



Maintaining the Master Plan's Commitment to College Access

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The expressed goal in current law is that all Californians should be afforded the opportunity to receive a college education. The *Master Plan for Higher Education*, originally adopted by the Legislature in 1960, has served as the state's higher education roadmap. This report describes the state's admissions policies and practices, and assesses how they relate to the Master Plan. While we conclude that the Master Plan's commitment to access can be maintained even in the current fiscal environment, this will require some adjustments in current policies and practices. ■

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INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, the Legislature has expressed concern about ensuring “access” to public higher education in California. In response to this, over the past few years the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU) have adopted specific changes to their freshman admissions processes. These changes have primarily focused on (1) defining eligibility for admission to each system and (2) specifying the criteria individual campuses can use to select new students from among eligible applicants. Because these various changes cumulatively can have significant policy implications, we believe it is important for the Legislature to revisit and assess the process of higher education admissions in California. Such a review is particularly important at this time because, in keeping with legislative intent expressed in the 2003-04 budget package, the

Governor’s budget proposal for 2004-05 does not fund enrollment growth at UC and CSU.

In this report, we:

- Discuss the mission of public higher education in California.
- Review the Master Plan’s principle of college access.
- Examine the determination of admissions policies.
- Review current admission practices and recent changes.
- Identify issues for the Legislature to consider, including recommendations to maximize access given the state’s fiscal constraints.

MISSION OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

California’s Education Code assigns to the state’s three public higher education segments the following shared goals:

- Access to education and the opportunity for educational success for all qualified Californians.
- Quality teaching and programs of excellence for their students.
- Educational equity not only through a diverse and representative student body and faculty but also through educational environments in which each person,

regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstance, has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.

The *Master Plan for Higher Education*, originally adopted by the Legislature in 1960 and periodically updated, specifies the mission of each particular segment, as discussed below.

California Community Colleges (CCC). The Master Plan and state law assign the community colleges many, and sometimes competing, roles. First, the state’s community colleges are required to offer—as a primary mission—academic

and vocational instruction at the lower-division (freshman and sophomore) level. Community colleges may grant the associate of arts and the associate of science degrees. Based on agreements with local school districts, some college districts also offer a variety of adult education programs—including basic skills education; citizenship instruction; and vocational, avocational, and recreational programs. Finally, state law directs the colleges to establish programs to promote regional economic development.

California State University. The CSU's primary mission under the Master Plan is undergraduate and graduate instruction through the master's degree in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education, including teacher

education. The CSU is also authorized to (1) offer selected doctoral programs jointly with UC and private universities and (2) support research related to its instructional mission.

University of California. Similar to CSU, UC provides undergraduate and graduate instruction in the liberal arts and sciences and professional education. However, UC has exclusive jurisdiction over (1) graduate instruction in law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine and (2) doctoral degrees in all fields (except where it agrees to award joint doctoral degrees with CSU in selected fields). Finally, the Master Plan specifies that UC is the primary state-supported academic agency for research.

ACCESS TO THE STATE'S HIGHER EDUCATION SEGMENTS

Many of the policy issues in higher education in California appear to fall under the broad category of "access." A somewhat nebulous term, access is invoked by education advocates, legislators, and others as an overriding goal of higher education policy and budgeting. Over the past several years, the Legislature has expressed considerable interest in promoting access to the state's higher education segments. In general, the expressed goal in current law is that all Californians should be afforded the opportunity to receive a college education. However, the term access has many different meanings depending on the context of the discussion. We identify three separate components of access below:

- **Admissions—Access to Opportunity.** For students to attend a college or university, they must apply and be formally admitted. The admissions process is intended to ensure that students possess the qualifications required for attendance. While not all students are qualified to be granted admission to particular institutions, they should be provided the opportunity to prepare for admission.
- **Affordability—Financial Access.** A student's access to higher education in part depends on that student's ability to pay the costs of tuition, fees, books, housing, and related expenses. In policy and budget discussions, the issue of affordability shows up in two primary areas: fees and financial aid.

- **Awareness—Informational Access.** Some high school students are not familiar with college admissions requirements and thus might not take the classes or maintain the grades to make themselves eligible for admission. Further, students may not be aware of financial aid opportunities and thus incorrectly conclude that they cannot afford to attend college. More fundamentally, some students may not have an accurate sense of the value a college degree can provide them—both in economic and other terms.

Historical Perspective on Access: College Enrollments and Participation

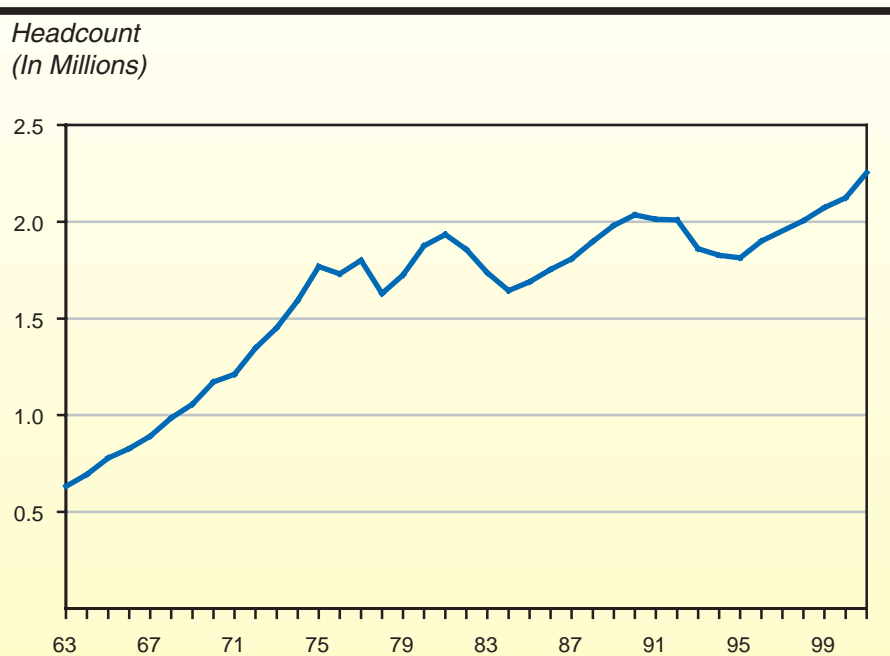
Given that access to higher education can have different meanings, there are different ways to measure it. In this section, we examine two common factors used to measure access—enrollments and participation.

