

BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS
Response to the 2003-04 Eligibility and Admissions Study Group
Finding/Recommendation 5: Examination of the Policy of Admitting Students
from the Full Range of the Eligibility Pool

ENDORSED BY THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL ON APRIL 27, 2005

Introduction

In October 2003, President Robert C. Dynes established the Eligibility and Admissions Study Group (Study Group), co-chaired by Joanne C. Kozberg, Chair of the UC Regents' Committee on Educational Policy, and Bruce B. Darling, Senior Vice President for University Affairs, to examine undergraduate eligibility and admissions issues facing the University of California. In a *Final Report to the President*, dated April 2004, the Study Group submitted its findings and recommendations. Among them was Finding/Recommendation 5:

The Study Group affirms that the University is best served by admissions processes that ensure a variety of student experiences and interests on each campus and that enable the distribution of students from the breadth of the eligibility pool across all of the University's campuses. At the same time, the Study Group requests that BOARS examine the policy of admitting to each campus students from the full range of the eligibility pool and report to the President and the Regents on the benefits and consequences of this approach.

The Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) is pleased to respond to this request.

Academic and Policy Rationale

In President Dynes' October 16, 2003 letter to the Regents announcing his intention to form the Study Group, he observed that:

Consistent with Regents' policy, campuses use a variety of factors – predominantly traditional academic criteria, but also other measures of achievement and promise – to select from the pool of eligible applicants. Campuses are encouraged to draw from the full range of the eligibility pool. This seems reasonable and desirable in a system like UC, where we do not have a flagship and several lesser campuses, but a true system of distinguished universities.

BOARS is in full agreement with this statement from the President. In BOARS' examination of the Study Group's question, members observed that the practice of selecting students from the full range of the eligibility pool has both an academic and a policy rationale.

The academic rationale for admitting students to each campus from the full range of the UC eligibility pool is that, by virtue of having achieved UC eligibility, all of the students in the pool demonstrate the ability to succeed at any UC campus. Students who enter college with different levels of academic preparation will inevitably perform at varying levels; this is the case even when students enter with the same levels of academic preparation. UC's eligibility requirements, however, provide an academic foundation that ensures a student has a reasonable chance of success at the University. The premise that all UC-eligible applicants can succeed at any campus is borne out by data on persistence, graduation, and GPAs earned at UC. Both BOARS and campus admissions committees have a strong interest in ensuring that admitted students have an excellent chance of academic success and monitor the correlation between UC's eligibility requirements and student outcomes on a regular basis.

Importantly, each UC campus also has an educational interest in admitting a mixture of students who will enrich the learning environment, both inside and outside the classroom. Students at different places within the range of eligibility exhibit unique constellations of desirable academic and non-academic qualities. These qualities enable students to contribute to the intellectual, cultural, and social environment on the campus in different ways. For example, many successful business and political leaders and artists and entertainers were not necessarily academically at the top of their college class, but contributed in other important ways to the campus environment and later to society. Similarly, students from one region of the state or one kind of background have much to learn from and teach to others whose experiences and perspectives differ from theirs. Selecting students from across the breadth of the eligibility pool best enables a campus to attain a rich learning environment, full of a variety of student experiences, interests, and skills.

The policy rationale for admitting students to each campus from the full range of the eligibility pool is that, as a public, land-grant university, the University of California has a special obligation to offer opportunity to students from throughout California. The 1868 state law that established the University of California spoke to this obligation by declaring, "...it shall be the duty of the Regents, according to population, to so apportion the representation of students, when necessary, that all portions of the State shall enjoy equal privilege therein."¹ The *University of California Policy on Undergraduate Admissions*, adopted by The Regents in 1988, affirms that this responsibility extends to all UC campuses, not just a subset of them:

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

¹ Organic Act (Approved March 23, 1868). *Statutes of California, Seventeenth Session*. 1867-1868, ch. 244, § 14.

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.

UC's eligibility and admissions criteria have acknowledged this responsibility from the University's inception, by laying out objective systemwide criteria that can be easily understood; by working to ensure that high-quality college preparatory coursework is available in every public high school in California; by reaching out, first, to women and students from all geographic regions and, later, to racial and ethnic minorities, to poor and immigrant students, and to students in schools that historically have sent fewer students on to higher education.

Practice's Historical Development

During the period when campuses could admit all eligible applicants, there was no need for specific policy direction regarding the desirability of admitting from the full range of the pool: they did so by virtue of the fact that they admitted all eligible applicants. However, the idea that UC should balance academic achievement with other factors has been expressed in policy documents throughout the University's history. For example, the 1957 predecessor to the Master Plan, the *Study of the Need for Additional Centers of Public Higher Education*, concluded that restricting access to UC campuses to only the very highest achievers on the basis of high school grades and test scores alone was undesirable because "the qualities of leadership so important to success in business and the professions are not necessarily confined to a smaller percentage of the high school graduating class."

The University's first written policy guidelines for choosing among UC-eligible applicants, promulgated by the Office of the President in 1971,² directed campuses to admit no more than half of their students from among those with the highest academic rankings and to admit the remaining students based on a review of their other achievements, personal qualities, and the University's diversity goals, as well as academic factors. At the time, the intent of these guidelines was to ensure that no single campus or group of campuses selected more than a share of the most academically qualified applicants, but rather, that these applicants be distributed across all of the campuses, including those that had just opened. Thus, the underlying goal of this policy was an institutional desire not to prefer any one campus—which would create a hierarchy among UC campuses—but rather to ensure that all campuses remained of relatively equal stature.

This policy goal also served in the 1970s and 1980s to ensure that all campuses built student bodies that were broadly diverse, in terms of socio-economic, geographical, cultural, and racial/ethnic background. The goal is embodied in the 1988 *University of California Policy on Undergraduate Admissions* which calls for a student body on every campus that "demonstrates high academic achievement or exceptional personal talent,

² See Item IV-8 in materials for the December 16, 2003 meeting of the 2003-04 Eligibility and Admissions Study Group <<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/compreview/backgroundmaterials1203.html>>

and that encompasses the broad diversity of...backgrounds characteristic of California” (emphasis added). This policy directed each campus to develop procedures for selection from eligible applicants that were consistent with these principles. Shortly after this policy was adopted by The Regents, the Office of the President revised its earlier guidelines, specifying that selective campuses (which at the time included only UC Berkeley and UCLA) admit no less than 40 percent and no more than 60 percent of their incoming classes on academic criteria alone.

The “two-tier” policy embedded in the 1971 and 1988 guidelines was incorporated in Regents’ Resolution SP-1 (1995), which changed the proportions for the two different groups, restricting admissions on academic achievement alone to 50-75 percent of the incoming class. In 2001, Regents’ Resolution RE-28 eliminated the two-tier process and incorporated, by reference, the criteria from the *Guidelines for Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions* (as revised in 2000). Later the same year, when it adopted comprehensive review, BOARS amended the 2000 *Guidelines* to eliminate headings that identified some criteria as “academic” and others as “supplemental” and to add BOARS’ principles for comprehensive review. The criteria utilized for selection remain unchanged.

Conclusion

BOARS finds the practice of admitting students to each campus from the full range of the eligibility pool fully consistent with Regents policy regarding the desirability of a student body whose members exhibit a broad range of both academic and other talents and strengths as well as a diversity of geographic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. BOARS also finds such campus practices fully consistent with the *Guidelines for Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions*. BOARS will continue to monitor campus policies and practices for consistency with both Regents policy and the University *Guidelines*.