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University of California
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August 31, 2007

SYSTEMWIDE SENATE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

DIVISIONAL SENATE CHAIRS

RE: Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy

Dear Colleagues:

The enclosed document is being forwarded for your review and comments. As background information, BOARS voted unanimously to endorse the BOARS Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy at its May 4, 2007 meeting. The proposal, which would substantially alter UC's existing eligibility policy, was presented at the June 27, 2007, Academic Council meeting, where Council agreed to send out the proposal for systemwide Senate review in the fall.

The Council would very much appreciate receiving responses by **December 5, 2007**. Please be advised that the practice of the Academic Council for general reviews is to send the comments to all Systemwide Committees. **Each committee may decide whether or not to opine.** Please notify the Senate Office either directly, by emailing Executive Director María Bertero-Barceló (maria.bertero-barcelo@ucop.edu), or through your Committee Analyst, if your committee chooses not to participate in this review.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'JO', for John B. Oakley.

John B. Oakley, Chair
Academic Council

Encl: 1

Copy: María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director
Divisional Senate Directors
Academic Senate Committee Analysts



BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS (BOARS)

Mark M. Rashid, Chair
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Assembly of the Academic Senate

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June 11, 2007

**JOHN B. OAKLEY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

Re: BOARS' UC Freshman Eligibility Reform Proposal

Dear John,

I am pleased to report that BOARS, at its May 4, 2007 meeting, unanimously endorsed the enclosed UC Freshman Eligibility Reform proposal. As you know, this year the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) has undertaken a comprehensive examination of UC's freshman eligibility policy. Presentation of BOARS' UC Freshman Eligibility Reform proposal to the Academic Council this month is an exciting threshold for BOARS, which looks forward to continued work to see this proposal to its fruition with the Board of Regents next year.

On behalf of BOARS, I respectfully request that the Academic Council approve BOARS' UC Freshman Eligibility proposal to be distributed for systemwide Senate review.

I look forward to Council's action at the June 27 meeting.

Best wishes,

Mark M. Rashid, Chair
BOARS

Encl: 1

cc: BOARS

Maria Bertero-Barcelo, Executive Director, Academic Senate

MMR/mr

A PROPOSAL TO REFORM UC'S FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY POLICY

Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools
16 May, 2007

I. SUMMARY

At present, UC determines who, among California's graduating high-school seniors, is in the top one-eighth based on an Eligibility Index involving GPA and standardized test scores. California's Master Plan for Higher Education instructs that UC should “draw from” this portion of the graduating class for its freshman entrants. UC has long construed this Master Plan provision to imply a guarantee of admission, somewhere in the system, to all students who meet the GPA/test score Eligibility Index.

In recent decades, space limitations have obliged most campuses to select from among their UC-eligible applicants, with a few campuses becoming extremely selective. Selection for freshman admission to a particular UC campus is made on the basis of a comprehensive review of the entire application file, which contains much information about academic and non-academic achievements, as well as the circumstances and context in which those achievements were made. Admission to the UC *system* (i.e. UC eligibility), on the other hand, is based simply on course-taking and GPA in those courses, and test-taking and scores on the required tests. UC eligibility engenders rigidly-enforced criteria which are, individually, arbitrary and difficult to justify educationally. Further, recent data suggests that eligibility depends heavily on merely *taking* UC's required pattern of standardized tests, which itself is not an educationally valid metric of academic achievement.

In short, UC's values and goals in freshman admissions, with respect to both academic quality and equity in access to the University, would be better served by establishing eligibility for UC on the basis of a complete review of each UC aspirant's qualifications. Accordingly, a replacement for the existing eligibility policy is proposed. The main purpose of the proposed change is to invite applications from a larger number of qualified applicants, and then use full information from the application itself to decide which applicants are truly in the top one-eighth.

II. BACKGROUND

Freshman admission to the University of California is defined by two main concepts: *eligibility* and *selection*. *Eligibility* identifies students who are invited to apply, and simultaneously guarantees them admission to the UC system, though not necessarily to a campus to which they apply. *Selection* is the process by which campuses choose from among applicants. Since 2001, selection has employed “comprehensive review” of each entire application. The eligibility concept originated in 1960, and since 1968 has relied only on the grade-point average across all UC-approved courses, and test scores.

The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education instructs UC to “draw from the

top one-eighth” of the State’s graduating high school seniors. This stipulation has, since 1988, been interpreted as a guarantee that UC will admit, to some campus in the system, all California high school graduates in the top one-eighth who apply. Eligible status does not, however, guarantee admission to a campus of the applicant’s choosing. Applicants who wish to enroll at a campus with more eligible applicants than space permits must be selected by that campus. At present, seven of the nine general campuses are obliged to select from among their eligible applicants. The Riverside and Merced campuses currently admit all eligible applicants who apply to them. To fulfill UC’s guarantee of admission, UC-eligible applicants who are not admitted to any campus to which they apply are referred to Riverside and Merced for admission. These *referral-pool* admission offers are declined by the vast majority of their recipients: in 2006, only 6% of referral-pool admits submitted a Statement of Intent to Register.