Higher Education Enrollments. For the past ten years, the state’s public higher education segments have experienced moderate sustained enrollment growth. In 2001, approximately 2.3 million students (“headcount enrollments”) were enrolled either full-time or part-time at CCC,

CSU, and UC. Figure 1 summarizes actual headcount enrollments from 1963 to 2001 for the state’s public colleges and universities. The figure shows that enrollment grew rapidly through 1975, fluctuated over the next two decades, and has grown steadily since 1995. Total enrollment in 2001 was 354,712 (or about 19 percent) more students than in 1990.

Higher Education Participation. In addition to demographic changes, one of the main factors that affect enrollment trends is college participation rates. Figure 2 (see next page) shows the percentage of the state’s college-age population (age 18 to 24) attending CCC, CSU, and UC from 1979 through 2002. The figure shows this percentage is at its highest level. In comparison to other states, California ranks slightly above the national average in the college participation of 18 to 24 year olds. College

Figure 1
California Public Higher Education Enrollments^a



^aIncludes the University of California, California State University, and the California Community Colleges.

participation in California for other age categories ranks even higher. A recent study by the Education Commission of the States finds that California has the nation's highest college participation rate among persons over 25 years of age.

Policies That Affect Access To Higher Education

The variation in college participation rates over time reflects changes in various factors that affect Californians' choices about college. Over the years, the Legislature has invested in various initiatives to promote access to higher education. Below, we discuss in detail some of the state and campus policies that affect access to higher education.

Admissions—Eligibility and Selection

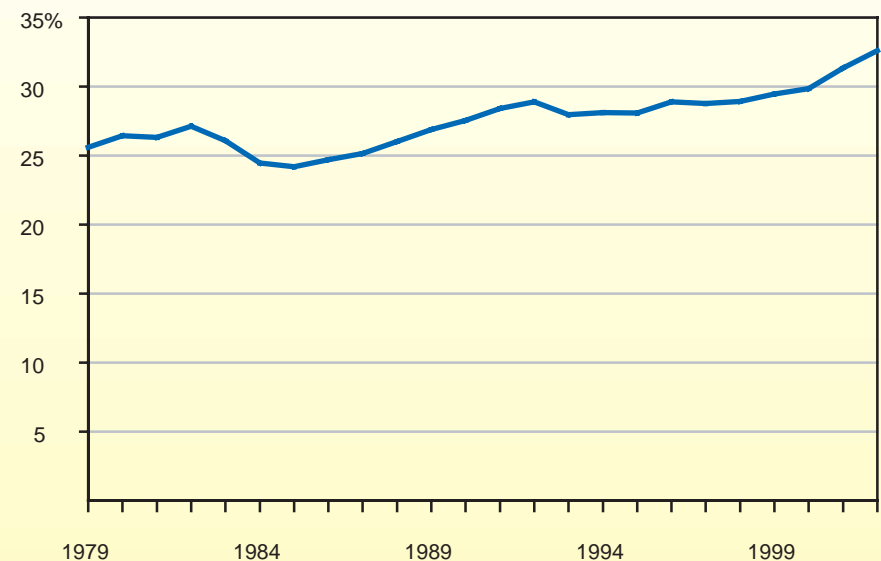
Criteria. Each segment's admissions process (for both first-time freshman and transfer students) helps determine who eventually attends that institution. For the most part, the admissions process for public higher education in California consists of two parts: (1) eligibility for admission to the segment and (2) selection to a particular campus or academic program. The Master Plan describes parameters for who should be admitted as a freshman at each segment. For example, the Master Plan calls for UC to admit students in the top 12.5 percent of public

high school graduates. Conversely, the Master Plan envisions that the remaining 87.5 percent of public high school graduates would have the opportunity to attend CSU or a community college. (Please see nearby box for a more detailed description of eligibility.) Based on the Master Plan targets, UC and CSU develop admissions requirements to determine who is "eligible" for admissions. Eligibility applies to the segment as a whole, and does not guarantee admission to any particular campus. This is because some campuses do not have the capacity and resources to admit all eligible applicants (as defined by the university). As a result, some campuses use additional admissions criteria (which typically are stricter than eligibility criteria) to select new students from among eligible applicants. Eligible students who cannot be accommodated at the campus of

Figure 2

Public Higher Education Participation Rates At All-Time High

Percentage of 18 to 24-Year Old Californians in Public Colleges



their choice typically are offered a space at a different campus in the system.

Institutional Capacity. The capacity of the three public higher education segments to accommodate additional students also affects student access. Factors that affect institutional capacity include the availability of (1) classroom space and other facilities, (2) course offerings, and (3) student support services. For example, the Legislature provides funding in the annual budget act to the segments for enrollment growth. Each year from 1998-99 through 2002-03, UC and CSU received funding for an average enrollment increase of about 4 percent. This enrollment growth funding exceeded changes in the state's college-age population during that period. For the current year, the 2003-04 budget provides about \$268 million to fund enrollment growth at the two segments of roughly 7 percent. (Preliminary data indicate

actual growth was below this level. We will discuss enrollment trends further in our *Analysis of the 2004-05 Budget Bill*.)

Student Fees. The level of student fees can influence whether and where individuals choose to attend college, and thus affects overall enrollment demand. This is because fees contribute to the cost of attendance. Other things being equal, lower fees encourage attendance, and higher fees encourage the weighing of other postsecondary options. Because fees cover only a portion of total instructional costs, the state subsidizes the education of every resident student attending UC, CSU, and the community colleges. The relative size of this subsidy for each segment in part reflects state policy choices about (1) the overall level of funded college enrollments and (2) the desired distribution of students among the three segments and independent colleges and universities. Although

WHAT IS ELIGIBILITY?

The Master Plan specifies percentage targets that define the pool from which each higher education segment should accept its students. The plan calls for community colleges to accept all applicants 18 years and older that can benefit from attendance. The plan calls for CSU to draw from the top one-third of public high school graduates, and accept all qualified community college transfers. The Master Plan calls for UC to draw from the top one-eighth of public high school graduates and to accept all qualified community college transfers. In short, the Master Plan specifies a target for the subgroup of high school graduates to be selected to attend each segment.

In order to target the above populations, UC and CSU have adopted specific admissions criteria of their own choosing (such as grade point average and SAT requirements). Students meeting these requirements are identified by the segments as being "eligible" for admission. As we discuss later in this report, we believe it is likely that UC and CSU are currently drawing students for admission from outside their Master Plan targets. However, these students that do not fall within the Master Plan target are nonetheless eligible for admission based on criteria established by the segments.

UC and CSU increased student fees twice in 2003, there had been no increase at the segments in the previous eight years. Instead, from 1995-96 through 2001-02, the Legislature provided the segments with a total of over \$500 million in General Fund support in lieu of the funding they would have received from fee increases.

