Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid  
Annual Report, 2009-10

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

The Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) overall had productive year working collaboratively with the Offices of Admissions and of Financial Aid. The subcommittee structure for CAFA, formed in the previous year (2008-09), continued to work well and allowed CAFA to fulfill its ever expanding agenda even as it has grown more complex. Experimental changes in the weights applied to selection criteria for admissions (for the 2009-10 academic year) coincided with a small improvement in diversity among the cohort of admitted students, and an incremental improvement in SAT scores. The increase in the diversity of admittees translated to a similar improvement among the cadre of students who declared an intention to enroll at UCSC, but the mean SAT score for this latter group decreased (by an amount larger than the increase in SAT score among students admitted). The GPAs of both groups (admittees and those who intended to enroll) remained constant.

I. Data on Admissions and Financial Aid
A. Admissions

For fall 2010, UCSC received a total of 34,796 applications, an increase of 1,922 applications (5.8%) over fall 2009. The frosh applications totaled 27,659, a slight rise of 410 applications (1.5%) from fall 2009. A substantial increase in applications occurred with transfer applications as the campus received 6,963 applications compared to 5,624 applications the previous year, an increase of 1,339 applicants (23.8%). Our campus also received 58 applications from students seeking their second baccalaureate degree, as well as 120 applications from international students participating in the UC Education Abroad Program.

UCSC admitted 17,844 frosh for fall 2010, a slight increase over the previous year of 354 students (2%). The admission rate of frosh, however, remained relatively constant with fall 2009, 64.5% vs. 64.2%. For the first time in the history of UC/UCSC, seven of the nine campuses offered denied frosh an opportunity to be placed on a waiting list. Only UC Los Angeles and UC Merced did not participate in a UC wait list. UCSC offered 1,184 frosh the opportunity to be placed on the wait list, with just over half accepting that opportunity. Due to the number of frosh that accepted their offer of admission with a “Statement of Intent to Register” (SIRed frosh), none of the waitlisted frosh were offered admission to the campus. The number of SIRed frosh increased for fall 2010 following a decrease in fall 2009. UCSC received 3,853 SIRs for fall 2010 compared to 3,648 in fall 2009 (21.6% SIR rate vs. 20.8% last year). The unanticipated increase of frosh SIRs will result in an incoming class of 3,275 – 3,325 new frosh (in fall 2009 UCSC enrolled 3,229 frosh).

Among frosh SIRs, there were again only modest shifts in planned majors and fields. For fall 2010, the percents of frosh SIRs for majors in the arts was 5.8%, in engineering 8.7%, in
humanities 8.4%, in physical and biological sciences 26.6%, and in social sciences 23.4%. Approximately 27% of the SIRed frosh were undecided/undeclared majors.

UCSC admitted 4,801 transfers for fall 2010, an increase of 937 students (24.2%). The enrollment target for transfer students was increased for fall 2010 at every UC campus, thus competition between UC campuses vying for the same admitted students would increase. The increase in admitted transfer students was projected to yield between 12-15% more transfer SIRs, but instead the campus experienced an increase of 40% in transfer SIRs. The total SIR count for transfers was 1,471, an all-time high for UCSC. The transfer SIRs will result in an incoming class of an estimated 1,250 transfer students (in fall 2009 UCSC enrolled 882 transfer students). With the increase in fall transfer SIRs, UCSC will meet its annual transfer enrollment goal with its fall cohort, resulting in UCSC not accepting any new transfer applicants in winter quarter 2011 (in winter 2010 UCSC enrolled 354 transfers).

B. Financial Aid and Scholarships

The UC undergraduate student Education Finance Model requires students who qualify for need-based gift assistance to pay the first $9,000 of their need from loan and/or work resources. Gift assistance is offered to help pay the estimated total cost (about $27,600 for a student living on campus in 2009-10) remaining after subtracting the family contribution calculated from FAFSA data and the $9,000 loan/work expectation. Many students and families struggle with meeting this expectation.

In 2009-10 the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office administered more than $183 million in financial assistance for undergraduate students. Approximately 56 percent of undergraduate students received more than $100 million in grant and scholarship assistance from university, state, federal and private sources - 33 percent received Federal Pell Grants - a need-based grant program for low income students.

