COMMITTEE ON ADMISSIONS & FINANCIAL AID
Policy for Frosh Admission – Holistic Review

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

During the 2010-11 academic year, the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) has reviewed UCSC’s frosh admissions and selection policy. While CAFA believes that the current quantitative method of selection has been responsive to the needs of the UCSC campus, as a whole UCSC would be better served if we reoriented our admissions selection process towards a holistic review approach starting Fall 2012. Holistic review uses multiple measures to assess whether potential students exhibit the qualities necessary to succeed academically and graduate in a timely fashion as well as demonstrate the promise of making a positive contribution to the UCSC community. The differences are not drastic but significant. UCSC will continue to review frosh applicants based on their qualifications and accomplishments using the 14 UC faculty-approved criteria; however, these criteria will no longer carry individual fixed weights. The holistic approach employs a thorough review of each application by professionally trained readers who determine a single score that is reflective of an applicant’s full spectrum of achievement, viewed in the context of his/her academic and personal opportunities. CAFA thinks that this shift in policy will have an overall salutary effect. The consideration of additional profile information for each applicant will provide a greater opportunity for readers to consider a more complete set of indicators of academic excellence and promise, and to account for outstanding achievement in particular areas. The proposed policy roughly maintains the weight of the GPA and completion of ‘a-g’ courses as is currently used in UCSC’s frosh selection process.

Scoring Frosh Applicants
The UCSC holistic score will be guided by two broad areas of evaluation. Half of the score will be determined by GPA and ‘a-g’ courses completed, planned, and in-progress and the other half of the score will be determined by test score performance, personal qualities, potential for positive contributions, achievement in educational preparatory programs, and accomplishments within life experiences. Readers will all be required to undergo intensive training, and norming of score outcomes will be ongoing throughout the reading phase of the Admissions process to eliminate any variances.

Score of 1 – Emphatically Recommended for Admissions (should be reserved for approximately 10% of all applicants)

Score of 2 – Strongly Recommended for Admissions (should be reserved for approximately the next 15% of all applicants)

Score of 3 – Recommended for Admissions (should be reserved for approximately the next 25% of all applicants)

Score of 4 – Qualified for Admissions

Score of 5 – Recommended Denial of Admission

NOTE: All scores align with UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles score ranges.
Use of UCLA and UCB Holistic Scores

Students who have applied to both UCSC and either UCB or UCLA will not be read again by UCSC readers, saving substantial resources that would be considered duplicative in nature. UCSC would accept the read from UCB/UCLA to be equal to our own campus score. In the case where an applicant has both a UCB and a UCLA score, those two scores would be averaged. By adopting this method of using other campus’ holistic scores, the work load for the Admissions staff will be reduced. More importantly, UCSC reviewers will then be able to concentrate on reading applicants who either did not apply to UCB/UCLA, or those who received a UCB/UCLA score that requires a UCSC tie-break review.

Once UCSC’s admission target is set (this is the number of offers of admission needed to achieve the campus’s enrollment target for any given term), a UCB holistic score and a UCLA holistic score would be considered exactly the same as the UCSC holistic score. UCSC readers will read all applications which will not be read at UCB or UCLA. The lower the holistic score, the higher the chance for admission. When the holistic scoring band would yield too many admits, UCSC will employ tie-breaking procedures (see below) that weight certain factors more heavily. These factors embody criteria that are highly valued by UCSC’s faculty.

The chart below shows the basis of CAFA’s assertion that the use of UCB/UCLA scores correlates with both our past admissions offers and the future admissions goals for our campus. The data shows how many students in each UCB/UCLA scoring range were admitted to UCSC last year. UCSC admitted almost 93% of the overlapping applicants even at a score of 4.0.

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Fall 2010 data prepared by UCOP IR TC, 1/25/2011

Tie-break Criteria

One of the scenarios which CAFA has spent a great deal of time considering is how to select from within the cohort of applicants who have like scores (at our current level of selectivity, between 3.5-4.25), when the entire cohort with that score cannot be admitted because it is too large. Holistic scoring will not align evenly at this “break point,” so tie-break criteria have been established. Since the holistic review has already been conducted on these students, the tie-break criteria are not a rescoring of applicants. Tie-break criteria are meant to give Admissions staff the best possible tools to produce a frosh class which closely reflects the expectations and values of the faculty.
CAFA is recommending that at the point at which too many applicants have the same holistic score, the Admissions staff use a composite of criteria to select for admission. These criteria are as follows:

- Demonstrated success and preparedness in writing
- Demonstrated success and preparedness in math
- Students that have qualified for Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) and how they compare to other ELC students from their high school
- Students that would be considered “first-generation” to achieve a 4-year degree
- Students coming from low-performing high schools (low API or similar characteristics for out-of-state high schools)
- Potential for broader campus impact, including but not limited to residency status, tribal affiliation for American Indian applicants, and low-socioeconomic status.

During the UCSC holistic review, Admissions readers will populate an electronic checklist of the above criteria for later use in tie-breaking. For applicants that have been read by UCB and/or UCLA, and whose score is also within the tie-break band, Admissions readers will review those applications to also populate the electronic checklist.

**Evaluating Effectiveness of Holistic Review**

CAFA and the Office of Admissions, as well as the UC Office of the President, will conduct annual assessments of UCSC’s selection process and holistic scoring. Traditional outcomes such as GPA, test scores, total ‘a-g’ courses, etc. will be compared to previous admitted/enrolled frosh cohorts, ensuring that UCSC continues to admit excellent students who will succeed and graduate in a timely fashion. Ongoing analyses will ensure that UCSC’s selection criteria and implementation of this holistic approach will not negatively impact specific populations of students.

Respectfully submitted,

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May 13, 2011