Financial Aid. Financial aid policies also affect whether and where students go to college. Dollar for dollar, state expenditures on financial aid provide broader financial access to higher education than do across-the-board fee reductions. This is because financial aid targets students with the greatest financial need. State higher education subsidies in the form of financial aid, rather than fee reductions, also afford

more needy students the opportunity to enroll in the state's independent colleges and universities. Chapter 403, Statutes of 2000 (SB 1644, Ortiz), expanded the Cal Grant program so that all recent high school graduates and community college transfer students (under 24 years of age) who demonstrate need and meet certain other criteria are entitled to a financial aid award.

The remainder of this report examines the impact that admissions policies have on access to public higher education in the state, particularly freshman admissions to UC and CSU. Specifically, we discuss the purpose of an admissions process and how eligibility standards and selection criteria establish expectations about who can and cannot attend college.

THE PURPOSE OF AN ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The UC and CSU each has a process for determining which students can and cannot attend one of their respective campuses. There are two main reasons for this: (1) Master Plan guidelines call for the segments to select their students from a certain percentage of high school graduates and (2) at many campuses the potential demand for admission exceeds enrollment capacity (that is, the number of available spaces). In other words, an admissions process allows the segments to select their Master Plan target populations and allocate their limited number of available spaces. By definition, therefore, the process, both facilitates and restricts enrollment.

Master Plan Targets—Maintaining Educational Quality. By establishing targets for admission, the Legislature has sought to protect the

quality of the state's higher education system. As stated in the Master Plan, "The quality of an institution and that of a system of higher education are determined to a considerable extent by the abilities of those it admits and retains as students." In other words, through the Master Plan the Legislature has recognized the need for an admissions process to ensure the continued high standards of the state's higher education institutions. For example, although the state provides all residents the opportunity to attend college, the state's three-tiered higher education system limits which students can attend UC and CSU based on their mission and standards. Accordingly, the Master Plan states that both segments have a "heavy obligation to restrict the privilege of entering and remaining to those who are well above average in the college-age group."

Enrollment Capacity—Allocating Limited Resources. Due to resource limits, many campuses cannot afford to admit and enroll all eligible applicants. As a result, these campuses must use an admissions process with additional selection criteria in order to select new students from eligible applicants. More specifically, an admissions process assists campuses in allocating enrollment spaces to those applicants with the greatest likelihood of future academic success. This is consistent with the Master Plan, which states that admission requirements “serve to qualify for admission those applicants whose

educational purposes are properly met by the college and whose abilities and training indicate probable scholastic success in the college...”

There is, however, some disagreement regarding how one’s likelihood of future academic success can best be measured. For example, education experts disagree about the ability of the SAT and other standardized tests to measure college readiness and success. As we discuss in a later section, this ongoing debate has led UC to make changes on how it uses the SAT in its admissions process.

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND ADMISSIONS POLICIES

Many factors in the public arena influence eligibility and admission policies at UC and CSU. For example, legislative actions, court rulings, and other public policies circumscribe permissible practices for admitting students. Nevertheless, the faculty and governing boards of these two segments have been given significant autonomy in determining (1) which students are eligible for admission and (2) who is eventually admitted to each campus, as discussed below.

Legislative Actions and Other Public Policy Considerations. The Legislature’s primary involvement in college admissions has been through the state’s Master Plan, which specifies percentage targets that define the pool from which UC and CSU should accept their students. (As we discuss later in this report, however, the segments define eligibility using specific admissions criteria of their own choosing.) Over the years, the Legislature has also influ-

enced the development of admissions policies by adopting resolutions, expressing its intent in hearings and legislation, and providing funds in the annual budget act for specific admissions-related initiatives. The UC’s “comprehensive review” process and “dual admissions” program are two examples of admissions-related initiatives supported by the Legislature in the budget.

Other public policies also affect college admissions in California. For example, Proposition 209, passed by the voters in November 1996, essentially prohibits the state’s public colleges and universities from using race, religion, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin as criteria in granting admission. In addition, court decisions also help define which particular selection criteria are permissible under the law.

UC Faculty and Board of Regents. For the most part, UC develops its admissions policies using a shared governance structure between its Board of Regents and faculty. The actual process

of selecting students is the responsibility of university and campus administrators. Although the Regents (most of whom are appointed by the Governor) have constitutional autonomy and authority to set policies for the university, they delegate the responsibility for setting admissions policies to the faculty. (The governing board of the faculty is referred to as the Academic Senate.) This includes the development of the university's minimum eligibility standards. We note that the shared governance over admissions policies has been a subject of debate within the university, particularly in recent years. This is because in a few instances the Regents have made decisions regarding admissions that were not endorsed by the faculty.

CSU's Admission Advisory Council and Board of Trustees. At CSU, the Board of Trustees delegates the responsibility of developing admissions policies to the university's chancellor. The chancellor typically refers admission policies to the Admission Advisory Council, which is chaired by a campus president and includes faculty, students, and administrators. The primary role of this council is to recommend admission policy changes to the chancellor for implementation. Some admission policies may require approval from the Trustees in order to take effect. Requests for program and campus "impaction" must be approved by the Chancellor's Office. (We discuss impaction in further detail later in this report.)

UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION PRIORITIES

In order to guide UC and CSU in their enrollment planning and admission decisions, the Legislature adopted a set of priorities regarding which type of students should be given priority. Existing law states that, to the extent practicable, the two segments should admit and enroll California residents at the undergraduate student level in the order of the following categories:

- Continuing undergraduate students in good standing.

- Qualified community college transfer students who have successfully met all transfer requirements.
- California residents entering at freshman or sophomore levels.

In addition, the Master Plan states that both segments shall maintain lower-division enrollment at no more than 40 percent of total undergraduate enrollment. The next section of this report focuses on the freshman eligibility and selection processes at UC and CSU.

FIRST-TIME FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

As a reference point to guide future legislative and executive decisions, the Master Plan established admission guidelines that remain general state policy today. The plan calls for community colleges to accept all applicants 18 years and older that can benefit from attendance. The plan calls for CSU to draw from the top one-third (33.3 percent) of public high school graduates, and to accept all qualified community college transfer students. The Master Plan calls for UC to draw from the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of public high school graduates and to accept all qualified community college transfers.

The segments have adopted specific admissions criteria to select their target populations. Over the years, UC and CSU have adopted a variety of such requirements, including earning a minimum grade point average (GPA) in certain courses and grade levels, earning a sufficient score on the SAT or the American College Test (ACT), and completing certain college preparatory courses (commonly known today as the A through G course requirements). Beginning fall 2003, both UC and CSU aligned their standards to require that applicants complete the same 15 units of high school courses in the A through G subject areas. We describe in further detail below the eligibility requirements for UC and CSU.