The main route to UC eligibility – called “eligibility in the statewide context” – requires: a) successfully completing a set of college-preparatory courses, described in UC policy as “a through g courses,” each of which has to be approved by UC at the student’s high school in order to count toward eligibility; b) taking UC’s full pattern of standardized tests, consisting of the SAT Reasoning exam or ACT with Writing, plus two SAT Subject exams in different a-g subject areas; and c) achieving test scores and an honors-course-weighted GPA in the a-g subjects that together exceed the threshold established by UC’s Eligibility Index. This Index specifies the minimum test scores required for a given GPA. At present, the minimum GPA required for eligibility is 3.0. The required test scores decrease as GPA increases above this minimum.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) conducts a study every few years to estimate the number of the state’s graduating seniors who are UC-eligible. Based on these periodic studies, the Eligibility Index is adjusted to maintain the proportion of UC-eligible students at one-eighth the number of graduating high school seniors.

Beginning in 2000, an additional route to establishing UC eligibility was added: Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC). Students whose honors-weighted GPA in a-g subjects places them in the top 4% of their junior class, as determined by transcript evaluations performed by UC, are deemed eligible, provided they complete their remaining a-g subject requirements and take all the tests required for eligibility in the statewide context. These students are therefore guaranteed admission somewhere in the system, as are statewide-eligible students. Although ELC students must still complete the full test pattern, the scores themselves do not affect their ELC status in any way. Near-total overlap exists in the two main eligibility pathways: over 95% of ELC students are also eligible in the statewide context. However, there is some evidence to suggest that UC’s congratulatory notification of ELC status stimulates some students who would not have done so otherwise to complete their a-g course requirements and then apply to UC.

A third, minor pathway exists, in which UC eligibility is established solely on the basis of very high scores on the required standardized tests. This pathway is maintained for the purpose of affording access by students who, for various reasons, cannot present the traditional evidence of academic achievement in the form of grades in approved a-g courses. The number of students who are eligible by this pathway alone is only a few

hundred each year.

Whereas *admission to the system* – i.e. eligibility – is determined solely on the basis of course-taking, GPA, test-taking, and test scores, *selection* by a particular campus is based on a *comprehensive review* (CR) of the applicant’s file. CR ideally uses all the information in the application, as well as information about the high school from which the applicant graduated. CR is governed by a single, overarching set of principles and criteria, but campuses have considerable latitude in the formulation of their specific processes and procedures. It is through CR that all facets of an applicant’s academic preparation and other accomplishments can be carefully considered, in the context of the opportunities and challenges inherent in their school and family circumstances. Campus-based CR processes range in character from numerical formulas to more holistic judgments. In all cases, CR processes are subject to extensive guidelines, rigorous norming, and continuous monitoring of the results to ensure objectivity and consistency. In conformance with California state law, race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin do not enter into the decisions made under CR in any way.

Eight of the nine general campuses currently conduct CR processes. The newest campus, UC Merced, will likely develop its own CR process in due course. Campuses vary considerably in their levels of selectivity. Two campuses, Berkeley and Los Angeles, could be called hyper-selective: they are able to admit only about one-quarter of their UC-eligible applicants. In recent years, the Santa Cruz campus has found it necessary to select from among its eligible applicants, and currently admits about three-quarters of its eligible applicants. UC Riverside has in recent years come very close to the selectivity threshold, and consequently has conducted a CR process in anticipation of becoming fully selective. UC Merced is currently able to admit all UC-eligible applicants that apply. The other four general campuses (San Diego, Irvine, Santa Barbara, and Davis) generally select for admission between 40% and 60% of their eligible applicants.

III. RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSED POLICY CHANGES

Regents’ policy directs UC to “... seek out and enroll, on each of its campuses, a student body that demonstrates high academic achievement or exceptional personal talent, and that encompasses the broad diversity of backgrounds characteristic of California.” UC seeks to identify and admit freshman entrants who have prepared well by challenging themselves academically, and who have successfully met these challenges. Admissions criteria should directly relate to, and accurately measure, the applicant’s potential for success in college and beyond. These criteria should be applied in ways that fairly evaluate each applicant’s potential to benefit from, and contribute to, the university experience. Fixed, minimum measures on any particular criterion are inherently arbitrary, are difficult to justify educationally, and should be avoided. Admissions decisions should always be made with due regard for the challenges and opportunities inherent in each applicant’s circumstances.

