

## **COMMITTEE ON ADMISSIONS AND FINANCIAL AID**

### **Annual Report 2023-24**

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) continued its annual work evaluating the outcomes of the prior admissions cycle and adapting to changing circumstances in shaping the class entering in fall 2023 and planning ahead for new modes of application evaluation for the 2024 cohort. As always, we worked closely with Undergraduate Education (UE), Enrollment Management (EM), and Undergraduate Admissions (UA), whose energy and creativity provided us with both information and options for setting policy.

#### **I. WORK OF CAFA IN 2023-24**

##### **A. Changes in policy and practice**

###### ***1. Frosh Selection and Merit Award Principles.***

CAFA made revisions to the document describing CAFA's overarching goals, selection principles, and processes. In particular, several edits were made to the section describing CAFA's broad goals, including a list of collective interests that we serve. To this list, CAFA added an important but previously unmentioned goal: "the enrollment of students who are likely to be successful at UC Santa Cruz." Other edits were organizational or clarifying. For example, "UCSC's institutional interest in our continuing success as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI)" was previously a separate item in the list, which could be interpreted as suggesting that HSI and AANAPISI status are goals in themselves. CAFA's edits put these goals (and others) in context by emphasizing their role in supporting our collective interest in having a student body representative of the state.

###### ***2. Holistic Review Scoring Rubric.***

For the past three admissions cycles, the rubric used by readers to score applicants required that a separate score be assigned to each of 7 categories: the applicant's "academic success within context" based on their high school transcript, and six "non-cognitive variables" based on their activities and personal insight questions. This rubric was developed by CAFA in spring 2022 after the UC adopted a test-free admissions policy and was first implemented for the fall 2022 cohort. This year, CAFA and the Data Sub-Committee used data on students admitted under this rubric to assess the value of the disaggregated scoring for achieving CAFA's admissions goals. CAFA worked closely with Undergraduate Admissions to understand some drawbacks of the approach, including the inability to consider specific academic achievements in the context of extracurricular activities and also to contextualize their extracurricular achievements. The multiple score approach is also time consuming. After extensive deliberations, CAFA decided to reinstate a more holistic scoring rubric. Specifically:

- a) Rather than assigning separate scores for academic achievement within context, application reviewers will weigh all factors and combine them into one holistic score. These factors include academic achievement within the applicant's local context as

well as involvement in leadership and extracurricular activities and/or demonstrated resilience in overcoming challenging personal circumstances.

- b) Readers will continue to assign a special talents score indicating whether an applicant has special talents that makes them particularly suited to a field such as music, arts, athletics, and so on.
- c) To reduce the impact of idiosyncratic differences across readers, CAFA requested an increase in the number of applications that receive two human reads. The number will be determined in collaboration with Undergraduate Admissions, and if possible, second reads will target marginal applications for which small differences in reader scoring is most likely to be decisive. This process will be analyzed and refined during the next cycle.

### ***3. Selection.***

CAFA's data sub-committee also performed analysis to better understand the role of the student success index in the selection process. In recent years, the selection process has employed an index constructed by Institutional Research, Analytics, & Planning Support (IRAPS) using machine learning to predict student success. This index incorporated multiple measures of applicant's academic achievement within the context of their high schools. CAFA determined that it would be preferable in the future to construct two separate indices: one with the contextual metrics and one using only absolute (not contextual) metrics. This will give CAFA more flexibility in selection and help to identify applicants who may have good records within their local context but may nevertheless require extra support to succeed at UC Santa Cruz.

## **B. Subcommittee Efforts**

### ***1. Appeals Subcommittee***

The Appeals Subcommittee continued to meet occasionally throughout the year to consider cases of cancellations of admission offers from the prior cycle and provide input into the appeals policy. The appeals policy was modified this year to ensure students who have completed their matriculation term have one more level of due process. This includes a referral to Campus Conduct in the event the Cancellation Appeals Review Committee denies an appeal of such a student.

### ***2. Data Subcommittee***

The Data Subcommittee (DSC) met regularly with staff from Enrollment Management, Undergraduate Admissions, and IRAPS in order to design selection criteria for each stage of admission offers (early, regular, and waitlist). This was the third year that IRAPS participated regularly in the work of the DSC, and they have provided extremely valuable support as CAFA continued to study and modify its screening procedures to adapt to changes in the admissions environment.

This year, the need to limit enrollments to the Computer Science (CS) majors again necessitated the use of separate selection criteria for CS applicants. The work of the DSC benefited greatly from the participation of a CAFA member representing CS.

The DSC presented several admission scenarios – including alternative options for CS majors – to the full CAFA for selection and approval.

