

29 January 2002

TO: Chand R. Viswanathan, Chair, Academic Senate

FROM: Eva L. Baker

RE: Comments on "UC and the SAT: Predictive Validity of the SAT I and SAT II at the University of California," by Saul Geiser and Roger Studley, dated October 24, 2001

I am writing to summarize the involvement of my organization, the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) in the current deliberations of the University considering modifications of its admissions testing program. The request of the Academic Council was made in December that CRESST conduct an independent analysis of the Geiser and Studley paper based on UC data. In order to meet the short deadline, our team members, Bob Linn (co-director of CRESST) of the University of Colorado, and Dan Koretz, of Harvard University, agreed to conduct a review of the paper. My summary and interpretation of their review follows. Koretz and Linn support the methodology used in the Geiser and Studley analyses of the relative predictive validity of the SAT I and SAT II. They concur with the report's primary conclusions that, system-wide, the SAT-I does not add to the predictive validity of the SAT-II and high school grade point average. Their review points out some differences with Geiser and Studley on the choice of language to characterize the size of effects. For example, modest. The Koretz and Linn review also discusses the SAT-II "third test," campus effects, and the impact of SES variables. They also propose topics for future analyses. It is our understanding that databases for such analyses are forthcoming.

I would like to draw your attention to a few salient issues. The first is that the Geiser-Studley paper was, for the most part, necessarily limited to the consideration of the predictive validity of the examinations and high school grades on Freshman grade point average. This focus is consistent with reasonable technical approaches used to investigate the validity of admissions tests in particular and the validity of selection tests in general in order to predict performance on a criterion. The study naturally focused on data available in the UC system, for example, the SAT-I and the SAT-II, as opposed to other potential examinations.

Second, I believe that the changes under consideration by UC are important because they expand the purposes of the tests used in the admissions process, beyond the creation of and selection of students from a candidate pool. The consideration of subject matter-focused examinations is specifically intended to influence how students are prepared for the admissions process. Such a shift implies that discipline-based learning will be necessary in order to increase the likelihood of their admission to UC. There are relatively few studies in the U.S. looking at the relationship of subject matter preparation, examination performance, and subsequent academic success in postsecondary environments. However, it will be desirable for the University to investigate the impact of new tests in improving the quality of the programs offered in secondary schools. Studies of differences in the actual preparation and success of students in UC will also be of

interest. I have suggested that such studies be undertaken in order to enable the evaluation of the consequences of the change.

With regard to our further involvement, CRESST is currently preparing a draft, at the request of the BOARS Chair that summarizes issues related to the linguistic demands of candidate admissions tests. We will also conduct additional quantitative analyses of the UC data and provide such reports to you, BOARS, and others designated by the University.

As I am sure you know, I am available to provide whatever assistance you may need. We all recognize the importance of the work you are doing.