UC FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY

In order to capture the top 12.5 percent of the state's public high school graduates, UC developed two distinct "pathways" for students

to become eligible for freshman admission. Essentially, California residents can achieve eligibility by either (1) satisfying specific subject, scholarship, and examination requirements (referred to by UC as eligibility in the "statewide context") or (2) being in the top 4 percent of their high school graduating class—commonly known as the Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) program.

Statewide Context—Subject, Scholarship, and Examination Requirements

According to UC, eligibility in its statewide context pathway is how most students attain eligibility. To be eligible in the statewide context, students must satisfy all of the university's subject, scholarship, and examination requirements.

Subject Requirements. First, students must complete UC's A through G high school course requirements (see Figure 3). Students must take 15 units of high school courses to fulfill the subject requirement, and at least 7 of the 15 units must be taken in the last two years of high

Figure 3
UC and CSU
"A Through G" Subject Requirements

Subject Area	Years Required
A. History/social science	2
B. English	4
C. Mathematics	3
D. Laboratory science	2
E. Foreign language	2
F. Visual and performing arts	1
G. College preparatory electives	1

school. (A unit is equal to an academic year, or two semesters, of study in one course.) Students may satisfy portions of the A through G course requirements by earning an appropriate score on the SAT II subject tests, Advanced Placement tests, or International Baccalaureate examinations.

Scholarship and Examination Requirements. Students must also take and submit scores for the following tests: (1) SAT I or ACT and (2) three SAT II subject tests, including writing, mathematics, and one test in either English literature, foreign language, science, or social studies. (We describe UC’s use of the SAT in its admissions process in the accompanying text box.) In addition to completing the appropriate courses and examinations, students must also earn specific SAT I (or ACT) and SAT II scores depending on their GPA (which must be at least 2.80) in the required A through G courses as specified in the university’s statewide eligibility index. Figure 4 summarizes the eligibility index. It shows, for example, that a California high school graduate with a GPA of 2.9 must earn a total of at least 4,160 on the required tests. (This is the equivalent of scoring 520 on each of the SAT tests, with possible scores ranging from 200 to 800 on each.)

Students who do not meet the university’s subject and scholarship requirements may be eligible for admission by examination alone. To be eligible by examination, a student must achieve a total SAT I score of at least 1,400 or an ACT score of 31 or higher. The student must also earn a total score of at least 1,760 on the three SAT II subject tests, with a minimum score of 530 on each test.

Local Context—Top 4 Percent In Each High School

Beginning with students applying for fall 2001 freshman admission, UC implemented the ELC program. This extends eligibility to the top 4 percent of graduates (as determined solely by GPA in UC-approved courses) at each California *public* and *private* high school. To be considered for ELC, students must complete 11 units of the university’s A through G subject requirements by the end of their junior year in high school. The UC created the ELC pathway to ensure that at least some students at every high school in the state were eligible for admissions. While there is a large overlap between the top 4 percent of each school and the top 12.5 percent statewide, some students otherwise would not

Figure 4
UC Eligibility Index for California Residents

Minimum Test Score Needed With Different GPAs

GPA ^a	Test Score Total ^b
2.80—2.84	4,640
2.85—2.89	4,384
2.90—2.94	4,160
2.95—2.99	3,984
3.00—3.04	3,840
3.05—3.09	3,720
3.10—3.14	3,616
3.15—3.19	3,512
3.20—3.24	3,408
3.25—3.29	3,320
3.30—3.34	3,248
3.35—3.39	3,192
3.40—3.44	3,152
3.45—3.49	3,128
3.50 or higher	3,120

^a Based on A through G courses taken in grades 10 through 12.
^b Test Score Total = [SAT I score] + [2 x (SAT II scores)]. An ACT score may be converted to substitute for an SAT I score. Total maximum score possible is 6,400.

have qualified. The accompanying text box (see next page) summarizes another recent initiative to assist students who are not eligible to attend UC directly from high school.

CSU FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for freshman admission to CSU, high school graduates must (1) complete the university's A through G high

THE USE OF THE SAT IN UC ADMISSIONS

Virtually all colleges require prospective students to take either the ACT or the SAT I. The UC, however, is one of the few higher education systems in the country that require applicants to take the SAT II achievement tests. The university considers student test scores for both determining eligibility and selecting students for a particular campus. Over the last few years, UC has proposed various changes regarding (1) the relative weight placed on the SAT I and SAT II and (2) the content and structure of these tests. These changes are primarily a result of an ongoing debate regarding what the test actually measures. For example, disagreements exist on whether the SAT is an achievement test (measuring mastery of academic subjects) or an aptitude test (measuring innate intelligence).

Some of the changes to UC's use of the SAT in its admissions process include the following:

- In 1999, the segment de-emphasized the SAT I and increased the weight given to SAT II scores in its statewide eligibility index. The university concluded that the SAT II tests were better indicators of a student's first-year UC GPA than the SAT I.
- In February 2001, UC President Richard Atkinson proposed that UC no longer require the SAT I for freshman applicants and called for the development of a new test more closely linked to high school curricula. President Atkinson primarily argued that students should be admitted to college based on their actual achievements, not on notions of aptitude. Following his announcement, the College Board (the private company that produces the SAT) began developing a new SAT I that would (1) include a writing section consisting of multiple-choice questions and a student written essay, (2) replace verbal analogies with short reading comprehension questions, and (3) expand the material covered in the math test.
- In July 2003, the UC Board of Regents adopted a change in the university's testing requirements effective for fall 2006. Currently, applicants are required to take the ACT or SAT I, and SAT II tests in writing, math, and one subject area of choice. Beginning with students applying for admission as freshmen in fall 2006, applicants must take the new SAT I or ACT (both will include a writing exam), and SAT II tests in two subject areas. They will no longer be required to take the SAT II writing and math exams.

school course requirements (which are the same as UC) and (2) earn a specific combination of SAT I or ACT score and high school GPA (which must be at least 2.0) as specified in the university’s eligibility index table. Unlike UC, CSU does not require students to take the SAT II subject tests.

Figure 5 illustrates a sample of CSU’s eligibility index for California residents. As indicated in the figure, high school graduates with a GPA of 2.5 must score 900 or above on the SAT I. Students with a GPA of 3.0 or above are not required to take the SAT I (or ACT) to be eligible for admission. However, every student is encouraged to take the admissions test because (1) it could be required for admission to an impacted campus, program, or major and (2) a high score on the test allows the student to enroll in college-level writing and mathematics courses without having to first pass CSU’s placement examinations.

WHERE ARE THE SEGMENTS RELATIVE TO THEIR MASTER PLAN TARGETS?

