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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

To: Berkeley Division, Academic Senate
From: Tom Goldstein and Richard Rhodes, Co-Chairs, Committee on Admissions,
Enrollment, and Preparatory Education (AEPE)
Date: April 14, 2015
Re: Freshman Admission Policies for Fall 2016

AEPE unanimously approved substantial revisions to two key admission policy documents on 04/10/15. The first governs the way applications are read and recommended for admission, wait listing, or rejection. The second governs how recommended files are selected for the purpose of tendering offers of admission, and what quality control measures are used as part of the selection process. DIVCO approved the policies on 04/13/15.

University of California, Berkeley
Freshman Admissions Policy
Fall 2016

Background

This document represents the first major revision of the freshman admissions policy since 2002. Since then, the admissions landscape has changed radically, with the increase in the number of applications far outstripping the increase in available admission slots. As a result, the university is facing the challenge of having too few spots for too many highly qualified applicants. Since 2009, the university has transitioned to admitting a significant percentage of its freshmen from out-of-state. As Berkeley has become more selective in its undergraduate admissions, it has become imperative that processes allow for higher resolution and greater flexibility in assessing the applicants' qualifications, reaching beyond the UC mandated application data. In the context of these changes, it is important to reaffirm the centrality of holistic review as the organizing tool for the review of applications.

Holistic review

The admissions process honors academic achievement and also recognizes a wide range of talent and creativity that constitutes positive indicators of the student's ability to thrive at Berkeley and contribute to the university's mandate for excellence and access. In developing this document, the Committee recognizes the following principles of holistic review:

- Continued refinement of the concept of merit to reflect the full range of an applicant's academic and personal achievements and prospective contributions to the Berkeley community, viewed in the context of the opportunities and challenges that the applicant has faced.
- Individualized review and analysis of each applicant's full available record of achievement, including all evidence contained in the application form, the total available high school record, letters of recommendation, and the personal statement, as well as any supplementary information the campus may seek in order to clarify information provided in the application.
- Continued commitment to avoiding categorical approaches to the evaluation of academic and personal accomplishments and characteristics, as well as 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 Freshman Admissions

Berkeley's freshman selection criteria and process are based on the following fundamental principles:

1. The admissions process accords priority to students of outstanding 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 is expected to make to the intellectual, cultural, or co-curricular aspects of campus life.
2. Each applicant will be judged individually and comprehensively and all achievements will be 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 will never be a criterion in the admission decision.
3. The admissions process will further the Regents' Policy that each campus should enroll a student body that "encompasses the broad diversity of backgrounds characteristic of California." The process will also comport with state law, including Proposition 209.
4. The admissions process will select only those students whose academic preparation suggests a strong likelihood that they will graduate.
5. No preference in the admissions process will be given to applicants whose relatives are alumni of, employees of, or donors to Berkeley or the University of California.

Freshman Selection Criteria

As described above, the purpose of the admissions process is to identify those applicants who, based on a review of all of the information—both academic and non-academic—presented in their applications, most highly merit admission to Berkeley and will make the greatest contribution to Berkeley's intellectual and cultural community. 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 during high school, including the number and rigor of courses taken and GPA (weighted and unweighted) earned from those courses. Consideration will be given to completion of courses beyond the University of California's minimum coursework requirement; strength of the senior year course load; and performance in honors, college-level, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate (IB) 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. Where available, the school profile, provided by the high school as a supplement, will be a resource to place the achievement of the applicants in context.

2. Personal qualities of the applicant, including love of learning, leadership (in school, family, or community), persistence in the face of challenges, cross-cultural engagement, originality/creativity, and demonstrated concern for others.
3. Performance on standardized tests, including the required SAT reasoning test (or ACT with writing), and any optional SAT subject tests, Advanced Placement, or IB examinations the applicant may have taken.

Test scores will be evaluated in the context of all other academic and personal information in the application. Substantial disparity between SAT or ACT scores and other indicators will trigger additional scrutiny in the review process. Also, documented imprecision and other known weaknesses of standardized tests will be taken into account.

