. This subcommittee will present its initial report before the end of the calendar year.

BOARS applauds the progress that the Task Force has made thus far and will continue to be closely involved to ensure that all avenues are explored for improving the accuracy and usefulness of information in the application and the efficiency with which applications can be processed.

E. Clarity and Predictability of the Admissions Process

During the discussion of comprehensive review prior to its adoption and over the course of the past year, members of the University community, as well as some external observers, have raised the question of "transparency" in the admission process. This question seems to have two related, but distinct, dimensions. First, is the process clear and easy to understand for applicants and other interested parties? Second, are the outcomes of the process relatively easy to predict if one is aware of the criteria on which they are based?

1. <u>Clarity and Openness</u>. BOARS agrees that the University has a responsibility to ensure that its processes are open and easily understood by the public and that more can and should be done in this area.

At the systemwide level, much of the UC admission process is quite clear. Basic UC eligibility criteria and the promise of admission to at least one campus have not changed. And much of the selection process, including the application form and calendar and the overall selection criteria are consistent across all campuses and have not changed substantially in recent years. Traditionally, the University has communicated its freshman processes through a series of publications (*Introducing the University*, *Quick Reference for Counselors*, and the application booklet itself) that are widely disseminated throughout the state and through counselor conferences that reach an estimated 4,500 high school and community college personnel annually. Systemwide publications and conferences are supplemented by campus-specific publications and by websites and other electronic resources at both the University and campus levels.

At the campus level, BOARS observes that, in general, campuses have done a good job of articulating their policies and values, and of designing processes that implement these. Additionally, BOARS noted that in one respect UC is remarkably open about its admission processes: on virtually all selective campuses, high school counselors and teachers, as well as private admissions counselors, actually take part in the admission process. The practice of including high school personnel as admissions readers holds excellent promise for broadening the base of knowledge about our practices among those who most need this information: the high school personnel who work directly with applicants before, during, and after the application filing process.

Overall, however, BOARS concludes that further study needs to be given to the way campuses articulate the connection between policy and process. All campuses publish general statements of their selection processes that lay out specific criteria (for example, "academic excellence" or "ability to achieve in the face of challenges and obstacles"). They also publish documents describing their process. In some cases these are narrative (explaining, for example that the campus review process is conducted in multiple phases and describing each of these); in others they may be lists of points assigned for various factors. But they rarely make explicit the connection between policy and process, e.g., "UCX judges academic excellence based on the following four items:…" or "to evaluate 'achievement in context,' UCXX reviews the following pieces of information found in the application." Additionally, campuses vary in both the format and the level of detail of information they provide. Thus even though the documents seem clear, the process may remain mysterious.

To address these issues, BOARS recommends that a review of admission communications—including printed and electronic communications produced at both the campus and systemwide levels—be added to the scope of BOARS' monitoring of admissions processes. This review should be undertaken in parallel by campus faculty and staff, BOARS, and OP staff. It should address the completeness, clarity, and consistency of information provided by different sources

and work toward establishing a standard for the level of detail and kinds of information campuses should be expected to provide.

2. Predictability. Few admission processes are truly predictable. But historically, one of the defining characteristics of the UC eligibility and admission process has been that it was more predictable than most: the University's eligibility criteria set forth very straightforward standards for academic preparation and provided a guarantee that all applicants who met those standards are admitted. The absolute "predictability" of this system began to change more than 25 years ago, when individual campuses reached capacity and additional criteria were developed for selecting among qualified applicants. Nonetheless, for many years, most campus selection processes were based on simple formulae and, since the number of qualified students denied was still relatively small, admission decisions were rarely questioned.

Today, several UC campuses function much more like the nation's most selective private institutions in terms of the numbers of applicants they deny and the relative level of preparation of those denied applicants. UC is caught up in a troubling national spiral of increased competition for admission. More people are applying and more individual applicants are applying to more campuses, creating an unprecedented surge of applications. This year, applications to UCSD increased by more than eight percent to 41,367[4] and applications to UCLA increased by nearly seven percent, to 43,448. This year, UCLA denied nearly 33,000 freshman applicants—more than any institution in the country. UC Berkeley and UCSD denied roughly 28,000 and 24,000 respectively. The vast majority of these applicants were fully qualified and many of them have very high levels of achievement that indicate they would flourish on any of our campuses.