UC’s present collection of admissions policies falls short of these aspirations in a number of important ways:

- 1) *The current procedure for determining UC eligibility fails to use all the available*

information about applicants. By relying entirely on the grade point average and test scores, current eligibility procedures ignore everything else in a student's application, which includes pages of information about special academic attainments, leadership and other non-academic accomplishments, and a personal statement that allows applicants to explain their achievements in the context of their school and family circumstances. In addition, an applicant's achievements can and should be compared with those of other UC applicants who have similar profiles of opportunity and disadvantage. Quantitative studies show that using additional information, including information comparing a student to others from the same school, produces a more accurate prediction of who will succeed at UC. All selective private colleges and universities use some form of comprehensive review rather than a simple index of grades and test scores. Individual UC campuses have in place procedures for whole-file review. Continued reliance on a simple index for eligibility therefore seems educationally unjustifiable.

- 2) *Eligibility, as presently constructed, contains rigid minimums that lack sound educational justification.* The current eligibility requirements consist of a set of minimums, none of which *by itself* can be justified on educational grounds as a requirement for UC admission. For example, failure to complete a single required course on the a-g list renders a student ineligible, even if the school does not offer enough sections of that course to permit all students to take it, or no one told the student that the course was required for UC, or the student actually did take the course but the school failed to submit the required paperwork to UC for course certification. A 2004 CPEC report¹ estimated that about 1.9% of California school graduates – 6500 students – took all the required exams, and achieved a GPA and test scores that met the eligibility index, but failed eligibility because of a single a-g course deficiency. Other studies have found that only 45% of California's public high schools offer enough sections of a-g courses to permit all students to satisfy UC requirements². The course minimums therefore exclude many students who failed to satisfy the requirement through no fault of their own. Similarly, the statewide Eligibility Index requires unvalidated minimum test scores, a practice contrary to best practices in admissions testing (see the National Academies Press' 1999 "Myths and Tradeoffs: The role of Tests in Undergraduate Admissions," the recommendations of test producers including ACT Inc. and the College Board, and the 1999 Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME)). Finally, in light of the highly varied grading practices and access to GPA-enhancing honors courses, both between and within schools, the GPA minimum for eligibility is itself suspect. Taken together, these realities indicate that many graduating high school seniors who are academically strong and would perform well at UC are denied eligibility because they fail to meet just one of the minimum requirements.
- 3) *For all its apparent simplicity in concept, the actual determination of an individual student's eligibility can be quite complicated.* Aside from the a-g course-taking

¹California Postsecondary Education Commission, "Factors Limiting Eligibility for the University of California" (OP/04-03), December 2004.

²J. Oakes, J. Rogers, D. Silver, S. Valladares, V. Terriquez, P. McDonough, M. Renee, and M. Lipton, "Removing the Roadblocks: Fair College Opportunities for All California Students," UC/ACCORD and UCLA/IDEA, November 2006.

requirement, the testing requirement, and the Eligibility Index, the policy contains extensive provisions relating to grade levels in which some of the required courses must be taken, mechanisms for “validating” missing courses either by subsequent courses in an area of “sequential knowledge,” relevant standardized-test performance, or by other means; determination of grade points for repeated courses, etc. Some high schools do not maintain up-to-date lists of UC-approved courses on the “Doorways” web site, and students in those schools therefore may not get credit for some courses that should satisfy a-g requirements. Students from advantaged backgrounds who attend well-resourced schools with strong college-going cultures are likely to have access to the guidance needed to negotiate the bureaucratic complexities of UC eligibility. For example, such students are likely to receive strong advice to take UC-certified English courses beginning in the 9th grade, and thereby remain on track to complete the required four years of English by the end of the 12th grade. On the other hand, students from schools that send few students to UC, and/or whose parents and teachers cannot provide ready UC guidance, are placed at a disadvantage. It bears mention that the requirements of eligibility must be, and are, strictly enforced, because eligibility confers a valuable commodity – a freshman admission slot at UC.