For the most part, it has been the responsibility of the segments to periodically adjust their

admissions criteria to ensure they continue to select the target populations called for in the Master Plan. In order to gauge how well the segments are doing this, existing law requires the California Postsecondary Education Commis-

**Figure 5
CSU Eligibility Index for
California Residents^a**

Minimum Test Score Needed With Different GPAs

GPA^b	SAT I Score^c
2.0	1,300
2.1	1,220
2.2	1,140
2.3	1,060
2.4	980
2.5	900
2.6	820
2.7	740
2.8	660
2.9	580
3.0 or higher	— ^d

- ^a Does not represent entire CSU eligibility index. Actual index includes a minimum test score for each GPA calculated to the hundredth of a grade point (for example, 2.61).
- ^b Based on A through G courses taken in grades 10 through 12.
- ^c A separate eligibility index table is available for ACT scores.
- ^d SAT score not required.

DUAL ADMISSIONS

In order to increase access for students who otherwise would not be eligible for admission as freshmen, UC recently established the Dual Admissions Program (DAP). Under DAP, California students who fall between the top 4 percent and 12.5 percent of their high school graduating class and who are not eligible to attend UC directly from high school can be admitted to a specific UC campus provided they first complete a transfer program at a community college. According to UC, DAP will take effect beginning with the class applying to UC for fall 2004 admission. This means that the first cohort of students transferring to UC through the program would do so in fall 2006. Because DAP students would enter UC as upper-division (juniors and seniors) transfers, the program does not change freshman eligibility criteria.

sion (CPEC) to periodically estimate the percentages of California public high school graduates that the segments determine are eligible for admission. The most recent CPEC eligibility study was based on a survey of California's 1996 public high school graduates. In this report, CPEC found that CSU was drawing from the top 29.6 percent of high school graduates. This is about 3.7 percentage points below CSU's Master Plan target of about 33.3 percent. On the other hand, the study found that UC was drawing from a considerably larger pool than the top 12.5 percent. Based on CPEC's 1996 survey, the segment was selecting from the top 20.5 percent of public high school graduates. (See accompanying box on issue of determining the eligibility pool.) Since the last eligibility study

was based on a cohort of students that graduated from high school over seven years ago, we do not know how well the segments' current admissions standards are achieving their Master Plan targets.

Although CPEC has not completed an eligibility study in recent years, the past three budgets have provided funding for CPEC to conduct such a study. This funding was included in the budgets of CPEC and the three public higher education segments. As part of the 2003-04 budget, the Legislature adopted supplemental report language directing CPEC and the segments to complete and submit an eligibility study based on 2003 public high school graduates by May 15, 2004.

A NOTE ON MEASURING THE ELIGIBILITY POOL FOR UC

In its report, *Eligibility of California's 1996 High School Graduates for Admission to the State's Public Universities*, CPEC described the eligibility pool for UC in two ways. First, it estimated that 11.1 percent of high school graduates in 1996 were "fully eligible" for UC because they had achieved the then-required 3.3 GPA on UC preparatory classes *and* taken the SAT and three separate SAT II achievement tests. The CPEC also estimated that 20.5 percent of high school graduates in 1996 were "potentially eligible" for UC. These potentially eligible students, according to CPEC, included those who had achieved a 3.3 GPA but may not have taken the SAT and SAT II tests. At the time of the 1996 CPEC report, the university required students to take these tests, but did not use the test scores to determine a student's eligibility if their GPA was 3.3 or above. (High school graduates with GPAs between 2.82 and 3.3 could have become eligible for UC if their SAT I scores were sufficiently high.)

Top high school graduates that choose to attend CSU rather than UC do not need to take either the SAT I or SAT II, and many probably do not. Similarly, top high school graduates that choose to attend other top universities in the country do not need to take SAT II tests, and many probably do not. By excluding students who have not taken these test when it identifies top high school graduates, UC significantly understates the size of the pool from which it draws freshmen. When such students are included, as we believe they should be, UC is drawing from the top 20.5 percent of high school graduates.

UC AND CSU SPECIAL ADMISSIONS

Although the Master Plan requires students to meet minimum standards in order to qualify for admission to UC and CSU, it does permit a small percentage of applicants to be “admitted by exception” to these standards. Specifically, the Master Plan allows each segment to admit up to 2 percent of their freshmen through special procedures outside the minimum standards for academic coursework and standardized test scores. The Master Plan also applies this 2 percent threshold to specially admitted transfer applicants. The update to the Master Plan in 1987 reaffirmed the admission of students by exception, particularly for the purpose of increasing the participation rates of underrepresented students.

Currently, both UC and CSU admissions policies exceed the Master Plan’s 2 percent special admit limits:

- ***UC—Up to 6 Percent of Freshmen and Up to 6 Percent of Transfers.*** The UC permits each campus to admit by exception up to 6 percent of newly enrolled freshmen and up to 6 percent of newly

enrolled transfer students. Within the 6 percent designation, up to 4 percent may be drawn from disadvantaged students (who have limited educational opportunities or low socioeconomic status) and up to 2 percent from other students. According to UC’s policy, students admitted by exception must demonstrate potential for college success.

- ***CSU—Up to 8 Percent of Freshmen and Transfers Combined.*** The CSU authorizes admission by exception under two categories—“general exceptions” and “exceptions for applicants to special compensatory programs.” General exceptions are reserved for students that lack qualifying grades or test scores, but have special skills or talents deemed important by the university. The special compensatory category is reserved for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy provides for admissions of up to 4 percent of new freshman and lower-division transfers in each category, for a total of 8 percent.

FRESHMAN ADMISSION TO A PARTICULAR CAMPUS OR PROGRAM

As previously mentioned, some campuses do not have the capacity and resources to admit all eligible applicants that apply to them. As a result, many UC campuses and some CSU campuses use additional admissions criteria (beyond the systemwide eligibility requirements) to select new students from among eligible applicants. Unlike eligibility requirements, which

are uniform across the system, both the criteria and processes that individual campuses employ to select from among eligible applicants vary somewhat, although each campus must comply with a prescribed set of systemwide criteria and process guidelines. Below, we briefly discuss the selection processes at UC and CSU campuses.

UC'S COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW PROCESS

In November 2001, the UC Board of Regents approved a policy requiring campuses that cannot accommodate all UC-eligible students to “comprehensively review” the academic and personal qualifications of all freshman applicants. Previously, each campus was required to admit 50 percent to 75 percent of its freshman students solely based on academic factors (including grades, test scores, and completion of additional college preparatory courses). The remaining students were admitted on the basis of specified academic factors plus “supplemental” factors such as special talents and academic accomplishments in the face of disadvantaged circumstances.

