

Oral Testimony
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Madam Chair and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to summarize the Report of the Study Group on UC Eligibility and Admissions.

President Dynes chartered this group of Regents, faculty, students, and administrators in October of 2003. Regent Joanne Kozberg and I served as co-chairs of the Study Group. President Dynes asked the group to examine, and make recommendations on, issues related to eligibility and admissions at the University of California, including policies, implementation of those policies, the efficiency of the process, and its clarity to the general public.

As you know, “eligibility” refers to the minimum academic requirements for the UC system; that is, the set of college-preparatory courses, grades in those courses, and scores on college admissions tests needed to place a student in the top 12.5 percent of public high school graduates. “Admissions” refers to the process by which individual campuses select students. Because of the

intense competition for admission to UC campuses, most campuses have admission requirements higher than the minimum eligibility requirements. The campuses use a process called Comprehensive Review to admit students from the pool of UC-eligible applicants. Comprehensive Review involves an evaluation of a broad range of measures of each high school student's academic and personal achievements. This process is similar to that used by most highly selective universities across the nation. In establishing the Study Group, President Dynes made it clear that Comprehensive Review would remain the policy of the University.

Let me now briefly highlight the principal areas that were addressed by the Study Group. The final report of the Study Group should be in front of you so that you can examine the fifteen findings and recommendations in greater detail. All of them were adopted unanimously by the Study Group.

First, the Study Group reaffirmed current Regents' policy on undergraduate admission, which states that the University will "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." This policy reflects the historic tradition

of the University of California, which as a public, land-grant institution has been committed to excellence in teaching, research, and public service, along with access to the University by Californians from all backgrounds, all regions of the state, and all walks of life.

Second, the Study Group reviewed the federal and state legal requirements within which the University's eligibility and admissions processes must operate. In brief, federal law prohibits practices that have the effect of discriminating on the basis of race or ethnicity, even though there may be no intent to discriminate. Any practice that results in a significant disparity in admit rates between ethnic groups must be justified on the ground that it is educationally necessary and that alternatives creating smaller disparities do not exist. Otherwise, it can be said that a "disparate impact" exists. At the same time, state law, as determined by Proposition 209, prohibits the University from granting preferential treatment in the admissions process to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin. You can easily discern that state and federal laws are not congruent. However, the University is bound by both and must comply with both. Navigating a steady course between state and federal law requires great skill.

Without going into all of the detail in these introductory remarks, let me summarize our observations about UC eligibility and admissions in the context of the federal and state legal requirements:

First, African American and Chicano/Latino students are still substantially underrepresented at the University of California. This is due to the fact that a much lower proportion of African American and Chicano/Latino students meet UC's eligibility requirements. Since a student must become eligible before he or she can be admitted, this is a cause for deep concern. As you well know, not all California students receive the academic preparation necessary to qualify for a UC education. The University and the State should continue to invest in programs that help students prepare academically for a four-year college education.

Second, with respect to Proposition 209, we believe the University to be in substantial compliance.

Third, with respect to all of these issues, additional analyses are underway to examine these matters in greater depth.

Clearly, the University must keep both sets of legal requirements in mind -- both the federal disparate impact and Proposition 209 -- and it is important for the public to understand that we are paying attention to both dimensions as we make admissions policy.

The last area I would like to highlight is the Study Group's recommendation that the University pursue a number of steps to clarify the admissions process for the public, and that the University further examine a number of questions the Study Group had about the details of the admissions process.

For instance, the group recommended:

- That UC's admissions publications and web sites be revised to further enhance the clarity of the requirements and the process for students, parents, and the general public;
- That campus admissions processes be streamlined to make the best use of technology and eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort;
- That UC eligibility rates be monitored more frequently to ensure that the University is meeting its responsibilities under the California Master Plan for Higher Education;

- That the Academic Senate’s admissions committee report back on several issues, including alignment of campus practices with Regental and Academic Senate policies, the use of personal statements and letters of recommendation in the application process, the appeals process, and current guidelines governing the admission of students who are not in the UC eligibility pool (a process known as “Admission by Exception”).
- And finally, the Study Group recommended that better information about eligibility and admissions be provided to Regents when they first join the Board, and that comprehensive reports be provided to the Regents from the Academic Senate each year on the results of the admissions process.

The Academic Senate and the UC administration will monitor the University’s implementation of the Study Group’s recommendations in the coming months. In addition, a follow-up Study Group will be appointed to meet twice a year to discuss emerging issues related to eligibility and admissions at the University.

Madam Chair, that is a brief summary of the findings of the Study Group, and I welcome your questions.