Campus scholarship support averaged around $2,100 for the 9% of undergraduates who received it. Scholarships help students offset the $9,000 loan/work expectation. Scholarship programs provided $2.8 million for 1,347 undergraduate students:

124  Regents Scholars received $760,000
23   Karl S. Pister Leadership Opportunity Award Scholars received $207,000
1,200 Undergraduates received other campus scholarships totaling $1.9 million

Demand for scholarship support far exceeds available funds. It is vital that scholarship fund raising be a major component of the comprehensive capital campaign the campus is undertaking to ensure that UC Santa Cruz is an affordable as well as attractive alternative for undergraduate students who aspire to attend.

C. Appeals

There were 368 frosh appeals submitted for fall 2010 with 77 offered fall admission and 291 denied. Among the 77, all but 14 met our selection criteria, and those individuals had
unique circumstances that met the CAFA appeals guideline, meaning they were compelling students who were within 100-200 points of our comprehensive review score cutoff. Three cases were granted Admission by Exception due to international academic records, but they were excellent students that embody the spirit of the selection criteria and Admission by Exception (A by E) guidelines. There were a total of 99 transfer appeals submitted for fall 2010 with 33 being offered fall admission and 66 denied. All 33 successful appeals met the transfer selection criteria and there were no A by E cases in that cohort.

II. Work of CAFA in 2008-2009
A. Campus Connections

The Committee interfaced with several campus and Senate processes, with mixed results.

1. Web Presence.

CAFA was represented on the Web Council by Chair Cooperstein. Reasonable progress appeared to be made at improving the quality of our web presence, which is essential to the success of our admissions process: it is estimated that access through the web accounts for the vast majority of information prospective students and parents of students obtain about the campus.

2. Student Affairs

Perhaps the greatest impact of CAFA on Student Affairs occurred with regard to the Bridge Program. Because of policy changes made in how A by E students would be selected, CAFA decided participation in the Bridge program would be voluntary rather than required for admission for A by E EOP students. This was decided by CAFA since their academic profiles would be equivalent to that of ordinarily selected students: the only difference being that the A by E students were missing something that caused them to be ineligible. The decision to make Bridge voluntary rather than obligatory was claimed by Student Affairs to create some additional work for their staff, and memos originating within the Student Affairs Division expressed resentment. There are no indications, however, that the change was anything but positive for the students.

CAFA had met twice, in fall 2009 and spring 2010, with the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Felicia McGinty with mixed success. At the fall meeting, the Vice Chancellor did not follow protocol and brought along AVC for Student Life Alma Sifuentes and Executive Director of Retention Services Pablo Reguerin, who were neither invited nor requested to attend. CAFA was frustrated since much of the consultation was taken up with descriptions of the SA Division’s functions and financial challenges. This left little time for VC McGinty to answer the committee’s questions.

The second consultation, though shorter, was somewhat more productive: CAFA and VC McGinty exchanged views on the Bridge Program in light of the CAFA decision. She informed us of those actions being taken to continue Bridge as a volunteer program.
B. Committee Configuration

Much of the work CAFA occurred between meetings in the subcommittees established during 2008-09. Originally there were five subcommittees: Appeals, Data, Honors, Publications, and Web Presence. In the current year CAFA merged Publications and Web Presence into a single Communications subcommittee.

1. Appeals subcommittee

The Appeals subcommittee consisted of CAFA Members Chris Edwards (chair), Amy Weaver, Associate Vice Chancellor Michelle Wittingham, and Associate Director Michael McCawley. The subcommittee met multiple times over the year to consider several agenda items.

The subcommittee reviewed the established policies on admission appeals and cancellations. Noting the overlapping but distinct conditions under which first-year and transfer students file appeals, separate guidelines for the Office of Admission for these two student groups were crafted. Overall, the subcommittee improved the guidelines, clarifying language and updating content. For example, it eliminated the route to admission through the UCSC-UCM Shared Experience Option, which no longer exists.

The Appeals Subcommittee created an Appeals Process Flowchart to clarify and illustrate the appropriate sequence of events during an appeal. This document is posted on the CAFA website (http://senate.ucsc.edu/cafa/) and it is anticipated that it will help both students considering filing an appeal as well as non-Admissions-related University employees who may receive appeals directly from students.

The subcommittee emphasized that appeals must be submitted by the applicant to the Office of Admissions, and clarified that all appeals directed by the applicant to other offices within UCSC must be forwarded to the Office of Admissions for review. It was further decided that in very rare cases that are brought to CAFA by the Office of Admissions, a final appeal may be considered by the CAFA chair.