The comprehensive review process, which was first implemented for students applying for fall 2002 freshman admission, essentially eliminates the previous two-tiered process. Under the new policy, all applicants to these campuses are reviewed based on both academic and supplemental criteria. Decisions on the weights of the various qualitative and quantitative criteria are left to the discretion of faculty on individual campuses. According to UC, there is considerable variation among the campuses. For example, the Berkeley campus assigns each application a single score from one to five based on academic and nonacademic achievements. Applicants with the highest scores are admitted to the campus. At UC Davis, applications can receive up to 13,000 points based on a fixed weight formula that assigns a score to each selection criterion. For example, an applicant earns 500 points for participation in a precollegiate outreach program. The highest scoring applicants are admitted to the Davis campus.

Under the comprehensive review process, some UC-eligible applicants may not be admitted to their campus of choice. As a result, eligible students who are denied admission to the campuses of their choice are offered admission at a different campus through UC's “referral” process. For the past several years, over 4,000 freshman applicants were referred to Riverside, Santa Cruz, or both of these campuses.

CSU'S ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AND IMPACTION PRACTICES

Most applicants that meet CSU's minimum eligibility requirements are admitted to their first-choice major, program, and campus. However, there are certain high-demand majors, programs, and campuses (which we list below) that do not have the resources to accommodate all eligible applicants. As a result, CSU campuses use two primary sets of “tools”—enrollment management and impaction—in order to control enrollment demand and the allocation of limited spaces for admission. As we discuss below, a campus must utilize enrollment management strategies before it can implement policies for impaction.

Enrollment Management

The CSU campuses use enrollment management tools as a way to align enrollment demand with available resources without actually denying eligible applicants admission to a particular program, major, or campus. This is because unlike impaction (which is discussed in detail below), enrollment management involves administrative guidelines that do not affect the selection of eligible applicants. In other words, enrollment management is a series of strategies that campuses use at their discretion either to increase enrollment or to control enrollment

prior to requesting impactation status and the use of supplementary admission criteria to screen applicants.

Some of the enrollment strategies that campuses use to limit enrollment include the following:

- Stop accepting applications after the initial filing period. (The initial filing period for the fall term is from October 1 to November 30 of the previous year.) Until recently, many CSU campuses accepted applications as late as several weeks into the semester for which the students were applying.
- Suspend or limit “special” admission of students who do not meet systemwide eligibility criteria.
- Do not accept applications from lower-division transfer students.
- Limit admission of non-California residents.

Program, Major, and Campus Impactation

Unlike enrollment management strategies, program, major, and campus impactation status allows campuses to require applicants to meet higher academic and scholastic standards to limit the number of eligible applicants that enroll in a particular campus or program.

- **Program Impactation.** Refers to an undergraduate program (such as nursing and graphic design) that received more eligible applications than can be accommodated. For example, a campus with an impacted communication program means that all of the majors under that

program (journalism, theater, communication, and radio, television, and film) are in high demand.

- **Major Impactation.** Signifies that a particular major does not have enough capacity to accept all eligible students.
- **Campus Impactation.** Signifies that a campus does not have the capacity to accept all eligible applicants from one or more enrollment categories (freshman, transfer, or graduate).

Figure 6 shows the number of programs and majors that are impacted on each CSU campus. As indicated in the figure, 15 of the 23 campuses have at least one impacted program/major. However, all but three of these campuses have only one or two impacted programs. The basic nursing program is impacted at most campuses. The figure also shows that all of the programs and majors at San Luis Obispo are impacted. In addition, Chico, Long Beach, and Sonoma are impacted at the freshman level and San Diego is impacted at all enrollment levels.

Once the Chancellor’s Office declares a major, program, or campus impacted, campus administrators may use supplemental criteria to select students. Supplemental criteria include SAT scores, eligibility index scores, special talents, and socioeconomic and educational disadvantages. According to CSU, campuses use these criteria to “determine how serious an applicant is about his/her choice of major, and the extent to which applicants are fully prepared academically to fulfill the requirements of that major and be able to graduate with a degree in a timely manner.” For example, a campus may assign applicants a formulaic score based on

Figure 6
Few CSU Campuses Have Many Impacted Programs and Majors

Campus	Number of Impacted Programs/Majors
Bakersfield	—
Channel Islands	—
Chico ^a	2
Dominguez Hills	1
Fresno	1
Fullerton	—
Hayward	1
Humboldt	1
Long Beach ^a	6
Los Angeles	1
Maritime Academy	—
Monterey Bay	—
Northridge	2
Pomona	1
Sacramento	1
San Bernardino	1
San Diego ^b	28
San Francisco	1
San Jose	—
San Luis Obispo ^c	24
San Marcos	—
Sonoma ^a	—
Stanislaus	1

^a Impacted at the first-time freshman level.

^b Impacted at all class levels.

^c Impacted in all majors and programs.

grades and the SAT I (or ACT) score. The campus would then admit the highest scoring applicants.

STATE TO NOT FUND 2004-05 ENROLLMENT GROWTH

As part of the 2003-04 budget package, the Legislature expressed its intent to provide no

The use of supplemental criteria causes some CSU-eligible applicants to not be admitted to their first-choice campus, major, or program. As result, CSU forwards the applications of these students to another campus without asking them to supply additional information or to pay an additional admission application fee. Applications are redirected only to campuses still accepting applications. Given this “redirection” process, CSU encourages students to designate a second-choice campus on their application.

Local Admission Guarantee. Local residents receive special consideration at impacted campuses. Impacted campuses automatically admit local first-time freshmen and upper-division transfer applicants, so long as they meet the university’s minimum eligibility standards. This local admission guarantee process applies only to impacted campuses and not to impacted majors and programs. Local first-time freshmen are defined as those students who graduate from a high school in a school district historically served by a CSU campus in that region. Local upper-division transfer students are those who transfer from a community college district historically served by a CSU campus in that region. The boundaries of a campus’s local region include the entire territory of the school district or community college district in which the high school or community college campus is located.

funding for enrollment growth in 2004-05. (We note, however, that the 2003-04 budget funds

6.9 percent enrollment growth at UC and 7.1 percent at CSU.) In keeping with legislative intent, the Governor's budget proposal for 2004-05 includes no enrollment growth funding. In fact, the Governor proposes to reduce new freshman enrollment at UC and CSU by 10 percent, with the foregone enrollment being redirected to the community colleges.

