

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID (CAFA)
Annual Report, 2004-2005

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

Once again, this was a busy year for CAFA. Besides its regular roles of setting and interpreting policy and monitoring admissions and financial aid activities, we studied, commented upon, and made recommendations and proposals dealing with a wide range of special issues. These included the WASC review, changes in the high school honors program, guidelines for minimum and satisfactory academic progress, course articulation, phasing out UC participation in the National Merit Scholarship Program, questioning the AP/Honors advantage in admission to UC, the SAT/ACT exam concordance and the new UC eligibility, the low level of UCSC Regents Scholarship Funding, Regents Scholar yield efforts, admission by exception and undergraduate student body diversity.

The committee began the year with an admissions workshop to help bring the committee up to speed on the intricacies of the admissions process, and acquaint them with a variety of relevant statistics. Throughout the year the committee worked closely with the admissions office, and wishes to thank Executive Director Kevin Browne, Associate Director Michael McCawley and Analyst Sue Grimes for their very valuable assistance and insight. We also wish to acknowledge the excellent service of our BOARS representatives, Karen McNally (F) and Trish Stoddart (W and S), and administrative support by Pamela Edwards.

ADMISSIONS UNDER COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

This was the second year that admissions operated under comprehensive review, a process crafted by the previous CAFA for the campus in response to the fourteen general criteria adopted by the UC Regents in 2001 and in anticipation of admissions selectivity. For details of UCSC criteria see <http://senate.ucsc.edu/cafa/cafa.scp1370.htm>, http://admissions.ucsc.edu/apply/freshman_guide.cfm. CAFA decided not to change any of the point assignments for the various criteria so as to have two years of statistics with which to assess the effects of comprehensive review. The academic credentials (GPA and test scores) of the freshman classes entering in Fall 2004 and 2005 are virtually equivalent, as are the number of students. An unrelated fluctuation is that the number of freshman applicants for entrance to UCSC in Fall 2004 increased by 7.4% over the previous year (while all other UC campuses registered decreases), whereas this year the number of applicants declined slightly (1.6%). Thus the admission rate increased (from 68.5% to 75.4%), and selectivity decreased comparably. Percentages of applicants and enrolled students by ethnic group remained stable over the past five years, including the two years of comprehensive review and the three years prior. The only visible trend since 2000 is a gradual increase in percentage of Asian students (from 18 to 21%).

In summary, comprehensive review appears to be working smoothly at UCSC and has produced no statistically discernible anomalies. A more stringent test awaits a time when UCSC becomes significantly more selective. During the two years since the introduction of comprehensive review we have admitted approximately four out of every five eligible applicants, compared to, for instance, one in five for Berkeley, so the characteristics of our student body still depend much more on our applicant pool than our selection process.

WASC REVIEW

CAFA provided feedback on the materials submitted to WASC and participated in the review. We advised that the projected expansion of undergraduate student body could not be substantially driven by increases in junior transfer students. We also endorsed the significant rise in number of graduate students planned for UCSC, pointing out that this was likely to increase the application rate and percentage yield of more highly qualified high school students.

HIGH SCHOOL HONORS PROGRAM (HSHP)

The HSHP posed a problem because it was costing UCSC about 100 slots for regular freshman, an unsupportable financial penalty. The problem is now resolved in the new High School Scholars Program, which replaces HSHP, by administering it under University Extension. About 50 students have enrolled in the new HSSP. Although not large, this program is highly visible in the Santa Cruz community and a pleasure for faculty who are lucky enough to have these highly motivated and high performing high school students enroll in their classes.

MINIMUM AND SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

CAFA endorsed the proposal that minimum academic progress be defined as passing 12 units per quarter and that satisfactory academic progress be decided by the college review of academic standing (grades) and minimum academic progress. This standard is simpler than the previous one. Its consistent application should, over a number of years, improve the financial aid appeals situation at UCSC and the graduation rate. This issue currently awaits resolution by CEP and the Academic Senate.

STREAMLINING COURSE ARTICULATION

Committee members agreed that articulation of California Community College (CCC) courses with UCSC major programs is valuable when it can be done meaningfully and thus provisionally endorsed a proposal to streamline such articulation that was sent to the campuses by the UC Academic Council. Our reservations included concerns about faculty prerogative and the need for articulation to be done well, with sensitivity to the varying flavors of each major among the UC campuses. Poor articulation would be worse than none. Unfortunately, funding for articulation is currently not sufficient to keep it up to date. CAFA suggested that it would be wise to spend more time and effort initially on perfecting articulation agreements with the twenty percent of CCCs that provide the great majority of its transfer students, letting full articulation with the other CCCs develop more gradually.

NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (NMSP)

Early in the Spring quarter CAFA studied materials critical of the NMSP and decided that the money the campus puts into the program would be better spent on UCSC merit (Regents) scholarships. At that time most but not all UC campuses participated in the NMSP. National Merit Scholarships are awarded almost entirely on the basis of the score on the Educational Testing Service PSAT exam taken in 11th grade. The NMSP has never demonstrated the validity of the PSAT exam for selecting meritorious students, whereas the literature is clear that sole reliance on high-stakes, norm-referenced tests like the PSAT has severe negative impact on disadvantaged students. UCSC criteria for awarding Regents Scholarships are broader and more rigorous. By the

end of Spring quarter the entire UC system withdrew from NMSP. Existing scholarships will of course be honored. See <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/2005/jul13.html>

AP/HONORS ADVANTAGE

The committee engaged in extensive discussion of the 1-grade-point increase currently given for Advanced Placement courses and certain other designated honors courses. A large study conducted on students who entered UC between 1998 and 2001 detected no significant correlation between academic success in the University and AP courses taken or grades received in them. A positive correlation was found for scores on the AP exams, but many students do not take them and the scores for AP exams taken in 12th grade are not available in time to use for admissions. See <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/papers/papers/ROP.Geiser.4.04.pdf>

Moreover, access to AP and other honors courses is more limited in less affluent schools and for some students in schools that use academic tracking. Hence the proposal to eliminate the unjustified AP/Honors advantage, but there is concern that eliminating the point advantage will weaken the rigor of the high school curriculum; i.e., schools will stop offering AP and honors-level courses. In addition, other prior research has found a relationship between general rigor of course work taken in high school and undergraduate degree attainment. This issue will come before BOARS and campus admissions committees again next year for further consideration.

LOW LEVEL OF UCSC REGENTS SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING

Regents and Chancellor (R/C) scholarships are those that are awarded principally on the basis of academic merit to attract top students to the University of California. UCSC merit scholarships are entirely of the Regents category. From 2000-01 to 2004-05 UCSC Regents scholarships have fallen drastically per capita: in total expenditure from \$95 to \$40 per undergraduate FTE, and in total number from 1.7 to 0.7 percent of undergraduate FTE. UCSC ranks lowest in merit scholarship funding in the UC system; in 2003-04, the last year that comparative figures were available, UCSC's expenditure per undergraduate FTE was less than half the seven-campus average. The base allocation from UCOP for Regents Scholarships has been frozen while enrollment at UCSC has increased, but the main cause of UCSC's precipitous decline has been the drying up of annual augmentations supplied from campus funds.

Although academic merit scholars comprise only a small percentage of the UC undergraduate student bodies, they play a vital role in the intellectual life of the campuses. The presence of just one or two students of their caliber and motivation can raise the level of an entire class, inspiring others by their example to challenge themselves, work hard, and learn at a level beyond what they believed they could. CAFA has proposed that the administration incrementally augment the Regents Scholarship base budget over a period of three years to bring it back up to the 2000-01 level, putting us on a par with Riverside, though still 20% below the seven-campus average.

REGENTS SCHOLAR YIELD EFFORTS

Late in Spring the committee decided to write prospective Regents Scholars in an effort to attract more of them to Santa Cruz. The distinguishing feature of our effort was to invite them to engage in an e-mail conversation with a faculty member in one of their areas of interest. We found faculty members for those who requested them, answered some of their questions, and put them into contact with UCSC Regents Scholars when they wanted to ask questions of students. Although causality is difficult to prove, our effort seemed to make a difference: 15 students accepted

compared to 9 the year before. We plan to try this again in 2006, and engage our UCSC Regents Scholars even earlier in the process.

DIVERSITY AND ADMISSION BY EXCEPTION

CAFA discussed issues related to undergraduate student body diversity many times during the year. We supported a broad interpretation of the term including diversity of gender, ethnicity, cultural and socio-economic background, sexual preference, geographical distribution, abilities, interests and talents. There are two admissions avenues available for enhancing student body diversity. One is the comprehensive review process, which includes criteria that encourage diversity. The other is the University's Admissions by Exception (AbyE) policy, which allows campuses the flexibility to admit up to six percent of newly enrolled freshmen and advanced standing students who demonstrate potential for success at UC but do not meet the eligibility requirements. (The algorithm for determining eligibility is based on GPA and test scores, as described at the link below). The more selective campuses used to accept significantly lower percentages of AbyE students than the less selective campuses, such as UCSC. During the past eight years, however, AbyE percentages have fallen across UC, including at UCSC, which reached 2 % in Fall 2004—close to the UC mean.