The subcommittee encouraged CAFA to direct the Office of Admissions to enforce an admitted student’s "Conditions of Admission," up to and including the cancellation of a student’s admission, yet allowing some tolerance for exceptions to the "Conditions of Admission," both for first-year and transfer students.

Together, these documents and positions contribute to admissions policy and procedures that ensure fair and consistent treatment of applicants in any given year and between years.

2. Communications subcommittee

The Communications subcommittee, which consisted of CAFA Members Faye Crosby (chair), Alexander De Arana-Lemich (SUA), Bruce Cooperstein, Juan Poblete, Associate
Director Michael McCawley and Publications Coordinator Jennifer Wright, continued to work. Jennifer coordinated all publications and submitted them to the CAFA for review in a timely manner. The “documents” submitted and reviewed by the subcommittee included: eslug, a web-based newsletter for counselors and friends of UCSC; "Major Pages" (web-based pages which have replaced print documents) on the different majors available at UCSC; and guides for frosh and transfer applicants. Subcommittee members as well as Michael and Michelle were very thorough in their reviews and made significant comments about the quality and likely effectiveness of the materials, and Jennifer was very responsive to the feedback. As a consequence of the attention paid to how we represent ourselves, our publications and other communications are now quite professional. We take pride in having set the groundwork for an effective and efficient system.

CAFA was also represented on the Web Council by the Chair, Bruce Cooperstein and, indirectly, through the participation of AVC Michelle Whittingham, who is a regular guest of CAFA.

3. Comprehensive Review Data subcommittee

This year, it was CAFA’s intention to first decide on a philosophy regarding admission criteria and then in the light of this philosophy gather the requisite data. Because CAFA was not able to establish the philosophical foundations by the end of the year, the data subcommittee was not given the go-ahead to collect data. Therefore, the subcommittee has less to report than previous years. The subcommittee included CAFA Members Donald Wittman (chair), Faye Crosby, Robert Singleton (SUA), Associate Director Michael McCawley and Analyst Mary Masters.

Last year CAFA decided to reduce weights given in reader scores. At the time, there was some concern about the negative effects of this change. This year was the first year that the new scoring rules were used for admission. A birds’ eye view of those admitted suggests that it is possible to raise diversity and test and GPA scores simultaneously, while still indicating ample room for improvement.

Looking at admits, all ethnicities except white/Caucasian (which went down from 41% to 38.1%) and Chinese/Chinese American (which went down from 11.8% to 10.6%), increased in their percentage representation. These two categories are regarded as "over-represented" in the UC system. The percentage of first generation students who were admitted also increased from 33.9% to 34.6%. Again looking at all admits, SAT total went up slightly from 1,797.4 to 1,802.8 and GPA went from 3.76 to 3.77.

Looking at SIRs, the results are mixed. Except for whites (who fell from 42.5% to 37%), the percentage of every identified ethnicity went up from 2009. First generation went up from 37.4% to 43.2% and the percentage of those from low API schools went from 15.3% to 20%. The average SAT total decreased from 1717.3 to 1700.3 (from approximately the 74th percentile to the 72nd percentile).
There are a number of possible reasons for the reduced SAT scores for SIRS along with the increased SAT scores for those who were admitted. We have 210 more SIRS this year than last year and other factors being equal the larger the sample, the lower the scores (but then again, we had 500 more admits, but higher scores). It may also be the case that the decrease in test scores, despite greater selectivity, is a consequence of a greater percentage of first generation students among our SIRS. This would be consistent with national research that reflects this trend for students coming from first generation and low income families. However, without further information, our best guess is that UCSC is losing out in competition with the other University of California campuses as some students with higher GPAs and test scores choose to go elsewhere. One of the major challenges facing CAFA is to improve our “brand” among high achieving prospective students.

4. Honors and Merit Scholarships subcommittee

This subcommittee, as its name indicates, had two main areas of work in AY 2009 - 2010. Subcommittee members included CAFA Members Amy Weaver (chair, NSTF), Andy Fisher, Raoul Birnbaum (W & S) and Robert Singleton (SUA).