Anticipating no new enrollment growth funding in 2004-05, the UC Board of Regents and the CSU Board of Trustees discussed various alternatives in summer and fall 2003 for bringing admissions and enrollment policies more in line with budgeted resources. (The governing boards intend to take formal action on these and other alternatives in the coming months.) Some of the scenarios included:

- **Deny Admission to Eligible Students.** The UC and CSU are considering denying admission to applicants even though they meet the university's current minimum admission requirements.
- **Implement Existing Enrollment Management Tools.** The CSU is encouraging campuses to use enrollment management tools (such as cutting off applications after the initial filing period and limiting special admissions) in order to preserve access for eligible students.
- **Encourage Community College Enrollment for Lower Division Students.** Students eligible for UC admission would be admitted to a specific campus, but asked to attend a California community college for their first two years of college. The process would function similar to UC's current dual admissions program which targets otherwise ineligible students.
- **Restrict Community College Transfers.** The UC Regents are considering restricting growth in community college transfers.
- **Increase Student Fees.** In order to accommodate "unallocated" reductions in their 2003-04 budgets, UC and CSU increased student fees by 30 percent for the current academic year. (This is in addition to spring 2003 increases of 10 percent to 15 percent.) Both segments are considering additional fee increases for 2004-05. The Governor's budget proposal for 2004-05 assumes that the segments will in fact raise fees.
- **Increase Nonresident Enrollments and Fees.** Currently, nonresident students at UC pay substantially higher student fees than California residents. The Regents discussed the possibility of enrolling more nonresident students and charging them even higher fees, essentially subsidizing the cost of enrolling additional state residents at the university. The Governor's budget proposal for 2004-05 assumes that both UC and CSU will increase nonresident tuition above current-year levels.

NO NEED TO ABANDON MASTER PLAN COMMITMENT

The Legislature's decision not to provide funding for enrollment growth at UC and CSU in 2004-05 raises important policy questions regarding higher education admissions. The state must find ways to maintain the Master Plan's commitment to college access. As discussed above, some of the alternatives being discussed by the UC Board of Regents and CSU Board of Trustees would essentially abandon some principles expressed by the Master Plan. However, based on our review of current admission policies and practices, we do not think this is necessary.

We recognize that the state's fiscal constraints are requiring that the segments enroll fewer additional students than they likely would have in better fiscal times. However, for reasons described earlier and summarized below, we believe that the state can continue to maintain the Master Plan's commitment to access even with these resource constraints.

Segments May Have Room to Accommodate Additional Eligible Students

Based on our review of UC and CSU's admissions policies and practices, we believe the segments could accommodate additional eligible students in 2004-05 without increased funding for enrollment growth.

As discussed earlier in this report, UC's freshman eligibility standards have deviated from the top 12.5 percent of the state's public high school graduates. The 1996 CPEC eligibility study showed that the segment was selecting from the top 20.5 percent of high school gradu-

ates. Although we do not know precisely how UC eligibility currently compares with its Master Plan target, recent initiatives (such as establishing the ELC program and aligning course requirements with CSU) have probably expanded the eligibility pool in recent years. For example, UC established the ELC program in order to extend eligibility to additional students who do not meet UC's minimum standards for *statewide* eligibility.

The 1996 CPEC study also found that CSU was drawing from the top 29.6 percent of public high school graduates. This is several percentage points below CSU's Master Plan target of 33.3 percent. We note that in recent years the segment has made changes to its eligibility requirements (such as modifying its high school course requirements) in order to increase its eligibility pool above 29.6 percent. These efforts may have caused CSU's eligibility pool to exceed the Master Plan target of 33.3 percent.

Moreover, both UC and CSU admission policies currently exceed the Master Plan's stipulations that no more than 2 percent of freshman and 2 percent of transfer students be admitted through special procedures outside the state's minimum eligibility standards. By definition, students admitted by exception to UC and CSU are otherwise ineligible for admission. In other words, a special admit essentially takes up a "slot" at the university that could otherwise have gone to an eligible student.

In view of the above, we believe it is likely that UC and CSU are currently drawing students

outside their Master Plan targets and special admission pools. Thus, the segments may have room to accommodate additional students in 2004-05 who qualify for admission without increased funding for enrollment growth. Rather than accept as many students from outside the Master Plan targets, the segments could more strictly observe these targets and refocus existing funds at the state's high school graduates who fall within the targets. In effect, realigning UC and CSU's eligibility criteria with the Master Plan targets may create "room" to fund additional eligible students in 2004-05. Ineligible students denied admission to UC might be able to attend CSU instead. In addition, students denied admission to UC and CSU would be able to attend a community college.

As noted earlier, this spring CPEC will be providing the Legislature with an updated eligibility study based on 2003 high school graduates. Given the importance of understanding enrollment demand and determining where the segments actually are relative to their Master Plan targets, the Legislature should carefully consider the results of CPEC's eligibility study in its upcoming budget and policy deliberations.

Task of Defining the Master Plan Pool Has Largely Been Delegated To the Segments

Our review suggests that the current eligibility requirements established by the segments may not be accurately defining the state's top high school graduates under the Master Plan.

Since the Legislature first established the student population targets in the Master Plan in 1960, the segments have been permitted to define for themselves who are the state's top high school graduates that fall within those targets. In adopt-

ing and modifying eligibility criteria, UC and CSU can (1) increase or decrease the percentage of students eligible for freshman admission at each segment, (2) alter the profile of eligible students without changing the percentage of eligible students, and (3) change the allocation of students across the three segments. These definitions of eligibility therefore reflect important policy choices that affect access to and the quality of the state's higher education system, yet they have been made with very little legislative oversight. We note also that the Legislature has little information about the appropriateness of existing criteria and how well the criteria are aligned to its K-12 education priorities and expectations.

For example, the Master Plan does not require that students complete a college entrance exam (such as the SAT) in order to be considered among the state's top public high school graduates. However, UC defines its eligibility pool to exclude those students who have not taken the SAT I and SAT II exams, regardless of their other academic achievements. As noted above, the 1996 CPEC eligibility study identified "potentially" UC eligible students who completed the required courses and earned exceptionally high grades but chose not to take the required tests. In other words, these students simply had to take the SAT I or SAT II tests in order to become fully eligible under UC's definition. We believe it would make more sense, and would be easier to calculate the top one-eighth and one-third of high school graduates, if the definition of these pools was not dependent on whether a student chose to voluntarily take a test. Instead, we believe the targets specified in the Master Plan should—to the maximum extent possible—be defined on the basis of data available for *all* high school students.

LAO RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we have reviewed UC's and CSU's current admission policies and practices and identified a number of important policy issues that merit legislative consideration. Based on our findings and the Legislature's desire to preserve the Master Plan's commitment to quality and access to public higher education in California, we recommend (1) redirecting lower division students on a voluntary basis to enroll at community college, (2) returning to the Master Plan special admission caps, (3) implementing enrollment management policies, and (4) reexamining current eligibility standards.

Redirect Lower Division Students to Enroll at Community College

We recommend the Legislature establish a policy whereby UC and CSU would admit qualified freshmen but redirect a portion of them, on a voluntary basis, to enroll in specific community colleges for their lower division coursework.

