

The Rural Student Pipeline to the University of California

This topic brief compares application, admission and enrollment rates of fall freshman applicants who graduate from California high schools in rural communities (rural applicants) to their non-rural counterparts (non-rural applicants). Figure 1 shows the areas in California that are considered rural and non-rural based on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) definitions.

Overall, the share of Californian applications from students enrolled in rural schools has risen since 2000, from 2.7% to 3.6% in 2017. The most recent data from the United States Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) reports that in the 2015-16 school year 7.8% of California seniors were enrolled in rural schools. In fall 2016, only 3.8% of both applicants and enrollees for UC's freshman class were from rural high schools.

While the freshman applicant pool from rural high schools is disproportionately small, rural students are admitted to and enroll at a UC campus at rates very similar

Figure 1: California, rural areas in gray, non-rural areas in blue



Key Conclusions

- 3.8% of freshman applicants in fall 2016 were from students in rural schools, while 7.8% of all CA high school seniors were enrolled in rural schools.
- Rural applicants to UC in fall 2017 were just as academically prepared as their non-rural counterparts, with equivalent GPAs, A-G coursework, and AP courses.
- Rural applicants are just as likely to be admitted and enroll at a UC campus as their non-rural peers.
- Rural applicants are more likely to be first generation students than their non-rural peers.

to their non-rural counterparts. In fall 2017, there was only a one-percentage point difference between the rural and non-rural admission rates to a UC campus (61% and 62%, respectively.) Yield rates are slightly higher for admitted, rural students. In that same year, 56% of admitted students from rural high schools enrolled at a UC campus, while only 52% of non-rural admitted students enrolled.

This similarity in admission and yield rates is consistent with the similarities between rural and non-rural students' academic preparedness. The average unweighted GPA of rural and non-rural students who apply to UC are virtually indistinguishable at 3.5. The

number of A-G course credit hours completed (46.2 and 47.6, respectively) and Advanced Placement (AP) course credit hours completed (9.0 and 9.2, respectively) are equally close.

Though rural and non-rural students have similar academic preparation, they do have some notable demographic differences. Students coming from rural high schools are more likely to be first generation college students. In 2017, 55.1% of rural applicants identified themselves as first generation, while 47.9% of non-rural students identified themselves as such. Additionally, more rural students identify as Hispanic/Latino(a), while fewer identify as Asian. From rural high schools, 44.7% of applicants identify as Hispanic/Latino(a), while only 36.6% of non-rural applicants identify that way.

Figure 2: Percent fall freshman applicants from rural high schools

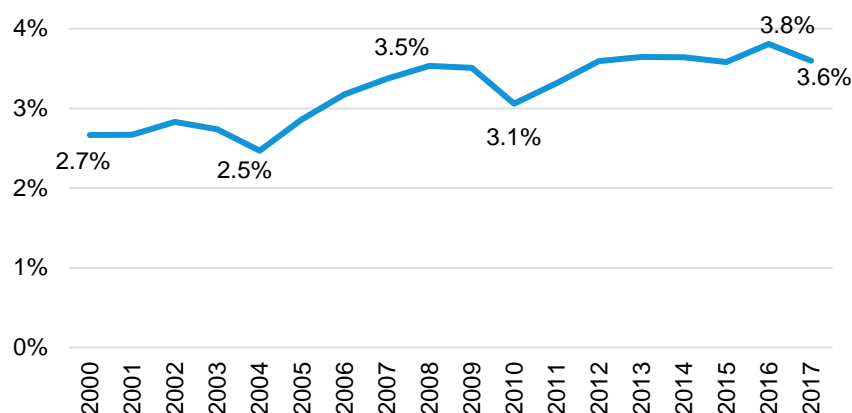


Table 1: Applicant Demographics by high school location, fall 2017

Demographic	Rural	Non-Rural
Avg. Unweighted GPA	3.49	3.48
Avg. AP Credit Hours	9.0	9.2
Avg. A-G Course Credits	46.2	47.6
First Generation	55.1%	47.8%

Table 2: Applicant ethnicity, fall 2017

Ethnic Category	Rural	Non-Rural
African American	6.3%	6.1%
American Indian	1.4%	0.5%
Asian	19.7%	29.2%
Hispanic/Latino	44.7%	36.6%
White	23.3%	22.7%
International	2.3%	2.1%
Unknown	2.2%	2.8%

Methodological Notes:

A school is considered rural if its address (as recorded in the UC Data Warehouse) falls into a “Rural—Fringe,” “Rural—Distant,” or “Rural—Remote” area as defined by the NCES Locale Classifications and Criteria. Address are matched by school by year, as addresses can change over time. City, suburban and town areas (codes 11-33) are all considered “non-rural.”

Counts of all California grade twelve students are taken from the 2015-16 NCES Common Core of Data, which includes all California public schools.