- 4) *In practice, the impact of the testing requirement for eligibility depends almost entirely on whether or not a student takes the tests, not on the performance on the tests. Test-taking by itself is not an educationally justifiable criterion for admission. In its 2003 eligibility study, CPEC found that 14.4% of the state’s graduating seniors were fully UC-eligible. However, that is only slightly less than the 14.8% who completed the a-g curriculum as well as the full UC test pattern. Less than half a percent of the state’s graduating seniors are taking all required courses and tests, but failing to achieve eligibility due to inadequate performance. And, virtually all of these 0.4% missed the Eligibility Index by a very narrow margin. CPEC further found that the single most prevalent reason for ineligibility was simple failure to take the required SAT Subject exams. CPEC also reported that, among those who completed the a-g curriculum and took the SAT Reasoning exam but not the required SAT Subject exams, fully three-quarters would have become UC eligible if they had taken the SAT Subject tests and received scores at least equal to their SAT Reasoning-exam average. The state’s UC eligibility rate would thereby have jumped from 14.4% to 20.7%. Taken together, these facts indicate that eligible status is much more a matter of mere willingness to submit to test-taking or knowledge of UC’s testing requirement, than it is a rational assessment of academic achievement. Students who successfully complete the a-g curriculum and merely take the required battery of tests are very likely to be eligible.*
- 5) *The two SAT Subject tests required by UC are taken in subjects elected by the student. In quantitative studies, BOARS has repeatedly found that, while the predictive power of all standardized admissions tests is quite modest, scores on these elective subject tests make a negligible contribution to predictions of initial academic performance at the University. In 2006, UC’s required test pattern changed in response to changes introduced in the SAT Reasoning exam. These Reasoning-test changes, in turn, were compelled by then-president Atkinson’s call on the College Board to more closely align the SAT with the curricula that college-bound students are actually expected to learn before enrolling in postsecondary institutions. The College Board’s response*

consisted mainly of incorporating the old SAT Subject test in Writing into the core Reasoning exam, along with some elements of the old SAT Subject Math level 1C exam. Additionally, analogies were dropped from the old Verbal section of the core exam, as were quantitative comparisons from the old Math section. The ACT Assessment, on the other hand, did not change in response to President Atkinson's call, but an optional writing component (required for UC applicants) was introduced in order to provide a comparable alternative to the SAT Reasoning test for UC applicants. The extent to which these changes bring the SAT and the ACT into conformance with BOARS' 2001 testing principles remains under study. However, these new test configurations have, in the meantime, compelled a change in UC's required test pattern: prior to 2006, *three* SAT Subject tests were required along with the core exam, but two of the three were mandated to be the Writing and Math tests, with the third one in an elective subject area. With the inclusion of the Writing test and aspects of the Math Subject test in the core exam, the test pattern was changed to specify *two* SAT Subject tests, both in elective (but different) subject areas. Under the old test pattern, the Writing and Math Subject tests, but not the third (elective) test, showed reasonable predictive validity for freshman GPA. Thus, the only predictive elements of the old SAT Subject test requirement have been incorporated into the core exam, leaving a Subject test requirement that contributes very little to UC's ability to predict which applicants will perform well initially at UC.

- 6) *The SAT Subject test requirement, in particular, contributes to underrepresentation of certain groups.* From an analysis of 2004 CBEDS and College Board data, it is estimated that 54% of all a-g completers also took the eligibility-enabling SAT Subject exams required by UC³. However, among African American students, only 35% of those completing the a-g curriculum also took the required SAT Subject exams. Among Chicano/Latino students the number was 38%. These gaps in SAT Subject test-taking behavior have a major negative impact on the size of the pool of high-achieving ethnic-minority students who are visible to UC.
- 7) *UC's eligibility construct denies certain UC campuses the benefits of selecting their admitted classes on the basis of a comprehensive review of each applicant.* For two campuses, eligibility serves as a *de facto* admissions process, with a third campus in nearly the same circumstances. For these campuses, the ideals of comprehensive review, whereby individual applicants are judged within the context of their own opportunities and circumstances and assessed against the campus's own goals in constructing classes, simply do not apply. Further, the admit pools for these campuses are artificially constrained by rather arbitrary requirements that bear little relation to actual academic achievement, as explained above.
- 8) *The prominence of existing eligibility requirements in official UC publications and*

³ These figures are only estimates. CBEDS (California Basic Educational Data System) contains estimates of a-g completion rates at California high schools, whereas the College Board maintains data on the number of California students who complete SAT Subject tests. CBEDS does not contain a-g data records for individual students, so it is not possible to match students between the CBEDS and College Board datasets. Accordingly, it is assumed that SAT Subject-test takers are also a-g completers. While this is an assumption, it is thought to be quite accurate, in light of the fact that any student who completes UC's distinctive required pattern of tests very likely intends to apply to UC.

presentations deters non-eligible students from applying, and therefore renders invisible to UC many graduating high school seniors who could potentially excel as UC students. The vast majority of California high school seniors who apply to UC do satisfy the formal requirements for eligibility. However, many other California seniors who have strong academic records in high school do not meet all the technical requirements for UC eligibility. Some of these currently non-eligible students would be *more* likely to succeed at UC than some of the students who are currently deemed eligible. But under existing procedures many of these academically talented students are not applying to UC.