One of the major drivers of higher education cost is growth in student enrollment. As enrollments increase, the segments face additional costs for serving more students. Based on projections of enrollment increases and the Legislature's budget priorities each year, funding is added to UC's and CSU's budget for the cost of serving additional students at each of these segments (commonly referred to as the "marginal cost"). As enrollment increases at the community colleges, the state also provides funding for those students at a specified dollar amount per student based on an established budget formula.

Because of the different missions of the three segments, the per student support rates for new students vary substantially. For 2003-04, the state provides UC with \$9,030 for each additional full-time equivalent student compared to \$6,594 at CSU and about \$4,132 at CCC. In addition, the student fees charged by the segments also vary substantially. In the current academic year, a UC full-time undergraduate student's systemwide fee is \$4,984 compared to \$2,046 at CSU and \$468 at CCC.

All three segments of higher education offer lower division (freshman and sophomore) level studies. In recent years, the Legislature has identified transfer from community colleges to UC and CSU as a central priority for all segments of higher education. Given the higher costs to the state and student to attend UC and CSU, it can be cost-beneficial for students to attend the community colleges for lower division work and then transfer to either UC or CSU for upper division work. The Legislature through the Master Plan and other initiatives has recognized the importance and value of facilitating a four-year student's ability to complete lower-division courses at a community college. For example, existing statutes place a high priority for the enrollment and admission of community college transfer students to UC and CSU. As mentioned earlier, UC recently developed a "dual admissions" program so that students who are *not* eligible to attend the university directly from high school can be admitted to a specific UC campus provided they first complete a transfer program at a community college.

Given the state's fiscal condition and projections for enrollment growth, we believe encour-

aging eligible students to enroll at community colleges for their lower division coursework helps preserve college access. Accordingly, we recommend the enactment of legislation establishing a policy whereby UC and CSU would admit qualified freshman but redirect a portion of them, on a *voluntary basis*, to enroll at community colleges for their first two years. Some students may find it more advantageous to initially attend a community college and incur lower direct costs (such as student fees and housing costs). In order to encourage a student to participate in this “redirection,” the segments could guarantee student’s admission to his or her first-choice campus after completing their lower-division coursework at a community college. This would be beneficial to students who otherwise could not attend their campus of choice because of its selectivity.

As noted earlier, the Governor’s budget for 2004-05 proposes to reduce new freshman enrollment at UC and CSU by 10 percent (or 5,000 students), with the foregone reenrollment redirected to the community colleges. Partly in recognition of this diverted enrollment, the budget provides funding for CCC for 3 percent enrollment growth, which is higher than what is called for under current law. Similar to our recommendation above, the Governor’s proposal would guarantee otherwise ineligible students admission to a specific UC or CSU campus provided that they first attend a community college. In establishing this initiative, the Governor’s budget provides UC and CSU with a \$3.5 million General Fund augmentation to provide counseling services to students that participate in the new dual admissions program. We believe the Governor’s redirection proposal makes sense on policy grounds. However, at the

time this report was prepared, it was unclear how the proposal would be implemented.

Return to Master Plan’s Special Admission Caps

We recommend the Legislature require the segments to return to the Master Plan’s special admissions cap of 2 percent, in order to maximize access for eligible students with the state’s limited fiscal resources.

As discussed earlier in this report, both UC and CSU admission policies exceed the Master Plan’s special admission provisions. Given the state’s fiscal constraints and the desire to maintain access for eligible students, we recommend that the Legislature reinforce the Master Plan’s admission priorities and require the segments to return to the 2 percent special admit cap. Under this proposal, UC and CSU would still retain the flexibility to admit a small percentage of otherwise ineligible students whose special circumstances warrant an exception. We recommend that priority be given to those students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Implement Policies to Preserve Access For State’s Eligible Students

We recommend UC and CSU implement policies (such as cutting off applications after an initial filing period) on a systemwide basis that seek to manage enrollment demands by preserving access for state residents who are eligible for admission.

The CSU campuses currently use enrollment management tools at their discretion to align enrollment demand with available resources without specifically denying California high school graduates who are eligible for admission. (Please refer to the earlier section of this report

for a detailed description of CSU's enrollment management policies and their distinction from impactation.) One tool is for campuses to stop accepting applications after a reasonable filing period. We note that 15 of the 23 CSU campuses were still accepting applications in March 2003 for fall 2003 admissions. This was well after the official filing deadline of November 30, 2002. In cutting off applications after the initial deadline, CSU would be accommodating all eligible students who apply by the deadline, thereby encouraging potential applicants to plan and prepare. This would also have the effect of giving CSU more time to plan for enrollment demands and make admission decisions.

Under CSU's enrollment management policies, campuses can also limit or not accept applications from lower-division transfer students. Such students can essentially "defer" their transfer to the university until after they finish their lower-division coursework at a community college. This protects access for students who are eligible for freshman and upper-division transfer admission. In view of the above, we recommend both segments implement policies on a systemwide basis that seek to manage enrollment demands.

Reexamine Existing Eligibility Standards

We recommend the Legislature more clearly define how the segments should select the state's top high school graduates, in order to preserve its higher education priorities.

As we concluded above, the current eligibility requirements established by UC and CSU may not accurately define the state's top high school graduates as called for in the Master Plan. Consequently, we recommend the Legislature examine alternative ways for defining eligibility. For example, the Legislature could specify that the segments determine eligibility solely based on high school GPA and scores on the California High School Exit Exam or the California Standards Tests (CST). (The CST, which all public high school students must take, measures the degree to which students achieve the academically rigorous content and performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education.) Under this scenario, UC and CSU eligibility requirements would be objective, transparent, and based on measurements aligned to K-12 curriculum standards.

The segments could choose to place additional requirements (such as requiring students to take the SAT and complete a specific high school course pattern) as a condition for admission, particularly for those students seeking admission to an impacted or highly selective campus. However, such supplemental criteria would not be used to identify the *pool* of students that each segment should draw from. We note that CSU currently uses portions of the CST to identify high school students that need assistance in improving their proficiency in English and mathematics prior to entering CSU.

CONCLUSION

The 2003-04 budget package expresses legislative intent that no new funding be provided to UC and CSU for enrollment growth in 2004-05. In keeping with the Legislature's intent, the Governor's budget proposal for 2004-05 includes no enrollment growth funding. In this report, we recommend a series of steps the Legislature can take to maintain the Master Plan's commitment to college access. Since

many state and campus policies—including admission standards, institutional capacity, student fees, and financial aid—affect access to the state's public higher education segments, it is important for the Legislature to consider the interaction of such policies in its deliberations.

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