Applicants who have not had the opportunity to take Advanced Placement (AP) or IB courses or who have chosen not to take the examinations for these courses will not be disadvantaged. Conversely, for applicants who have ready access to AP courses, taking an unusually large number of AP examinations will not be a deciding factor in admissions.

4. Supplemental evaluation, in the form of two letters of recommendation. One may come from any referee of the applicant's choice, but at least one must come from a teacher who has taught the applicant in an academic course. The letters should address the applicant's academic and non-academic qualities.
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; extraordinary accomplishments in the performing arts, creative arts, or athletics; and sustained local, national, military, or international service. The admission of applicants with special athletic talent is described in detail in the Student-Athlete Admissions Policy document.

Both academic and non-academic achievement 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 courses available, among other indicators of the resources available within the school. When appropriate and feasible, they will 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. These qualities may be illuminated in the letters of recommendation in the applicants' files. The evaluators will also consider other contextual factors that bear directly on the applicant's achievement, including parental education level, whether English is the primary language spoken at home, and other indicators of support available at home.

Freshman Admissions Recommendation Guidelines

The purpose of the application review process is to identify successful applicants according to the Freshman Selection Criteria. The new guidelines are a departure from the numerical scoring of applications, which worked well in an environment where the application pool did not significantly increase in size from year to year. The ongoing dramatic growth in the size of the applicant pool has occasioned the need for a new approach. In addition, the new guidelines begin to adopt a strategy of building a class, which allows input from academic disciplines in the admissions process. These guidelines also take the first step toward matching student interests and available campus capacity.

The recommendation to admit or not to admit represents the reader's judgment of the applicants' relative level of achievement in both academic and non-academic areas. Applicants who receive a particular recommendation may exhibit quite different patterns of achievement across various dimensions if, in the judgment of the reader, those differing patterns nonetheless equate to a similar overall level of achievement when compared to all other Berkeley applicants and viewed in the applicant's context. The three possible recommendations are "Yes," "Possible," and "No."

1. "Yes" recommendation

This recommendation should be given to outstanding applicants, who have distinguished themselves across multiple academic and non-academic criteria described in this document. Applicants who receive the "Yes" recommendation shall comprise about 65% of all freshmen admission offers. The top 10% of this group should be nominated for the Regents' and Chancellor's Scholarship. Identification of this group should be based on exceptional achievement that goes beyond the normal expectations of a successful Berkeley student.

2. "Possible" recommendation

This recommendation should be given to applicants who have demonstrated clear promise of success at Berkeley, but who have not shown the same degree of outstanding accomplishment as the applicants in the "Admit" category. Applicants who are recommended for "Possible" shall comprise about 35% of all freshmen

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admission offers. The “Possible” rating will be given to a cohort of approximately twice the number of students that will ultimately be admitted from this group. The process of reaching admissions decisions for applicants recommended for “Possible” is described in the Freshman Selection Procedures document.

3. “No” recommendation

This recommendation shall be given to applicants whose overall level of achievement is not sufficiently high relative to the rest of the applicant pool to warrant admission.

Approved by the Admissions, Enrollment and Preparatory Education Committee on 04/10/15

**University of California, Berkeley
Freshman Selection Procedures
Fall 2016**

Background

The purpose of this document is to specify the process by which the review of applications translates into decisions on freshman admissions. The organizing principle of the selection procedures is to provide maximum possible information at each stage of the review, focus additional attention on marginal admit cases, and provide a feedback mechanism to enable improvement in future admissions cycles.

Outline of the Selection Procedure

Each file is first read by an external reader, who makes a preliminary recommendation, and next by an internal reader, who has access to the external reader's report, and makes a final recommendation. Next, all applications undergo Quality Control. This is followed by Faculty Review, By High School Review (BHSR), and Director's Review. The final decision is rendered at the end of this process with the exception of Regents' and Chancellor's Scholarship nominees, who are notified upon completion of the files being read. Appeals of denied applicants are handled as necessary.

