

University of California Regents' Meeting
Remarks on the Proposal to Revise Criteria
for UC Undergraduate Eligibility
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Madam Chair, throughout your discussion, members of The Regents have made many eloquent comments about the issues and implications of a change in UC's eligibility criteria. Yet, it is clear that The Regents do not share a common perspective on this issue. After listening to your comments, I would like to provide some contextual remarks about this topic and also comment on the President's recommendation to The Regents.

Over the past five years, the University has undertaken a number of far-reaching admissions changes, all of which have been supported by the Regents:

First, in 2001, The Regents rescinded SP-1. In doing so, The Regents returned authority for admissions policy to the faculty for the first time in seven years. As part of this policy change, The Regents also removed the requirement that 60 percent of students be admitted solely on the basis of their high school grade point average (GPA) and SAT scores.

Second, The Regents approved a series of admissions changes and new programs to ensure that the University enrolls “a student body that demonstrates high academic achievement or exceptional personal talent, and that encompasses the broad diversity of backgrounds characteristic of California.” You adopted:

- Eligibility in the Local Context for high school students
- Dual Admissions for high school graduates enrolling at a community college
- Higher goals for community college transfers
- Comprehensive Review for freshmen and transfer admissions
- Greater emphasis on SAT II scores relative to SAT I scores
- Greater emphasis on students’ high school GPA compared to their SAT scores, and
- Changes in the content of the SAT examination

These changes were made to ensure that all California high school students with the motivation to challenge themselves academically can aspire to a University of California education, and that their admissions applications will be evaluated based on their academic performance in high school and their personal potential.

With regard to the President’s recommendation that you revise the criteria to tighten freshmen eligibility requirements, please note that the University has always

expanded student access when past studies indicated that fewer than 12.5 percent of high school students were eligible for UC. This is the first time in the past twenty-four years in which the University has been called upon to decrease student eligibility. This is because the recent eligibility study conducted by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) found that more than 12.5 percent of public high school students are UC eligible.

In order to arrive at the best method of decreasing student eligibility, the faculty examined the academic performance characteristics as well as the socioeconomic and educational opportunity characteristics of entering freshmen under fifteen alternate options. After weighing the impact of each option, they recommended the option of raising the required high school GPA as the choice that would have the least negative impact on underrepresented students and one that would, at the same time, achieve the best levels of academic preparation for entering students. The President's recommendation takes into account the margins of error in the CPEC study by reducing the GPA to 3.0 from the GPA of 3.1 recommended by the Academic Council. And it provides three years advance notice to high school students before it is implemented.

Regent Marcus made the point that any student made ineligible by the proposed change still has three college options available: the California State University system, private universities, and the California Community Colleges. Students who

choose to attend a community college can then transfer to a UC or CSU campus if their academic performance meets the requirements for transfer in their junior year of college. In addition, high school students also have the option of working hard in the next three years to become UC eligible because we will provide students, parents, teachers and counselors with three years of advance notice of the proposed changes.

President Dynes has committed to recommend to the Board in 2006, following additional analysis by the Academic Council's Board on Admissions and Relations with Schools, additional changes to UC eligibility criteria if that is necessary. If we do need to tighten eligibility further, we can examine the full range of options to do so. Changes could be made to the GPA or SAT requirements, to the Eligibility Index, or to our Eligibility in the Local Context program, to name just a few of the options that will be available to us at that time. If we do recommend further changes, we would then provide students with additional advance notice of the changes so that no student then in high school would be negatively affected. If we discover that, in adopting the President's recommendation, we have tightened eligibility too much, as some Regents fear, we can lower one or more of these eligibility requirements to arrive at the desired eligibility target. And this can be done immediately, since it will have no adverse effects on high school students.

Lastly, because this eligibility recommendation will affect students from all racial and ethnic groups, it is estimated that the proposed change will not measurably reduce the relative proportion of any racial or ethnic group in the UC eligibility pool beyond the change in eligibility requirements that you adopted last July.

In conclusion, the President's recommendation takes all of these factors into account and I strongly believe that it represents the best solution to address the myriad of complex factors that must be weighed in adjusting the UC eligibility target.