

# THE FACTS: ELIGIBILITY REFORM IN FRESHMAN ADMISSION

The UC Board of Regents in February 2009 adopted a proposal to change freshman admission to give more high-achieving students the chance to apply to UC and receive a full review of their applications. The new rules will take effect for students applying for fall 2012 admission, meaning the class applying in November 2011 for admission the following year.

The Academic Senate proposed the changes to address concerns that current policy prevents UC from considering thousands of outstanding students. It removes unnecessary barriers like the SAT Subject Tests and sends a welcoming message to a larger and more diverse pool of applicants than UC has previously drawn.

## NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR 2012 ADMISSION

Under the new policy, all California high school seniors who

- complete the 15 UC-required college-preparatory ("a-g") courses, with 11 of those done by the end of 11th grade,
- maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better (weighted by up to 8 semesters of honors/AP/IB bonus points) in these courses, and
- take the ACT with Writing or SAT Reasoning Test

are invited to apply and will be entitled to a comprehensive review of their applications at each UC campus to which they apply. Within this pool of applicants, two categories of applicants will be guaranteed admission somewhere within the UC system:

- those who fall in the top 9 percent of *all* high school graduates statewide as determined by an admissions index, and
- those who rank in the top 9 percent of *their own* high school graduating class.

Together, these two pools of applicants will comprise just over 10 percent of UC's admitted student pool. The remaining students (approximately 2.5 percent) will be offered admission as an outcome of the comprehensive review process, which has been in use since 2002.

## HOW DOES THE NEW POLICY DIFFER FROM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS TODAY?

**Today, there is no "entitled to review" concept.**

Students either meet the requirements that define UC eligibility and thereby are guaranteed a seat somewhere in the UC system, or they are deemed ineligible and only considered for admission under the university's Admission by Exception policy. Students currently become eligible if they (a) complete the 15 UC-required college-prep courses, (b) take the ACT with Writing or SAT Reasoning Test, *and* two SAT Subject Tests, and (c) either meet a GPA/test score index that places them in the top 12.5 percent of graduating seniors statewide, or rank in the top 4 percent of their school's graduating class.

In effect, the current eligibility requirements define who is invited to apply while simultaneously guaranteeing them admission to UC based on grades and test scores alone. The new policy will invite more students to apply and promises that all applicants will receive a comprehensive review of their application. The guarantee of admission will apply to only the highest-performing subset of these students based on traditional measures of academic achievement.

**SAT Subject Tests will no longer be required.**

This eliminates a barrier that has discouraged otherwise high-performing students from applying to UC. However, the tests will still be considered as part of the application for any student who takes them and chooses to submit such scores, just as Advanced Placement tests are considered (but not required) now. SAT Subject Tests also can be recommended for applicants to particular majors.

**The share of students who are guaranteed admission based on their rank in their own high school class will grow (9 percent vs. the current 4 percent).**

Fewer students overall will receive an admission guarantee (10 percent of high school graduates vs. 12.5 percent now), but nearly all students who would have received this guarantee under current policy will be entitled to a full review of their application by their campuses of choice under the new policy.

## WHY MAKE THESE CHANGES?

The intent is to give more high-achieving high school students the opportunity to present their qualifications to UC campuses and, at the same time, to maintain high standards for admission through comprehensive campus selection processes. The policy:

- Sends a clear message that *all* students who have completed a reasonable course of preparation for college and have done well deserve a full review of their applications – not just those students deemed eligible by a limited set of numeric indicators.
- Addresses the fact that some outstanding students with high GPAs and ACT/SAT scores currently are excluded from consideration by UC because of a minor gap in their coursework or a missing test – chiefly, the SAT Subject Tests, which are not required by any other public university in the country.
- Continues to ensure that the highest-achieving students based on traditional academic indicators receive the benefit of guaranteed admission to at least one UC campus, though not necessarily their campus of choice.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THIS NEW POLICY ON UC'S DIVERSITY?

It is difficult to say with certainty what the net effect of the policy will be on the diversity of the enrolled student body. We can safely say the applicant pool will be more diverse than it ever has been. While we have done some simulations on the potential effects on admission, the analyses have limitations: They are based on data for students who graduated in 2007 (data that will be five years out of date when the policy actually is implemented); and they are based on campus selection processes from 2007, many of which have already changed and will continue to evolve over the next two years – just as we expect applicants to adjust their preparation and behavior in response to the new policy.

At its core, this policy change is about extending the *opportunity to be considered* for admission and is not about campus selection.