Out-of-state admits are required to compare favorably to in-state admits—that is, “for admission to a given college or major (as appropriate) at UC Berkeley, the academic and personal qualifications of accepted nonresident applicants as reflected by the outcome of their holistic review must not be weaker than those of resident applicants accepted in that admissions cycle,” as described in the Committee on Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education's (AEPE's) Policy on Non-Resident Undergraduate Enrollment.

Quality Control Review

Both for quality control purposes and to ensure that the admission process affords all qualified applicants an equal opportunity for admission, OUA has implemented an additional predictive tool, referred to here as the Predictive Index.

Predictive Index Review is a quality control exercise based on a scale of predicted outcomes derived from regression analysis of previous admissions cycles. The Predictive Index Review gives a predictive read recommendation (“Yes,” “Possible,” “No”) for students based on easily quantifiable academic, socio-economic, and contextual factors. When a candidate's actual read recommendation differs from his or her predicted read recommendation, that candidate may be selected for additional review.

Faculty Review

This review takes place after the initial holistic review phase and is meant to bring disciplinary and broader academic expertise into the admissions process. The review

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involves two components: one is the review by AEPE of marginal admits or declines and second is the review of select applications by faculty in Colleges/Divisions.

AEPE Faculty Review

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that faculty have given approval to the admission of students with the lowest numerical indicators of academic achievement or promise and conversely consented to rejection of students with the highest numerical indicators of academic achievement or promise.

Faculty members on AEPE (or past members of the committee) will review a total of 100 files of those freshman applicants who have been designated for admission and who have the lowest scores on the current UC systemwide eligibility index. If the faculty reader concurs with the recommendation to admit, the applicant will be admitted in due course. Otherwise, the application will be denied.

AEPE faculty members (or past members) will also review a total of 100 files of those freshman applicants who have been denied admission and who have the highest scores on the current UC systemwide eligibility index. If the faculty reader concurs with the recommendation to reject, the applicant will be denied. If the faculty reader recommends admitting the applicant, this will be done in due course.

Review by College/Division

A select set of applications (typically from the “Possible” ranks) will be subject to review by a group of faculty organized within Colleges or Divisions. The objective is to bring expertise in the academic disciplines to bear on the admissions selection process and also provide valuable feedback to the Admissions Office.

This review is voluntary and Colleges/Divisions may opt not to participate. If Colleges/Divisions decline to participate in the review process, all decisions on the disposition of the waitlist revert to the OUA. The review will occur after all files are read and will be organized in the form of a half-day meeting for each College or Division. Faculty representatives will be selected by the College/Division and will include Undergraduate Deans or other faculty officers charged with undergraduate admissions, members of department Undergraduate Admissions committees, etc. This review will generally take place in February and will be organized by the Admissions Office jointly with Colleges/Divisions. The outcome of this review will be to make admissions decisions on a cohort of students who are originally on the waitlist and also to provide tangible guidance to the Admissions Office.

By High School Review

The By High School Review process (BHSR) allows for the review of applicants' achievement in the context of their high school, after all applications have been read and slated for decision. For each high school, experienced readers can view an array of quantifiable, primarily academic data for all applicants. The data include preliminary admit

and deny decisions so that experienced readers may either validate decisions or identify apparent anomalies, such as applicants ranking high in weighted GPA being denied admission when other students from the same high school ranking significantly lower in weighted GPA have been admitted. The data also allow experienced readers to identify schools where, based on preliminary admit and deny decisions, the admit rate appears to be at odds with the average for that year.

Moreover, the experienced readers review any applications that appear to have been anomalously denied. This will include comparing them with any admitted applications of similar characteristics from the same high school. This review may reveal that, for example, the denied applicant had an inflated count of honors courses or a notably light senior year course load, with no contextual explanation. In such a case, the read score and deny decision would be validated. Or, this review could reveal that, for example, the denied applicant had a set of academic and other qualities such as leadership, overcoming challenges, etc., comparable to admitted applicants in proximity on the list. In such a case, the initially denied applicant would then be admitted.

