

May 19, 2003

TO: Richard Church, Chair  
CCGA

FR: Neal Schiller  
Interim Dean, UCR Graduate Division

RE: Responses to Questions Posed by CCGA

As requested by the CCGA, I have elicited responses to the 3 questions below from the Graduate Deans of each campus. I have attempted to briefly paraphrase and capture the essence of the various responses below and grouped these into general comments and campus specific responses. If CCGA would like more detailed responses, or has additional questions, feel free to contact me for this information.

***Query 1:*** *In response to ACR 178 and the task force assembled gathering information on this topic, CCGA has requested COGD to inform them of current practices involved in admission of students into graduate programs.*

**General Comments:** A minimum GPA of 3.0 is considered to be a well-accepted standard at most UCs and in general, this appears to be the practice across the country. Most graduate programs require the GRE general exam (and some the subject exam) although most do not stipulate a specific minimum score for admission. International students are also required to submit a TOEFL score and there is a defined minimum for this test (a score of 550 for the written exam and 213 for the computer-based exam).

A minimum 3.0 GPA and some minimum GRE score could be considered as eligibility criteria rather than admissions criteria (analogous to well-accepted eligibility criteria for undergraduate admission to UC). That is, applications are considered that meet a threshold with regard to a quantitative measure, but then a comprehensive review is applied to those applications that pass the threshold. It was clear from all the responses received that graduate programs employ a comprehensive review of all applicant materials in making their admission decisions, and that lower GPA or GRE scores are often counterbalanced by strengths in other parts of the application, such as letters of recommendation, previous research experience, strength in specific courses in the major, and other considerations. There is also great variation between graduate programs on the relative weight placed on these quantitative measures and many have indicated that other factors, particularly previous research experience, motivation, and letters of recommendation are better predictors of success in graduate school than undergraduate grades or GRE scores. Even where minimum values are listed, exceptions to these standards are granted by the Graduate Dean in consideration of the factors listed above as justified by the graduate program's admission committee. Therefore, it is clear that no single quantitative test score is used to eliminate any applicant from consideration for admission into one of UC's graduate programs.

**Campus specific responses:**

Berkeley – No department uses a specific numerical criterion to determine admission exclusively; many take quantitative measures into account, such as GPA and GRE scores, and some graduate programs state their expectations for GPA or GRE performance in order for the applicant to be competitive; however, even with these specific programs, other applicant characteristics are strongly considered, including research experience, motivation, letters of recommendation, etc.

Davis – Most graduate programs do not specify required levels of GRE scores although there are a few exceptions. Programs do require a minimum GPA of 3.0 and some of the more competitive programs specify a 3.25 GPA. However, exceptions to this minimum are made when the program can justify a positive recommendation based on the holistic review of the entire application.

Irvine – The Grad School of Management uses a formula of GPA and GMAT to establish a minimal threshold for admission but still uses a “holistic” evaluation approach for candidates at the margin; with this exception, no other program uses a formula to determine eligibility.

Los Angeles – The Graduate Council stipulates a minimum junior/senior grade-point average of 3.00 or higher as a baseline standard for graduate admission. A few graduate programs stipulate a higher GPA for admission. The Graduate Council does not require the GRE although most programs do require this test. There is no published minimum GRE score and there is widespread disparity among the faculty in terms of value and usage attached to the GRE in the admissions process.

Riverside – Most graduate programs use a graduate admissions committee to review each file and make a recommendation. The Graduate Division has set as a guideline for admission eligibility, a GPA for coursework in the last 2 undergraduate years of 3.20 and a GRE (V+Q) combined score of 1100. Graduate programs that recommend admission for candidates with scores below these levels are asked to explain their recommendations; typically a low score can be offset by valuable research experience, strong letters of recommendation, performance in key courses germane to the graduate degree, or other considerations.

San Diego – The only numerical standard is the UC-wide 3.0 GPA requirement; admission of a student with a lower GPA requires an exception.

San Francisco – The Graduate Division requires a minimum 3.0 GPA; a letter of recommendation and justification must be sent to the Graduate Dean to admit a student with a GPA below 3.0. There is no minimum score required for the GRE. Faculty members in the graduate programs review the entire application; no single criterion is used to determine admission.

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Santa Barbara – UCSB uses system-wide 3.0 GPA requirement but exceptions are made based on additional information provided by applicant; all programs (except Art Studio) require GRE general exam, some require subject test – there is no formal minimum GRE set by Graduate Division although individual programs are free to set minimum GRE score requirements as appropriate for their selection process.

Santa Cruz – Departments look at GPA and GRE scores as admissions criteria, though no minimum is stated in any literature nor, it appears, used in practice.

**Query 2:** *CCGA has been asked by the Academic Senate to respond to the growing concern about international applications and has asked COGD for information. Basically, there are two questions: a) How serious a problem is there at the moment on each campus regarding falsification of application information (transcripts, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, etc.? While there is anecdotal information, what is each campus' experience in this matter? b) How does each campus protect itself against this problem? What practices are in place to address this concern? What is each campus doing in response to this?*

**General Comments:** There is hope that the COGD will build bridges to institutions in the PRC that will be effective in making sure that we are receiving valid applications from the best students. Several UCs have begun to build their own connections to specific universities in the PRC. Overall, the campuses seem concerned and cautious but not overly alarmed to date. Some point out that domestic students can also falsify documents so equal attention is paid to all applicants' credentials. Others mention that most of the international students who have been admitted have done well, which would support the argument that most of the application materials were legitimate. Finally, it was recommended that admissions staff from all UCs meet once a year or every other year to share information on topics such as verification of foreign credentials and detection of fraudulent ones.

