

APPROVED
University of California, Berkeley
Freshman Selection Criteria
Fall 2010

Background

The following selection criteria for freshman applicants to the Berkeley campus were developed by the Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education Committee of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate. The criteria were originally developed by the Committee between September 1995 and October 1996, formally adopted in October 1996, and reviewed annually for each admissions cycle.

In developing these guidelines, the Committee strove to adhere to a philosophical approach that emphasizes:

- Continued redefinition and refinement of the concept of “merit” to reflect the full range of an applicant’s academic and personal achievements and likely contribution to the Berkeley community, viewed in the context of the opportunities and challenges that applicant faced.
- Individualized, qualitative review and analysis of each applicant’s full record of achievement, including all evidence contained in the application form, the total high school record, and the personal statement, as well as any supplementary information the campus may seek in order to clarify information provided in the application.
- Continued movement away from categorical approaches to the evaluation of academic and personal accomplishments and characteristics and avoidance of specific weights for particular criteria.
- Continued commitment to the goal of achieving academic excellence as well as diversity of talents and abilities, personal experience, and backgrounds in the members of the freshman class.

Guiding Principles For Undergraduate Admissions

Berkeley’s freshman selection criteria and process are based on the following fundamental principles, first codified by the Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education Committee in spring 2000.

1. The admissions process honors academic achievement and accords priority to students of exceptional academic accomplishment. At the same time, the decision-making process employs a broad and multifaceted definition of merit, including an assessment of contributions that a student will make to the intellectual, cultural, or other aspects of campus life.
2. Each applicant is judged individually and comprehensively and all achievements are evaluated in the context in which the student learned and lived, as well as the opportunities available to the student and how he or she responded to challenges. In keeping with Berkeley’s status as a public institution, ability to pay fees and expenses is never a criterion in the admission decision.
3. The admission process should select students of whom the campus will be proud, and who give evidence that they will use their education to make contributions to the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of the State and the Nation.

4. The admissions process should further the Regents' Policy that each campus should enroll a "...student body ... that encompasses the broad diversity of backgrounds characteristic of California." The process must also comport with state law, including Proposition 209.
5. The admissions process should select only those students whose academic preparation ensures a strong likelihood that they will persist to graduation.
6. The process should consider each applicant fairly, given the information available to the campus, and should seek to be perceived as fair by the various publics of the campus.

Freshman Selection Criteria

As described above, the purpose of the admissions process is to identify those applicants who, based on a qualitative review of all of the information—both academic and personal—presented in their applications, are most deserving of admission to Berkeley and will make the greatest contribution to Berkeley's intellectual and cultural community. All applications will be read in their entirety. The admissions evaluation will reflect the reader's thoughtful consideration of the full spectrum of the applicant's qualifications, based on all evidence provided in the application, and viewed in the context of the applicant's academic and personal circumstances and the overall strength of the Berkeley applicant pool. The criteria on which this evaluation will be based are as follows.

1. The applicant's full record of achievement in college preparatory work in high school, including the number and rigor of courses taken and grades earned in those courses. Consideration will be given to completion of courses beyond the University's A-G minimums; strength of the senior year course load; and performance in honors, college-level, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate Higher Level (IBHL) courses, *to the extent that such courses are available to the applicant*. In assessing achievement levels, consideration will be given to individual grades earned, to the pattern of achievement over time, and to an applicant's achievement relative to that of others in his or her high school, including whether he or she is among those identified as Eligible in the Local Context.
2. Personal qualities of the applicant, including leadership ability, character, motivation, tenacity, initiative, originality, intellectual independence, responsibility, insight, maturity, and demonstrated concern for others and for the community.
3. Likely contributions to the intellectual and cultural vitality of the campus. In addition to a broad range of intellectual interests and achievements, admission officers will seek diversity in personal background and experience. Consideration will be given to the evidence of an applicant's ability and desire to contribute to a campus that prizes cultural, socioeconomic, geographic, intellectual and ethnic diversity.
4. Performance on standardized tests, including the required SAT subject tests, the SAT reasoning test or ACT, and any Advanced Placement or IBHL examinations the applicant may have taken. Applicants who have not had the opportunity to take Advanced Placement or IBHL courses or who have chosen not to take the examinations for these courses will not be disadvantaged. Test scores will be evaluated in the context of all other academic information in the application and preference will be given to tests that show a demonstrable relationship to curriculum and to Academic Senate statements of competencies expected of entering college students. Documented imprecision and other known weaknesses of standardized tests will be taken into account. Under no circumstances does Berkeley employ minimum scores or "cut-offs" of any kind.

5. Achievement in academic enrichment programs, including but not limited to those sponsored by the University of California. This criterion will be measured by time and depth of participation, by the academic progress made by the applicant during that participation, and by the intellectual rigor of the particular program.
6. Other evidence of achievement. This criterion will recognize exemplary, sustained achievement in any field of intellectual or creative endeavor; accomplishments in the performing arts and athletics; employment; leadership in school or community organizations or activities; and local, national, military or international service.

All achievements, both academic and non-academic, will be considered in the context of the opportunities an applicant has had, any hardships or unusual circumstances the applicant has faced, and the ways in which he or she has responded to them. In evaluating the context in which academic accomplishments have taken place, evaluators will consider the strength of the high school curriculum, including the availability of honors and advanced placement courses and the total number of college preparatory course available, among other indicators of the resources available within the school. When appropriate and feasible, they would look comparatively at the achievements of applicants in the same pool who attended the same high school and therefore might be expected to have similar opportunities and challenges. They will also consider other contextual factors that bear directly on the applicant's achievement, including parental education level, whether English was not the primary language spoken at home, and other indicators of support available in the home.

The admissions evaluation should also recognize a wide range of talent and creativity that is not necessarily reflected in traditional measures of academic achievement but which, in the judgment of the reader, is a positive indicator of the student's ability to succeed at Berkeley and beyond; to contribute meaningfully and uniquely to intellectual and social interchanges with faculty and fellow students, both inside and outside the classroom; and to make a special contribution to our society and culture. In applying the criteria above, readers should carefully consider evidence provided in the personal statement, as well as in the academic record and list of honors and achievements. For example, the essay may reveal a level of maturity and ability to reflect on one's life experience in relation to the larger world that indicates a high potential to benefit from and contribute to the richness of the intellectual life of the campus. Or it may reveal special qualities of leadership and initiative that indicate unique potential to contribute to the community and to society in an important way through political, social, or other forms of service.

*Approved by the Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education Committee
on September 25, 2009.*