



Mary Gauvain
Telephone: (510) 987-0887
Email: mary.gauvain@ucop.edu

Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

June 22, 2021

MICHAEL T. BROWN
PROVOST AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Re: BOARS Letter on California State Auditor Requests of Campus Admissions Officers

Dear Michael,

At its May 2021 meeting, the Academic Council unanimously endorsed the attached letter from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) expressing concern about the California State Auditor’s (CSA) recent request for details about individual campuses’ undergraduate admission selection processes.

BOARS’ main concern is that publicizing the exact details of selection procedures will encourage efforts to game the system, advantage better resourced students, and conflict with principles of fairness and equitable access. BOARS also emphasizes that the request is impractical given that most campuses use 13 selection factors in holistic review, do not assign uniform or fixed weights to those factors, and rely on the professional judgment of admission reviewers. In short, there is no single recipe for a successful UC applicant, so the request cannot be answered, and if it could be answered, it would be unfair to do so.

The University is already transparent about its admission selection procedures. BOARS’ *Annual Report on Undergraduate Admissions Requirements and Comprehensive Review* includes a summary description of campus selection processes (pages 16-30 in the 2020 Report¹). These descriptions make clear that all campuses use professionally-trained application readers to assess student talent and potential using multiple academic and contextual factors, and all include various institutional checks to ensure quality and avoid reader bias. In addition, all admissions staff and readers receive implicit bias training as part of their annual certification.

Council encourages uniform messaging across campuses to the CSA on the points BOARS raises in its letter, to support the continued integrity and fairness of the UC admissions process. We request your assistance in this effort by moving BOARS’ letter forward to campus Provosts and Admissions Directors.

¹ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/boars/documents/boars-2020-cr-report.pdf>

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Gauvain".

Mary Gauvain, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: Vice Provost Gullatt
Executive Director Yoon-Wu
Chief of Staff Peterson
Academic Council
Senate Directors
Systemwide Senate Director Baxter

Encl.



BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS (BOARS)

Eddie Comeaux, Chair

eddie.comeaux@ucr.edu

Assembly of the Academic Senate

1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor

Oakland, CA 94607-5200

May 14, 2021

**MARY GAUVAIN, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: California State Auditor Requests of Campus Admissions Offices

Dear Mary,

The members of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) have been following the important work of the response of our campuses to the ongoing audit activities from the California State Auditor (CSA) and UCOP. Last week, the CSA requested a set of additional documentation; UCOP has requested campus responses by May 24. Among the items requested was the following:

CSA Recommendation #5, Selection methodology

- *In selection methodology documentation, specifically articulate a priority order for how the campus would decide which applicants they would admit, rather than vague or general characteristics that are considered when evaluating applicants.*
- *Ensure the selection methodology documentation specifically describes how decisions are made between similarly rated students.*

While BOARS recognizes the goals of the CSA in making this request, we believe that making the exact details of selection procedures at each campus public runs counter to the principles of fairness and equitable access that we know are shared by all parties, from BOARS to the UC administration to the Regents to our state government. In the competition for admission to UC, which has grown ever fiercer in recent decades due to the lack of state support for growth, the students with the most advantages have the most ability to access and act on any information on the details of selection that is released. Savvy parents and counselors at well-resourced high schools are likely to help their children and students game the system by fine-tuning their applications to match the selection algorithm of their campus(es) of choice. First-generation students and students from under-resourced schools will less often have access to these advantages.

All of our campuses share this concern, from the most to the least selective. We all also recognize the need to certify that our selection procedures conform to the thirteen factors for admissions publicized by the University; by no means are we suggesting that we can or should deviate from these criteria. But the level of specificity of the published list of criteria was carefully considered, and we believe it remains appropriate. The release of greater detail on how these criteria are implemented at each campus, either in the generation of a holistic score (for

campuses that use it) or in subsequent selection, will hand a significant advantage to those with the resources to take advantage of the information. At a time when major changes -- including the elimination of standardized test scores -- have been made in attempts to level the playing field, this release of information would be a major, unintended step in the opposite direction.

Thank you for your support,

Sincerely,

Eddie Comeaux
BOARS Chair

cc: Members of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)
Executive Director Baxter, Systemwide Academic Senate
Vice Provost Gullatt, Graduate, Undergraduate, and Equity Affairs
Executive Director Yoon-Wu, GUEA