In this environment, the challenges involved in providing a road map to applicants eager to know their "chances" are enormous. Over time, UC has struggled with the question of how to provide high school students with a realistic estimate of their likelihood of admission without deterring them from even applying to the more selective campuses. The approach it has adopted is to provide tables (contained on pages 40-47 of *Introducing the University 2003-04*) that estimate the likelihood of admission (expressed as a percentage) to a particular campus given various levels of preparation (as indicated by traditional measures such as GPA and test scores). While these tables are not perfect, BOARS concluded that they can be quite instructive and succeed in striking a difficult balance between giving applicants needed information on their likely success at various campuses and not discouraging them from applying to campuses where admission is more of a stretch. BOARS recommends that these tables be reviewed in connection with the review of

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[4] Note that all application and admit numbers included in this report are based on UC systemwide data that has been updated through August 2002, but is not yet final. Final application, admit, and enrollment numbers will be collected in November and available in December.

communications discussed above and that they continue to be widely disseminated to applicants, families, and high school personnel.

Finally, in considering the question of "predictability," BOARS members returned to the fact that the bedrock on which our admission process is based must remain the guarantee of a space on at least one campus for all UC-eligible applicants. While the importance of this guarantee is sometimes lost in the competition for admission to one or two highly impacted campuses, it needs to remain part of our fundamental message: all of our campuses offer an outstanding academic environment and a challenging and rewarding experience.

F. Making the Best Use of Admissions Readers

In reviewing campus practices, BOARS members observed that campuses differ somewhat in their use of admissions readers to evaluate various aspects of the admissions file. BOARS had anticipated that due to differing levels of resources and readiness, as well as different campus admission climates and philosophies, not all campuses would use readers in the same way. In general, BOARS concluded that campus processes employed this year were appropriate, given local conditions. However, BOARS recommends that campuses continue to review and refine their use of readers, focusing on three specific areas.

1. <u>Number of reads per file</u>. BOARS did not require that all campuses use two readers for those portions of their processes that rely on evaluation by human readers. And BOARS notes that campuses that do use single reads have been very resourceful in ensuring reliability in other ways. (For example, Davis used single readers to score those parts of the application that cannot be evaluated mechanically, but it also implemented several quality control methods to ensure consistency and is conducting an in-depth analysis of the outcomes to identify problem areas and focus second reads in the upcoming year's process on those areas where they are most needed.) Nonetheless, BOARS concludes that the use of two "blind" reads constitutes a "best practice" that campuses should move toward adopting, not only because it adds further protection against individual subjectivity, but also because readers report that they feel much more comfortable knowing that their score is being confirmed by a second reader.

2. <u>Increasing the level of attention given to applicants on the "border" of admission</u>. As described above, in the section on process design and integrity, several campuses have developed additional evaluation processes for applicants on the "border" between admission and denial. BOARS recommends that, as a general principle, campuses focus their processes on those cases where additional attention is most needed in order to make the best admission decision. For example, campuses that currently read the files of all applicants, including those whose academic preparation is clearly sufficient to meet the campus's admission threshold, may wish to shift some of their resources to ensure multiple reads for applicants whose decisions are less clear-cut.

3. Extending the reading process to the full applicant pool. BOARS principle #8 for the implementation of comprehensive review states that, "campus selection policies should ensure that no applicant will be denied admission without a comprehensive review of his or her file." In other words, BOARS recognizes that, particularly at campuses that do not deny large portions of their pool, there may be many applicants who clearly meet the campus's threshold for admissions and who can, therefore, be admitted without further review. But, by the same token, a fair process must provide applicants the benefit of the doubt by giving them the opportunity to be judged on all possible criteria before they are denied. Thus, even if a statistical analysis shows that it is very unlikely that a student will be admitted, as long as that possibility exists, the applicant should receive a full review.

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In summary, BOARS concludes that campuses have implemented comprehensive review in a manner that is consistent with University goals and policies, that preserves and deepens the academic quality of our incoming freshman classes, and that protects the University's historic promise of access to students from all of California's communities. BOARS looks forward to the second year of implementation of comprehensive review and to returning in future years to report on further progress on those issues identified as being in need of additional study.