In November 2003, President Robert Dynes chartered the Eligibility and Admissions Study Group to examine undergraduate eligibility and admissions policies and implementation issues facing UC, including AbyE. In its *Final Report to the President (April 2004)*, the Study Group wrote “Admission by Exception provides an important access path for students with outstanding talent or achievements in particular areas (such as athletes or students gifted in math or music), as well as those from nontraditional (such as home-schooled) or disadvantaged educational backgrounds.” It recommended that UC retain the ability to utilize the full six percent of enrollments currently permitted under the AbyE policy and for BOARS to examine guidelines for admission of ineligible students. BOARS then drafted guidelines for AbyE and requested admissions committees at each campus to consider and respond to them. CAFA resolved to study how we might refine our current procedures to identify and assess exceptional applicants that demonstrate the potential to succeed at UCSC. We noted that any such changes would certainly entail detailed reading and analysis of more applications, which would require increased funding for the admissions process, one would hope from UCOP. We also pointed out that AbyE is not an ideal mechanism for admitting qualified students who would greatly benefit the campus, but were missed by our standard admission procedure, because it does not apply to all the UC-eligible students who fall below our cutoff for admission.

In mid-May CAFA met with Chancellor Denton to discuss concerns about diversity, particularly with regard to disadvantaged, underrepresented students and the constraints imposed by Proposition 209 and recent court decisions interpreting its application. Frank discussion or research about what kinds of policies are called for at this moment of political backlash and rapid demographic transformation are often limited by overly cautious interpretations of what is permissible after 209. We are concerned with the continued low eligibility rates for African American, Chicano, and Latino students in particular, and by the fact that our admit rates for African American and Chicano students in the 2004 class were lower than the overall UC rate for

those groups. CAFA recognizes that creating a more diverse student body at UCSC is a complex project that will require action on at least five different levels of university involvement:

- **Increasing eligibility** of students from divergent backgrounds (particularly low-income students, ethnic minorities, first-generation-to-college students, and students from "inner-city" and "rural" areas.
- **Recruiting** more of those students to apply to UCSC.
- **Refining admissions criteria** to realize a more diverse pool of admitted students.
- **Increasing yield** of such students
- **Retaining** students with diverse backgrounds once they enroll at UCSC.

We suggested four possible pilot programs that might be undertaken at reasonable cost in the near future as a means to begin improving campus diversity.

- 1) **Augmented Review** for applicants in the bottom four deciles of California high schools. By reading all files from students in this group, it should be possible under our present or slightly modified implementation of comprehensive review criteria to identify and admit more students with high potential and the ability to contribute significantly to academic life at UCSC.
- 2) **Targeted Counselor Events.** Sponsor small groups of UCSC faculty, students and staff to meet with counselors in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area at schools that have high concentrations of underrepresented and low-income students.
- 3) **Expanded EOP Bridge Program.** Increase the EOP Bridge Program from the current 60 students to 128 students (adding incrementally over a two-three year period).
- 4) **Investment in Individual Students and Their Families.** Begin a pilot project at a local high school and community college in a low-income area to identify first-year, low-income students with academic potential to succeed at university, and groom them for admission to UCSC.

OTHER

The new method of calculating UC eligibility, which takes account of changes in the SAT exam series and a concordance to convert ACT to SAT exam scores, is given at

http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/undergrad_adm/paths_to_adm/freshman/scholarship_reqs.html

The committee welcomed a report by Michelle Handy on the EOP Bridge Program. After their first quarter at UCSC, Bridge students were doing well. Of 54 students enrolled, 2 had withdrawn for personal reasons and 50 were in good standing with an average GPA of 2.9. This represented a considerable improvement over the 2003-04 cohort's first-quarter performance.

In response to the Academic Senate's charge, CAFA plans to examine students' characteristics presented at the time of application and likelihood of retention and graduation at various rates.

This Fall Christian plaintiffs sued the University of California and BOARS over its refusal to approve certain religion-based high-school courses in admissions decisions. See

http://www.berkeley.edu/news/berkeleyan/2005/10/05_textbooks.shtml

Respectfully submitted,

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