IV. PROPOSAL FOR A NEW ELIGIBILITY POLICY

Following extensive study and deliberation, BOARS has concluded that UC's current eligibility construct hampers and will prevent, if unaltered, the University from achieving its admissions objectives over the long term. Accordingly, BOARS proposes that the University change its admissions policies to better honor the values inherent in its status as an elite, publicly-funded land-grant institution of higher education.

The various elements of the existing eligibility policy are defined by UC Systemwide Senate Regulations 418, 420, 424, 428, 440, 450, and 476, and also by two Regents' policies. The policy changes recommended by BOARS will require substantial amendments to the above-listed Senate Regulations. The specific changes to Senate Regulations are not detailed here; instead, the recommended policy itself is described in full detail. In order for the proposed policy to take effect, The Regents would also need to make conforming amendments to the existing Regents' policies on undergraduate admissions and admission requirements. Accordingly, the present document should be understood as: 1) a recommendation to the Academic Senate to seek, through the President, regental approval of the proposed policy; and 2) pending regental approval of the proposed policy, a request to authorize BOARS and UCRJ to work together to draft the specific amendments to Senate Regulations required to effectuate the new policy. The draft SR amendments would then be subject to Senate-wide review for clarity and conformance with the previously-approved policy.

Entitled to Review: Description of the Proposed Policy

BOARS recommends that the present practice of providing a guarantee of admission to all students who meet a narrow set of criteria based on course-taking, GPA, test taking, and test scores be replaced. The new policy would guarantee not admission, but *consideration for admission through a comprehensive review* at each campus of application, to all students who meet certain basic criteria of academic achievement. Guaranteed admission to the UC system, albeit not necessarily to the campus of a student's choice, would continue to be extended to California-resident applicants who are found by UC to be in the top 4% of their high school graduating class, as is presently the case under the ELC program.

The details of the proposed "entitled to review" (ETR) policy are as follows:

1. All California-resident applicants who:
 - complete a prescribed 11 of the 15 required a-g courses by the end of the 11th grade,
 - achieve an unweighted GPA of 2.8 or higher in all a-g courses taken in the 10th and 11th grades, and
 - take the SAT Reasoning test or ACT with Writing,

would be entitled to a review (ETR) at each campus to which they apply. Submitted test scores do not affect ETR status, but may be used in comprehensive review. Students who are entitled to a review by this pathway are expected to complete the full set of 15 required a-g courses prior to enrolling. Failure to do so is grounds for cancellation of admission, although this is not automatic. The provisions of this paragraph are similar to the current “eligibility in the statewide context” policy, except that no SAT Subject tests are required, and test scores are immaterial in the determination of ETR.

2. The ELC program continues in essentially its present form: California-resident applicants with ETR status as described in paragraph 1 above, and who are found, by a UC transcript analysis, to be in the top 4% of their high school class at the end of the 11th grade, would be offered admission to at least one campus in the system, provided they complete the required 15 a-g courses prior to enrolling. The ranking used to determine the top 4% is to be based on uncapped, honors-weighted GPA in all a-g courses completed. No guarantee is made of admission to any campus to which the applicant actually applied. Applicants who are not admitted to any campus to which they applied would be referred for admission to campus(es) that are open for referral admission. It is noted that this “ELC only” referral pool would be much smaller than the referral pool under the present policy, which usually consists of several thousand applicants. This can be inferred from the fact that under the current policy, typically only about 100 ELC applicants end up in the referral pool. In contrast to the current policy, under the proposed policy ELC status would no longer require the taking of SAT Subject tests.
3. All applicants who achieve very high scores on a prescribed battery of standardized tests are accorded ETR status, irrespective of their high school records. The battery consists of the SAT Reasoning test or the ACT with its optional Writing component, and two SAT Subject tests in different subject areas. This test pattern is identical to the one required under the current eligibility policy. This testing-only provision in the ETR policy is similar to the existing Eligibility by Exam Alone pathway, the intent of which is to provide a route into UC for those applicants whose circumstances prevent them from presenting conventional academic credentials (e.g. home-schooled students). At present, the number of students eligible by this pathway alone is very small – typically 200-300.
4. Nonresident applicants who achieve an unweighted GPA above a prescribed

threshold in all a-g subjects taken in the 10th and 11th grades are accorded ETR status. The exact GPA threshold will be determined to maintain a similar proportionality between resident and nonresident ETR students as now exists among resident/nonresident UC-eligible students.

