Remarks by Pamela Burnett, interim director of UC admissions, on fall 2011 admits

April 18, 2011

Today we are reporting on the preliminary outcomes of our fall 2011 undergraduate admissions process. Please note that this information is preliminary and includes only freshman admissions. Evaluations of transfer applications are still in progress, and the campuses do not expect to complete them until the end of April or early May. Freshman admission decisions reported today do not include students admitted through waitlists. In addition, UC-eligible students who did not receive an admission offer from a campus to which they originally applied will all be offered the opportunity to attend UC Merced, and those admissions are not reflected in these numbers. And again, we are reporting admissions offers only. We will not know which of these students accept their offers until May 1. Actual enrollments will not be known until after the fall term begins.

This year we received 106,186 applications for freshman admission. This is the largest number of applications ever received by the University of California. So far, the university has offered admission to 72,432 freshman applicants, including 59,288 California residents. The counts are up from fall 2010 when at this point in time we had admitted 68,329 freshmen, including 58,777 California residents.

These are very difficult times for the university. Faced with staggering budget reductions from the state of California, we have sharply curtailed enrollment growth needed to meet the demand of ever larger and better-qualified cohorts of California high school graduates. We now enroll more than 11,000 California students for whom we receive no state enrollment funding. Because of these dire financial circumstances, our campuses have had to make very difficult decisions to turn away highly qualified students who they know would thrive and contribute greatly to the life of their campuses. We know some of these decisions are deeply disappointing to students and their families.

Despite these difficult times, there is also good news in these numbers, and I want to highlight some of this.

- First, despite our constrained circumstances, our campuses have admitted roughly 500 more California resident students than they did at this time last year, and these numbers will grow with the admission of students from waitlists and the referral pool. As in previous years, we will honor our Master Plan commitment to offer a place somewhere in the system to every UC-eligible California applicant.

- In addition, despite the highly competitive nature of this year’s process, we have expanded access for many students who are traditionally underserved in higher education:
o The proportion of our new California-resident admits from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups grew from around 28 percent in 2010 to nearly 31 percent in 2011, fueled by proportional increases for Latinos on every campus and for African Americans at Irvine, Merced, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz.

o The proportion of our freshman admits who will be the first in their families to earn a college degree now exceeds 41 percent, and the proportion who will graduate from low Academic Performance Index (API) schools also increased. Nearly 37 percent of our freshman admits are from low-income families.

Now let me turn briefly to the tables themselves.

Table 1 shows applications, admits and admit rates by campus. As you can see, for the system as a whole, admission numbers increased at approximately the same rate as applications and, as a result, preliminary admission rates have remained remarkably stable for the past three years. All but two campuses admitted more students than they did last year. San Diego’s admits are very close to last year, while Riverside, which had unexpectedly high enrollments last year, decreased admissions by roughly 2,200.

In most cases, these higher admit numbers reflect the fact that a greater proportion of admitted students are from outside California. Because these students are less likely than Californians to accept admission offers, campuses generally admit more of them to enroll the same number of students. These numbers are reflected on Table 2, which displays admits by campus and residency status: California resident, out-of-state, and international. At this point in time, roughly 18 percent of admitted freshmen are from outside California — an increase from 14 percent last year. This proportion will decline over the rest of the process because we are still admitting California freshmen.

- 12,733 eligible California-resident applicants who were not offered admission to a campus to which they originally applied will be offered admission to UC Merced through the referral process.

- Additionally, all campuses except Los Angeles and Merced have implemented waitlists, totaling more than 16,500 students. Campuses will use the waitlist process to help ensure that no seat funded for a California resident will go unfilled.

- Because out-of-state students accept their admission offers at lower rates, the university fully expects that the proportion of California residents among enrolling freshmen will exceed 90 percent.

Table 3 displays a breakdown of California resident admits on each campus by race and ethnicity. Systemwide, both the numbers of admitted African American, American Indian,
Pacific Islander and white students and the proportion they represent of the total are about the same as last years’ with slight declines for African Americans and Native Americans. Asian Americans and, in particular, Latinos, have grown in both number and proportion. These trends are generally true at the campus level as well. Although African Americans saw proportional growth on five of our nine undergraduate campuses, they remain at less than 5 percent on all campuses except Riverside and Merced. Latinos now constitute more than a quarter of admitted students systemwide and more than 20 percent on six of our campuses.

Turning to the pie chart of California resident freshman admits by California location, the distributions you see here are reflective of California's population densities by region and have remained stable: 56 percent of admits come from Southern California, 26 percent from the San Francisco Bay Area, and we have also maintained representation from California's farther reaches.

The California freshman admit profile features, at the top, first-generation college, showing a nice increase universitywide of admitted freshmen with no parent having a four-year college degree. In the middle, where we can view trends for low-family income admits, we do see declines, though not at all campuses; for the system as a whole, students from low-income families still make up nearly 37 percent of all admits. The low high school API data at the bottom indicates gains at most campuses and an increase universitywide of students from schools with Academic Performance Index rankings in the bottom 40 percent.

Before I take your questions, I’d like to speak directly to the students, and I hope you as journalists will help deliver this message. This should be an exciting time for admitted freshmen and their families. The students have been hardworking high-achievers, and now they are at the doorstep of an outstanding educational experience at UC that will have lasting value, not only for themselves but for the state and beyond. At our campuses, they will expand their intellectual capabilities and learn how to find and implement solutions. They will emerge ready to contribute in positive ways to citizenship and the workforce and will play big leadership roles in all of our futures. Now, here they are at the threshold. Some students may have only one, or they may have a few campus choices, but all of the University of California campuses offer a high-quality education, all are beautiful, and each has its own distinctive style and atmosphere.

If they haven’t already done so, students should be sure to visit the campuses to which they have been admitted. New admits can also explore their UC options more in-depth and investigate the learning adventures that their chosen majors will expose them to. They can start planning in advance to select from rich opportunities, such as undergraduate research with faculty on the cutting edge of their fields and the many travel/study options, including
programs in the state capital or Washington, D.C., or international studies. From hundreds of selections, offering something for everyone, they can begin listing the student clubs, recreational and leadership activities they may want to engage in. For the undecided, there is still a little more time to choose which campus is the best fit. The deadline for filing statements of intention to register for freshmen is May 1.

I also want to remind families concerned about the costs of college that the university offers very generous financial aid programs. Low-income families are eligible for federal, state and university aid that makes UC affordable, even in these difficult times. The university’s Blue and Gold Program ensures that California students from families with financial need and incomes up to $80,000 will pay no university-wide tuition or fees. For fall 2011, needy students from families with incomes up to $120,000 have been granted a “holiday” from fee increases imposed for fall 2011 and as a result will pay the tuition at last year’s rate.

Now I’d be happy to take your questions.