1. Merit Scholarships. Beginning in Fall Quarter, the subcommittee members began a review of past essay questions used to select Regents Scholars and to award other merit-based scholarships on campus. The committee members believed that the essay topics of recent years were overly broad and did not produce compelling responses. In consultation with admissions and financial aid staff, the subcommittee prepared new essay topics for the Regents Scholars competition. CAFA, as a full committee, approved the new topics and in late Winter Quarter evaluated the submitted essays. As a result of this process, 75 admitted frosh were offered Regent Scholarships and our yield was 12. In addition, for admitted frosh who submitted essays but were not offered Regents Scholarships, we offered 201 Campus Merit Scholarships. Of these, we yielded 21. Four CAFA members, including one member of the Honors subcommittee, participated in a weekend morning reception and informational meeting for admitted Regents Scholars and their families.

2. Honors. As part of CAFA’s on-going interest in developing an Honors program at UCSC, the committee met with VP/DUE Ladusaw in Spring Quarter, with specific discussion about issues of attracting and retaining high-achieving students, and the role of honors programs in this regard at other UC campuses. As a direct result of this meeting, CAFA proposed forming a joint subcommittee with CEP to actively explore the feasibility of establishing an undergraduate honors program at UCSC.

III. Issues for the near future

There are at least two admissions policy issues that CAFA will need to address in the near future.
1. UC Frosh Admissions Changes

Beginning with the class of 2012, the UC system will no longer require subject tests, will expand the percentage of students guaranteed UC admission due to class rank within their high school, and also will expand the percentage of students who may be admitted to a UC without falling into what is currently defined as “Admission by Exception”. The removal of the subject test and the availability of additional class rank and other data will require either significant adjustment to the current point system or a new system of evaluation. UCSC must make a decision this year about how it will select from this larger cohort of students. In particular, we will need to decide if we will evaluate students “holistically” as is now done at UCB and UCLA, or continue with a method that assigns relative weights and points of particular characteristics we desire in our students or we may develop some kind of hybrid of both systems.

2. Transfer Admissions Issues

For the last several years, UC Santa Cruz has sought to increase the number of enrolled transfer students. Selection of transfer applicants has focused on criteria mainly related to minimum UC eligibility:

1. Overall grade point average in all UC-transferable course work (2.40 for a CA resident / 2.80 for a non-CA resident)
2. Completion of a specific 7-course pattern of UC-transferable courses that includes two English composition courses and one mathematics course
3. Completion of a minimum 60 semester units (90 quarter units)

Using these selection criteria has worked well for several years, but adjustments are in order given fall 2010 results. For fall 2010, the selection criteria yielded a 40% increase in transfer SIRs, far exceeding the desired target. This will necessitate UCSC making adjustments for the 2011-12 admissions cycle, which may include the following:

1. Raise the minimum GPA used for selection
2. Require all units to be completed by the end of the spring term

CAFA has also been approached by the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences to consider completion of lower-division major preparatory course work as a selection criterion. This has also been a topic for consideration by the Committee on Educational Policy and will need further investigation and discussion in the year ahead.

3. Data Issues

Several science faculty have complained to the chair of this committee that the academic preparation of newly enrolled students has declined. This sense has occurred despite the fact that UCSC has become far more selective in the past several years, from accepting four of every five perspective Frosh student who applied in for Fall 2006 to slightly over three of every five students for Fall 2010 with a concomitant increase in both GPA and SAT scores.
over this period. This impression needs to be tested rigorously by studying the performance of students during their first year at UCSC overall as well as in introductory math and science courses.

4. Honors Programs

Consistent with our efforts to improve our “brand” and attract more academically accomplished students, CAFA is investigating whether honors programs have a role to play in making this campus more desirable, perhaps in collaboration with the Committee on Educational Policy.

IV Acknowledgements and Appreciation

This has been a productive year owing to the quality of the membership, the SUA representatives, the collaboration the committee enjoys with the Enrollment Management unit and not the least the support received from Senate staff. Over the course of the year five different SUA students participated with the committee, among them two in particular who had better attendance records than some committee members. Their points of view on the many issues that came before the committee gave us grounding on the effects our decisions have on those we are bound to serve – the hardworking and academically successful students of California.

As always, CAFA enjoyed a close working relationship with the Enrollment Management unit, in particular the Offices of Admission and of Financial Aid. The committee could not function without the sage advice and extensive collaboration of the Associate Vice Chancellor Michelle Whittingham, Director Ann Draper, and Associate Director Michael McCawley. Finally, CAFA is blessed with staffing by Pamela Edwards. Pam kept the committee (and Chair) focused on its work and (along with Michael McCawley) provided institutional memory that helped guide the committee’s deliberations and decisions.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMITTEE ON ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID

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September 27, 2010