



UC faculty committee proposal on admissions tests

The University of California faculty's Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) has issued a proposal for the use of tests in UC freshman admissions. The proposal will be reviewed by faculty systemwide during 2002 and, if endorsed by the faculty, will be submitted to the UC Board of Regents for approval.

The proposal is available on the web at www.ucop.edu/news/sat/boars.html.

Summary of BOARS' findings

- UC should **continue to use admissions tests** because they provide useful information that supplements an applicant's high school grade-point average. Admissions tests should continue to be used – along with other criteria – both in determining minimum eligibility for the UC system and in admitting students to specific UC campuses.
- The **tests currently used by UC contain redundancies in their statistical ability** to predict an applicant's success at the university. The question of which tests UC uses should therefore not be decided primarily on statistical grounds, but on educational objectives.
- A **new statement of principles should guide the selection of admissions tests** at UC. Key among the principles recommended by BOARS is the principle that the tests used by UC **should measure a student's level of achievement** in mastering the college preparatory curriculum in high school.
- A test battery meeting these principles should include two components: (1) **a core achievement examination covering reading, writing and mathematics**, approximately three hours in length, and (2) **two one-hour examinations in specific subject areas** covered by UC's a-g course requirements, with some amount of student choice of subjects.
- **No current test meets BOARS' definition of the core exam**, including the SAT I and ACT.

Key points about the proposal

- BOARS is **not calling for the elimination of admissions tests**, but for the adoption of a new set of testing requirements that better meet UC's educational policy objectives.
- The BOARS proposal **provides a statement of testing principles for the first time** at UC. It is believed that few if any major universities have done this – considered and defined in clear policy terms their rationale for using the admissions tests they do.
- The intended result is **a set of tests with greater depth, breadth and rigor** than those now used. UC's testing requirements would not be "dumbed down" but, rather, enhanced to more effectively measure student achievement in mastering the college preparatory curriculum taught in high school. The core exam would require a writing sample for the first time.
- Use of **admissions tests tied to the college preparatory curriculum in high school would send a clear message** to students, parents and schools that what matters most is achievement in school, not mastery of test-taking skills, and that students should prepare for college by taking and excelling in rigorous courses.

(continued)

- At the same time, **the testing burden on students would not be expected to increase**. The tests to be taken by UC applicants would be designed in such a way that scores would be transportable to other institutions that continue to use the SAT I or ACT.
- Two of the nation's major testing agencies – the College Board and ACT – have each independently **indicated a desire to work with UC** on the development of admissions tests meeting the specifications drafted by BOARS.

Next steps in the review process

- The BOARS proposal will be reviewed this spring by campus divisions of the Academic Senate, the Academic Council (the systemwide executive body of the Academic Senate), and the Assembly of the Academic Senate (the systemwide legislative body of the Senate). BOARS may revise the proposal to reflect the feedback of these faculty bodies.
- If the Assembly of the Academic Senate ultimately grants its approval for the proposal, it will be presented to the Board of Regents for action – tentatively scheduled for the board's July 2002 meeting.
- A new set of testing requirements **would go into effect no earlier than for the fall 2006 entering class**, given the time needed for tests to be developed and for students to be made aware of the new requirements. There would be **no interim change** in UC's testing requirements – the current requirements would remain until the new set took effect. (The current requirements include the SAT I or ACT plus three SAT II Subject Tests.)