5. Students who miss ETR status under paragraphs 1, 3, and 4 above, but who nonetheless can demonstrate substantially equivalent academic preparation as determined by campus-based comprehensive review of their applications, are still invited to apply. Though not strictly entitled to a review, such students will generally receive a comprehensive review at each campus to which application is made. This provision is intended to avoid exclusion of students who, for example, have course records that reflect minor variances from the a-g curriculum, but whose overall academic records are clearly consistent with an ETR level of preparation and achievement. Students in this category whom a campus wishes to admit will be offered admission on a “by-exception” basis, entirely consistent with the existing Admission by Exception (A by E) policy. The A by E policy is a long-standing, regentally-approved mechanism by which applicants who are not strictly UC-eligible can be admitted to a campus. It is limited to a maximum of 6% of the enrolled freshman class, although in practice the A by E mechanism is used far less extensively even than this.

The intent of paragraph 5 is to allow some flexibility in the policy, so that no student is unduly penalized for circumstances that may be beyond the student’s control, or for minor variances from the a-g requirements in an otherwise strong record of achievement. This flexibility is compelled, among other factors, by the realities of K-12 education in California: many students attend poorly-resourced schools whose administrative capacities may not allow for diligent upkeep of UC-approved a-g course lists. Some students at these schools may pursue the most rigorous college-preparatory course of study available to them, but nonetheless fall victim to the administrative failings of their school in the matter of actually achieving a-g completion. Other reasons exist that can prevent high-achieving and high-potential students from attaining the technical requirements of ETR status. In light of the fact that ETR status guarantees only a review – for which the applicant pays a \$65 fee for each campus to which application is made – and not admission, it would seem inappropriate to deny this benefit on the basis of a set of criteria that only tends to suggest promise, but does not precisely partition students into those with promise and those without.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

If the ETR proposal, as defined in the above section, is approved, conforming amendments to Senate Regulations will be drafted to enact its provisions. However, in order for this substantial change in UC admissions policy to reach its full potential, or indeed even to become fully effective, other changes in the admissions-policy landscape should be made. BOARS has identified two areas where concurrent changes would be beneficial: the comprehensive review guidelines, and admissions-process management. With respect to the former, recommendations to amend are within the purview of BOARS and the Senate. Admissions-process management, on the other hand, is an administrative function, and while Senate consultation is desirable from the standpoint of

achieving the best outcome, decisions about implementation are ultimately in the hands of the administration.

The following two sections outline BOARS' current thinking with respect to desirable future policy evolution in both the CR-guidelines and admissions-process management. BOARS believes that the plans described below represent a possible way forward that could maximize the benefit of the ETR policy. These plans are tentative at this stage, and subject to ongoing and broad consultation and input. BOARS' intention in describing these plans here is simply to illustrate the nature of the changes that would be desirable or required in the event that the ETR policy is enacted.

It is noted that no concrete implementation timeline is included here, because the required discussions between the Senate and the responsible administrative units have not yet occurred. A policy change of this magnitude obviously would need to be widely and publicly disseminated. UC's past practice has been to provide sufficient advance notice of changes to eligibility policy so that students now in high school are not adversely impacted. Therefore, BOARS expects that the ETR policy, if approved, would apply to freshman entrants who first enroll in Fall 2009 or after.

A. Revision of the Comprehensive Review Guidelines

The main policy document that governs campus-based comprehensive-review practices is entitled "Guidelines for Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions" (the "Guidelines"). Dating from 2001, the Guidelines have governed all CR practices beginning with the Fall 2002 entering class. The main provisions of the Guidelines include a statement of eight guiding principles, and an enumeration of 14 selection criteria that may be used by campuses in formulating their CR processes. Among the eight guiding principles of Comprehensive Review, the first two merit explicit mention here:

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.

Among the 14 selection criteria are the academic GPA, scores on UC's required pattern of standardized tests, the volume of and performance in a-g courses beyond the minimum required for eligibility, the "quality of academic performance relative to the academic opportunities available in the applicant's secondary school," and special talents. Also explicitly included is personal hardship or challenges that may have diminished the applicant's ability to demonstrate their full academic potential. The Guidelines do not address the relative weights assigned to the various criteria, nor do they require that specific criteria actually be used in a campus's CR process (beyond the stipulation that a broad variety of criteria should be used).

BOARS believes that the present Guidelines are conceptually sound and consistent with UC's values. However, in light of the proposed ETR policy, BOARS also believes that an addition to the Guidelines is desirable in order to effectively guide the future evolution of campus-based CR processes. Specifically, BOARS proposes that a ninth principle be added:

The full course-work record, including courses taken in relation to what was available to the applicant, performance in them, and standing among the applicant's peers along both of these dimensions, is the primary basis on which to assess academic achievement. Scores on standardized tests can be useful for enhancing subject-specific understanding of an applicant's level of preparation, but should not be construed as providing an indispensable and independent measure of overall college readiness.

The intent of this additional CR principle is to make clear that a thorough analysis of the academic record, in all its various context-dependent aspects, is the critical element in any sound CR process. Test scores can and should be used for purposes of enhancing and confirming readers' assessments of subject mastery, but are not to be considered indispensable measures of "overall college readiness." Through this ninth CR principle, BOARS aims to discourage the rigid weighting of test scores in campus-based CR processes.