All By High School Review recommendations are reviewed by the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, who is responsible for the final admission decision.

Director's Review

In selecting freshman applicants for admission under the campus' holistic admission process, OUA will first fill the available spaces. As the distribution of admission recommendations will not align neatly at the break point, OUA will very likely have more applicants with the same admission recommendation than there are remaining spaces available. The Director's Review (DR) process is critical, as the decisions made at these edges of the admit pool often determine whether an applicant is admitted or not. Because of this, only experienced OUA internal readers serve as DR readers.

Readers will be instructed to positively weigh whether an applicant would be a first-generation college student, whether a public school applicant attends a school with a low Academic Performance Index (API) of 1 to 4, or whether a private school applicant comes from a low socioeconomic background. For all applicants in the DR pool, readers will consider whether fewer than 5% of their high school's seniors apply to UC annually. In addition, Eligibility in Local Context (ELC), defined as California resident applicants in the top 9% of the applicant's senior class, will be a positive factor. Geographic balance will be an additional consideration in DR. Also, special-talent applicants will be considered in the context of overall campus expectations of a well-rounded freshman class. Lastly, available capacity in the intended major of a student should be considered an important parameter in DR.

Waitlist Management

In selecting freshman applicants for admission, OUA will first fill available spaces with admitted students who accept the offer by submitting a Statement of Intent to Register

(SIR) before the May 1 deadline. As an enrollment management tool, OUA will also create a waitlist for qualified students who are not initially offered a seat in the class because of space limitations. The waitlist decision will be released on the same date as the final round of admission decisions. If space is available after May 1, a portion of the students on the waitlist will be offered seats in the class.

Post-Notification Waitlist Review Criteria

Once notified, waitlisted applicants must indicate a continued interest in UC Berkeley by opting in, effectively asking to remain on the waitlist. If a student does not opt in before May 1, the application will no longer be considered as a part of the waitlist pool. Students who opt in will be asked to supply high school records for the fall semester of the senior year as well as a 250-word essay responding to a prompt set by AEPE every year.

Applications of those who opt in will be sorted, using the criteria described below and recommended for admission where space is available after May 1.

As with DR, readers will be instructed to positively weigh whether an applicant would be a first-generation college student, whether a public school applicant attends a school with a low Academic Performance Index (API) of 1 to 4, or whether a private school applicant comes from a low socioeconomic background. For all applicants in the waitlist pool, readers will also consider whether fewer than 5% of their high school's seniors apply to UC annually. In addition, Eligibility in Local Context (ELC) will be a positive factor. Geographic balance will be an additional consideration in waitlist management. Lastly, available capacity in the intended major of a student should be considered an important parameter in clearing the waitlist.

Students in the waitlist pool who opted in, but are not offered a seat in the class will receive appropriate notification from OUA as soon as the freshman class is complete.

Appeals

Since the holistic review process is extremely thorough, it is not expected that information applicants provide will be overlooked or that errors will be made in the evaluation of applications. For this reason, the number of admissions appeals of denied applications granted is very small (ordinarily no greater than one percent of total freshman admissions).

In order for an appeal of a denied application to be initiated, an applicant must submit a letter of appeal and supplemental application materials, if any (such as 7th semester grades, documentation/proof of circumstances and/or achievement), to OUA. Only the applicant can initiate an appeal. Third party inquiries are not considered an official appeal. Successful appeals generally supply significant and/or compelling new information not contained in the original application.

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For the Colleges of Chemistry, Engineering, Environmental Design, and Natural Resources, Associate Deans of the colleges review appeals in consultation with OUA staff and make recommendations to the Director. For the College of Letters and Science (L&S), a committee of OUA senior readers reviews each appeal, re-reading the application and supporting materials in their entirety. Reviewers will identify the strongest cases and recommend those that they believe have merit to the Director. The Director again reviews files based on recommendations of the appeals committee and deans, and makes final decisions.

Approved by the Admissions, Enrollment, and Preparatory Education Committee on 04/10/15