### **Campus specific responses:**

Berkeley – Not sure how serious a problem this is; one of their admissions staff is contacting universities in the PRC to verify transcripts with mixed success. On the other hand, the Haas School of Business checked on 100 applicants to the MBA and found that 5 had falsified information – these were all domestic applicants so the problem of falsification is not confined to international students.

Davis – The admissions staff check to make sure an application is from a recognized institution, ensure that transcripts are authentic, and look for obvious fraud (erasure marks on GRE score reports or transcripts). At the program level, experienced admissions committee members in general view international applications with some skepticism, especially GRE scores and recommendations.

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Irvine – Not a serious problem; a few anecdotal cases but nothing systematic; admissions decisions involve the consideration of the full range of information about each student – inconsistencies among this data often identify a problem with the applicant.

Los Angeles – Fraudulent application materials are occasionally identified from people of all backgrounds, not only international students. While only a few cases have been routinely seen, there is a sense that the problem is growing. At the WAGS meeting in March 2003, the Council of Graduate Schools indicated they were working with the Chinese government to establish a web site that will aid US universities in identifying fraudulent records from Chinese students. Departments are encouraged to send records they have concerns about to the Graduate Division for review.

Riverside – The Graduate Admissions staff has experience in reviewing foreign student applications and is vigilant for any inconsistencies in materials received. There have been a few applications where significant concerns led to investigations and resulted in proof of fabrication of information (fraudulent letters of recommendation or doctored transcripts). However, the actual number of these cases has been small.

San Diego – Falsification of application materials is limited to 1-2 cases per year, both from domestic and international applicants. Trained admissions staff carefully review all documents and consult with other staff at other campuses as needed. Faculty evaluate recommendation letters in the context of the whole file. Falsification is not considered a significant problem.

San Francisco – Has not experienced problems with falsification of records; moreover, there are not a large number of international applicants and less than 20 foreign students a year are admitted into this specialized biomedical health sciences campus.

Santa Barbara – UCSB is aware of instances of falsification of application materials but this is not considered a serious problem; 3 graduate departments have expressed serious concern about applications and have adjusted their review process to address these concerns; graduate division does regular training sessions with staff and faculty involved in reviewing applications; a faculty member went to China to interview prospective applicants and assess English proficiency – 7 of 35 interviewed had overall lower ability than suggested by their record.

Santa Cruz – The Admissions unit has many years of experience handling these documents; the faculty are best able to determine if a letter appears to be suspicious. When the graduate faculty representatives from all graduate programs were asked, they reported no problems with falsified application information.

Additional information shared by UCLA's Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Vice Chancellor and Dean, Graduate Studies: Dan Bennett, Director of UCLA Graduate Admissions Office attended a recent NAGAP meeting and spoke with Margaret Wenger, a representative from Education Credential Evaluations, Inc. (Milwaukee) and an international records evaluation expert, who indicated that fraudulent records from China

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was a huge problem and even their experts have problems in spotting fraudulent credentials. ECE sends a lot of these transcripts back to China for verification. She said that one can purchase a degree from Beijing and that blank transcript paper is available at many universities. Also, there is a huge growth in diploma mills in China. Therefore, authentication of Chinese records is quite difficult.

***Query 3:** CCGA has asked COGD for information or data on the number of “dormant” graduate programs on each campus – those degree programs which have had low or no enrolled students for some years (~5 years) but which have not been formally disestablished.*

### **Campus specific responses:**

Berkeley – currently has no dormant programs

Davis – UCD has several categories of “dormant” programs: those discontinued but still appear on the books pending completion of the last student; those with admissions closed either at the request of the program or due to a program review; and orphaned program names left from mergers or renaming but where there are a small number of students who wanted to finish under the old name. There are about 5 truly dormant programs, with no students and no intention to renew the program. These are all programs which the faculty and Graduate Council have taken action on but formal discontinuation has not been processed.

Irvine – there are 2 PhD programs not listed in the UCI catalog but remain “approved” by the Academic Senate; admission to the MA/PhD in Comparative Culture was suspended in 1993 and admission to the MS/PhD in Radiological Sciences was suspended in 1996.

Los Angeles – only one program (the Master of Public Administration) is truly dormant (while still on the books, it has no courses, faculty or students and is not advertised); there are two programs (MA in History and Library and Information Science and MA in Latin American Studies and Education) that are listed in admissions material but have declined to admit students in recent years. It remains unclear if these departments intend to revive or disestablish these programs.

Riverside – The following programs have moratoriums on their admission and have had no students for years: French (MA, PhD); German (MA, PhD); Pest Management (MS); and Population Biology (PhD).

San Diego – one dormant program – Master of Architecture

San Francisco – The PhD program in History of Health Sciences has not accepted students for 5 years due to decreased faculty numbers; however, new faculty FTE have recently been added and a draft proposal for a re-start of this program has been submitted. The Graduate Council closed admission to the PhD in Health Psychology over 5 years ago; but with new faculty FTE recently added to this program, discussions are underway

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concerning whether to reopen this program. During 2003-04, the Graduate Council plans to initiate disestablishment of graduate programs in anatomy, endocrinology, experimental pathology, and physiology. These programs have been integrated into the now well-established program in biomedical sciences. Also, the program in speech and hearing sciences will be disestablished.

Santa Barbara – while the graduate program in speech and hearing has not admitted students for at least 6 years, it has not been disestablished

Santa Cruz – has no dormant programs