Also, because the proposed ETR policy does not include the SAT Subject test requirement of the existing eligibility policy, some adjustments to the language of Selection Criterion 2, which deals with test scores, is desirable. The following replacement language is proposed:

Scores on the SAT Reasoning test or ACT with its optional Writing component. Scores on other widely-administered standardized tests, such as SAT Subject tests or Advanced Placement exams, although not required, can be considered if submitted.

B. Guidance to Prospective Applicants

UC's admissions policies serve the dual purposes of: a) determining the procedures by which applicants are admitted to the University, and b) signaling to students and their parents, and to schools, what UC considers appropriate preparation for freshman enrollment at the University. The supposed simplicity of the existing eligibility construct is often cited as supporting the signaling function, and is therefore promoted as a major strength of the existing policy. However, as explained in section III above, the determination of eligibility for an individual applicant can actually be quite complicated. UC's admissions policies and practices have always been the subject of confusion and anxiety on the part of prospective students, their parents, and their teachers and counselors. This anxiety is due in part to the existence of two separate policy concepts – eligibility and selection. Public understanding of eligibility, selection, and the difference between them is extremely limited, and is highly heterogeneous across demographic groups.

BOARS believes that the changes proposed here offer an opportunity to bring some much-needed clarity to the public message conveyed by UC admissions. This clarity can be effected through direct, narrative communication explaining the values, goals, and criteria attending UC's admissions policy. This narrative statement should be fairly short, accurate with respect to all CR processes across the system, and meaningful to students seeking specific guidance on how best to prepare themselves for UC. BOARS recognizes that the public articulation of admissions policy, including any related guidance offered to students and their parents and counselors, is within the domain of the University's administration. However, as originator of the ETR proposal, BOARS believes that a collaborative effort between the administration and the Senate is likely to result in the most effective articulation of the policy to the public. It is in this spirit that the following is offered as a candidate narrative-guidance statement.

Admission to University of California campuses is competitive. UC seeks to admit students whose records demonstrate strong academic preparation, within the context of each student's educational opportunities. UC is also looking for evidence that applicants possess a level of maturity that will allow them to benefit from, and contribute to, the educational experience offered by the University. UC accords admission priority to applicants whose records indicate a willingness to challenge themselves academically, and an ability to rise to those challenges.

All aspects of your academic record will be taken into account, including:

- the courses you took and are now taking in high school,
- the courses available at your school,
- your course grades,
- how you did in comparison to other applicants from your school and from other schools,
- any special academic projects you undertook while in high school, and
- any improvement in your grades over your high-school years.

All standardized test scores that you submit will also be considered. These include your scores on the required SAT Reasoning test or ACT with Writing, as well as your scores on any additional standardized tests you may elect to take, such as SAT Subject tests or AP exams. UC uses test scores only to enhance our understanding of your mastery of specific subjects, and not as overall indicators of college readiness. Merely taking many tests does not, by itself, enhance your standing in UC's admissions process. In most cases, test scores are consistent with the course-work record. In these cases, the scores have neither a positive nor a negative effect on the admissions decision. In some circumstances, however, test scores can

provide important information not otherwise available to UC. Examples of these circumstances include:

- Your school does not assign conventional grades.
- You did not have access to a UC-approved a-g curriculum.
- You are missing one or more of the 15 required a-g courses.
- You feel that your grades in one or more subject areas do not reflect your true level of mastery of the subject.

In these circumstances, scores on standardized tests in the appropriate subject areas can help UC gain the understanding of your qualifications needed to make the correct admission decision. So, take the required SAT Reasoning test (or ACT with Writing), and in addition, strongly consider taking SAT Subject tests or AP exams if any of the above apply to you.

UC is also very interested in your experiences and achievements outside the classroom. The University views all your achievements in the context of the educational opportunities available to you through your school and otherwise, as well as in the context of particular challenges you may face in your life circumstances. Extracurricular achievements of all kinds can be important factors in admissions decisions, particularly if they are substantial and sustained, demonstrate leadership qualities, or make real contributions to the school, community, or society at large.

It is of the utmost importance to recognize that there is no single qualification or attribute that means certain admission or certain denial at any UC campus. Each year, each UC campus admits many students with very high grades but few if any extracurricular achievements. And, each year, each campus admits many students with more modest coursework performance, but exceptional records of leadership outside the classroom and/or of overcoming obstacles and challenges. The great majority of successful UC applicants fall somewhere between these extremes. Only you can decide how to spend your time as you prepare for college, but make academics a priority. Above all, if you apply your best effort to all that you do, it will show in your application, and you will have the best chance of being admitted to the UC campus of your choice.

