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Eligibility and Admissions in California Public Higher Education

L E G I S L A T I V E A N A L Y S T ' S O F F I C E

Presented to:

Joint Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education

Hon. Ira Ruskin, Co-Chair

Hon. Gloria Negrete McLeod, Co-Chair





Master Plan Requirements



University Eligibility Targets

- “In order to raise materially the standards for admission to the lower division, the state colleges select first-time freshmen from the top one-third (33-1/3 percent) and the University of California (UC) from the top one-eighth (12-1/2 percent) of all graduates of California public high schools....”
- Defining the top-eighth and top-third of public high school graduates is the responsibility of the university systems.
- The universities may not admit more than 2 percent of all freshmen through special admissions.



Open Access to Community Colleges

- Colleges must accept “any high school graduate and any other person over eighteen years of age...capable of profiting from the instruction offered.”



Transfer Mechanism Provides Second Pathway to Universities

- “The admission of transfer students is especially important in California’s tripartite system....”
- Tightened eligibility at UC and the California State University (CSU) will not reduce access “so long any high school graduate can be admitted to a junior college” and these students are “able and willing to meet the requirements for transfer to the upper division of [UC and CSU].”
- Master Plan did not set eligibility requirements for transfer students, but questioned whether the grade point average (GPA) requirements for transfer students at the time—2.0 at CSU and 2.4 at UC—were “high enough for a transfer student who was deficient in high school grades.”



UC's Eligibility Policy



Current policy guarantees eligibility to top 12.5 percent of high school graduates.

- Top 11.5 percent statewide, based on GPA and standardized test scores (SAT or ACT).

University of California (UC) Eligibility Index	
"A–G" Grade Point Average	Minimum UC Score Total
3.00 – 3.04	223
3.05 – 3.09	210
3.10 – 3.14	198
3.15 – 3.19	187
3.20 – 3.24	175
3.25 – 3.29	165
3.30 – 3.34	157
3.35 – 3.39	152
3.40 – 3.44	147
3.45 and above	143

- Plus, top 4 percent at each high school, based on GPA.
 - "Eligibility in a Local Context" (ELC).
- All eligible applicants are offered admission to at least one UC campus.
 - But this might not be campus of choice.



New policy guarantees eligibility to top 10 percent, and allows review for next 10 percent.

- Effective for 2012 high school graduates.
- Guaranteed eligibility for top 9 percent statewide and top 9 percent at each high school.
 - Combined eligible populations constitute about 10.5 percent of all high school graduates.
 - Eligibility based on GPA and standardized test scores for statewide group; for ELC group eligibility based on GPA only.



UC's Eligibility Policy

(Continued)

- Next 10 percent (roughly) of high school graduates are entitled to have their applications reviewed, with no guarantee of admission.
- Students in “guaranteed” eligibility pool are offered admission to at least one UC campus; might not be campus of choice.
- Students in “entitled to review” pool may or may not be offered admission.



CSU'S Eligibility Policy



The CSU's Eligibility Policy guarantees eligibility to top 1/3 of high school graduates.

- Combination of GPA and standardized test scores.

CSU Eligibility Index		
<i>(Selected Grade Point Averages [GPAs])</i>		
GPA	ACT Score	SAT Score
3 and above ^a	—	—
2.99	10	510
2.9	12	580
2.8	14	660
2.7	16	740
2.6	18	820
2.5	20	900
2.4	22	980
2.3	24	1,060
2.2	26	1,140
2.1	28	1,220
2 ^b	30	1,300

^a No standardized test scores are required for students with GPAs at or above 3.0.

^b Students with GPAs below 2.0 are not eligible for regular admission.

- All eligible students are entitled to admission to their local campus, and may need to compete with other students for admission to out-of-area campuses.
- Some programs are “impacted”—meaning that higher admission standards are in place for those programs.
- At two campuses—San Luis Obispo and San Diego—all majors are impacted. (Eligible local students are not guaranteed admission.)



Issues for Legislative Consideration



Are 1960 Eligibility Targets Still Appropriate?

- Targets were set to control demand on UC and CSU; is this still a concern?
- University eligibility targets were also set to preserve education quality and to ensure adequate student preparation; are these still concerns?
- How meaningful is the “ability to benefit from instruction” requirement for community college eligibility?



What Should Be the Basis for Eligibility?

- Master Plan leaves defining “top” students to the universities.
- But the Legislature may want to provide guidance as to whether top students are the ones who have achieved the most in high school, are the most prepared for college, are the most likely to be successful in college, etc.
- The Legislature may also wish to clarify the interaction of statewide eligibility and local eligibility.
 - The UC’s eligibility in a local context?
 - The CSU’s local admissions guarantee?



Is the Transfer Pathway Still Viable?

- Do students have sufficient opportunity to complete lower division coursework in a reasonable length of time?
- Is transfer eligibility sufficiently standardized across campuses?