

HIGHER EDUCATION: ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where Are the State's Universities Relative To Their Master Plan Eligibility Targets?



Master Plan Sets Targets for Freshman Admissions. The *Master Plan for Higher Education* specifies percentage targets for freshman admission to the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC).

- The plan calls for CSU and UC to draw from the top one-third (33.3percent) and one-eighth (12.5 percent), respectively, of public high school graduates.
- In order to achieve these targets, the segments have adopted their own specific admissions criteria—such as minimum grade point average and SAT requirements.



Recent Study Measures How Well Segments Are Achieving Their Targets. Existing law requires the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) to periodically estimate how well the segments' admissions requirements achieve their Master Plan targets. As directed by the Legislature, CPEC recently released an eligibility study based on 2003 public high school graduates. In this study, CPEC reported the following:

- The CSU is drawing from the top 28.8 percent of public high school graduates, which is *below* its Master Plan target of 33.3 percent.
- The UC is drawing from students from the top 14.4 percent of public high school graduates, which is *above* its Master Plan target of 12.5 percent. (Further analysis of CPEC data, however, may show that UC is drawing from a much larger pool of students, as was the case in the prior eligibility report.)



Eligibility Studies Inform Decisions About Funding Enrollment Growth. The recent eligibility findings suggest that the rate of CSU's enrollment growth funding would be higher than UC's rate if the Legislature wishes to observe the Master Plan targets.

Where Are the State's Universities Relative To Their Master Plan Eligibility Targets? *(Continued)*



Additional Analyses Needed on Eligibility Percentages and Criteria. In directing CPEC to conduct the eligibility study, the Legislature also required “in-depth analyses of course-taking patterns, grades, and test scores” (as has been provided in past studies). However, such information was largely excluded from the report.

- Information on why many otherwise academically talented students are deemed not fully eligible by the segments would help the Legislature better understand how existing eligibility criteria influence the composition of the pool from which UC and CSU draw their freshmen.
- Further analysis would also assist the Legislature in ensuring that all students are provided adequate opportunities to prepare for college.



Re-Examination of Existing Eligibility Requirements. The CPEC's eligibility study allows the Legislature to examine the effectiveness of the segments' eligibility standards.

- Definitions of eligibility reflect important policy choices that affect access to the state's higher education systems, yet they have been made by the segments themselves with minimal legislative oversight. The Legislature also has little information about how well existing admissions criteria are aligned to its K-12 education priorities and expectations.
- Currently, the segments define the state's top high school graduates on the basis of data that is *not* available for all high school students. For example, UC requires students to take voluntary tests like the SAT I and SAT II in order for them to be considered part of the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates. Alternatively, a test such as Standardized Testing and Reporting (which is taken by all students) could be used.

LAO Reference

- *Maintaining the Master Plan's Commitment to College Access* (February 2004).

This is one of a series of issue briefs examining important questions about higher education funding in California. For more information on this topic, or to request other briefs from this series, contact the Legislative Analyst's Office Higher Education section at (916) 445-4656, or visit our website at www.lao.ca.gov.