C. Admissions-Process Management: Admission and Enrollment Targets

In order to effectively manage undergraduate enrollment, any UC freshman admission system must serve two essential functions: 1) It must provide for admission, somewhere in the UC system, of approximately one-eighth of California's graduating seniors, as called for in the Master Plan; and 2) it should facilitate achievement of an enrolled freshman class on each campus that closely matches the numeric enrollment target on

that campus. Under the present admissions system, each of these functions is effectuated by a separate policy instrument: eligibility enforces the Master Plan, and campus-based selection serves to modulate freshman enrollment levels to match campus capacity. No consideration is given to the Master Plan at the level of campus-based selection. Likewise, periodic adjustments to the Eligibility Index are made only on the basis of CPEC eligibility studies, generally without consideration for matching enrollments with projected capacity.

Ultimately, capacity should grow with the enrollment demand dictated by the Master Plan's one-eighth provision and California's population of graduating high-school seniors. The participation rate, i.e. the proportion of California's graduating seniors who enroll at UC as freshmen, has remained fairly stable at between 7.5 and 8%. In light of this observation, UC's compliance with the Master Plan can alternatively be stated in terms of freshman enrollment, as compared to the population of graduating seniors. Under the proposed policy, although the number of students entitled to review is not directly regulated, the number of admits – and therefore the size of the enrolled freshman class – of course would continue to be regulated on each campus. Accordingly, the admission and enrollment data following each annual admission cycle could be analyzed to help determine how enrollment targets should be adjusted for the next cycle, in order to meet UC's Master-Plan obligations as well as its other institutional objectives.

It is clearly the case that the volume of applications would increase under the proposed policy. In fact, a major goal of the policy is to make better admissions decisions by reviewing more applications comprehensively. The associated fiscal burden would be partially if not fully offset by the additional revenue from the application fee, which at present stands at \$60 for each campus to which an application is submitted (\$70 for international applicants). In an effort to understand the possible magnitude of the application-processing increase, BOARS has studied estimates of the ETR pool based on the 2003 CPEC dataset. Those analyses suggest that the ETR pool would be perhaps 50% larger than the UC-eligible pool. Specifically, the 2003 CPEC study estimated a 14.4% UC eligibility rate, while BOARS' analysis based on the same data indicates a rate of 21.6% for the ETR pool. However, not all ETR students would apply to UC. A rough idea of potential application volume can be gained by considering the number of ETR students in 2003 who enrolled at *any* four-year college in the Fall. This is estimated at 15.4% of California graduating seniors. The proportion of ETR students who enrolled at any postsecondary institution, including two-year colleges, was 19.5%.

It is noted that opportunities presently exist to achieve economies in the read process, through sharing of application-read information between campuses. Any increase in application volume is likely to draw further attention to this fact. BOARS believes that much might be gained, both in terms of CR process improvement as well as efficiency, through collaborative sharing of application-read information among campuses with common applicants. BOARS further believes that these gains can be achieved while simultaneously respecting campus autonomy in the freshman selection process.

D. Admissions-Process Management: Application Referral

UC's current practice is to refer eligible applicants who are denied admission at all

campuses to which they apply, to one or more referral campuses for admission. In recent years, only the Riverside and Merced campuses have remained open for referral admissions. It is through this referral-pool mechanism that UC honors its commitment to admit all UC-eligible applicants. Although the yield rate for referral admission offers is very low (6% for Fall 2006 enrollment, or in the neighborhood of 1% of the systemwide entering freshman class), the referral pool does yield a not insignificant number of enrollees for the Riverside and Merced campuses. Further, the referral pool serves the important function of conferring a systemwide character to UC admissions.

BOARS believes that the proposed ETR policy offers an opportunity to strengthen the referral-pool mechanism, making it a more robust and attractive route into the University. In broad outline, one way to accomplish this might be as follows. In the course of comprehensively reviewing applicants, campuses could refer some applications to a central "recommended pool." Campuses could elect to do this in cases where the applicant's credentials would seem to merit admission somewhere in the UC system, but where space limitations preclude an admission offer from the reviewing campus itself. An applicant in the recommended pool would be removed from the pool if any campus to which the applicant applied makes an admission offer. The remaining recommended pool would consist of applications that one or more campuses considered sufficiently strong to merit admission somewhere in the system, but which did not receive a favorable admission decision from any campus. All campuses would then be invited to consider applications in the recommended pool using their comprehensive review processes, and to extend admission offers as appropriate. A process of this sort, particularly if executed in a timely manner, might help to distribute the enrollment demand more uniformly across the UC system. It would also tend to preserve the systemwide character of UC freshman admission.