### **C. Correspondence**

CAFA’s correspondence is summarized here very briefly; the interested reader should consult the formal correspondence for a more nuanced and more accurate representation.

#### ***1. Systemwide Senate Review of Area H/Ethnic Studies.***

CAFA participated in a second systemwide review of proposed Senate Regulation 424.A.3 (Area H). The committee was not unanimous in any opinion but instead expressed a wide range of levels of support and concerns. Some members viewed Ethnic Studies as an important requirement, on par with the current A-G requirements; others viewed it as inessential to students’ preparation for UC. Members also raised concerns about the costs and unintended consequences of a new requirement, especially for under-resourced schools. Some argued that a “non-additive” Area H requirement risks eroding the quality of existing A-G courses – particularly in Areas C (Mathematics) and D (Science) – and questioned the capacity of UCOP’s articulation staff to ensure quality across A-G courses when modified to satisfy Area H.

#### ***2. Computer Science and Engineering Enrollment Management Plan.***

CAFA expressed its full support for the proposal by Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) to further limit undergraduate enrollments in the CS majors as a short-run solution to the problems posed by the tremendous growth in demand for CSE’s undergraduate programs. However, CAFA believes that those problems would be better addressed in the long-run by: (1) shifting resources to majors that are in high demand, as well as majors that have high teaching loads due to service courses; (2) considering enrollment management at the division or department level as a normal process rather than an anomaly.

#### ***3. Classroom Modalities.***

CAFA provided several comments on the preliminary report of UCSC’s Classrooms and Modalities Advisory Committee.

## **II. ISSUES FOR THE NEAR FUTURE**

### **A. Frosh Selection and Merit Award Principles.**

CAFA should update the “Process” section of this document to ensure consistency with the recent revisions to the *Holistic Review Scoring Rubric* (described above).

### **B. Area H/Ethnic Studies and Area C/Data Science**

Over the past three years, CAFA has played an active role in discussions regarding two proposals related to the A-G course requirements that determine eligibility for admission to a UC: (1) Area H, (2) Area C.

#### ***1. Area H***

As noted above, CAFA participated in a second systemwide review of proposed Senate Regulation 424.A.3 (Area H/Ethnic Studies). The final determination will be made by the

Board of Regents. Approval of Area H would have implications for CAFA’s work, including the possibility that many non-resident applicants and some California applicants may not have had access to Area H-approved Ethnic Studies courses. CAFA should maintain awareness of developments through updates from Enrollment Management, Undergraduate Admissions, and the faculty Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) representative.

## **2. Area C**

In fall of 2023, a Workgroup on Mathematics (Area C) Preparation was convened by BOARS to review the criteria for advanced mathematics courses to validate advanced algebra (Algebra II/Mathematics III). The workgroup was formed in response to widespread concerns, voiced by STEM faculty and campus admissions committees, that a growing number of courses in data science and statistics had been approved by UCOP as “advanced math” – and therefore able to “validate” advanced algebra – despite covering little to none of the required content. In June 2024, BOARS issued policy guidance following the workgroup’s recommendations, which include an end to the practice of allowing courses in statistics and data science to validate advanced algebra. CAFA should maintain awareness of developments regarding implementation of the recommended changes.

## **C. Admissions and Enrollment Management by Major**

CAFA continued to discuss the challenges posed by ongoing trends in applicant demand that continue to widen the gap between the distribution of prospective students and the allocation of resources across majors, departments and divisions. CAFA met with stakeholders including Humanities Divisional Leadership who shared their concerns about declining enrollments in humanities and also heard from others about the desire to maintain intellectual diversity and sufficient enrollment to support a wide variety of offerings. At the same time, CAFA shared its insights on the risks of failing to allocate more resources to majors that are in high demand – which include risks to our campus rankings, student success, and future enrollments. CAFA also learned through discussions with Undergraduate Admissions staff that UC Santa Cruz is the only UC campus that does not manage admissions separately by major or division beyond Computer Science.

CAFA should continue to encourage campus-wide discussions on alternatives to the impaction process (see “*Computer Science and Engineering Enrollment Management Plan*” above) – in order to improve enrollment management across divisions and majors. CAFA should support and collaborate with Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Admissions in their efforts to collect data that could inform changes to current practice. Consistent with CAFA’s comments on the *Computer Science and Engineering Enrollment Management Plan*, CAFA should strive to support a range of strategies that will help to align enrollment with what the campus offers – while working to increase capacity to match applicant demand for the longer term.

## **D. International Student Conversion Rate**

After four years of steady decline in international student enrollments, this year’s Statement of Intent to Register’s (SIR’s) were up to roughly what they were in fall 2020. The increase

was due largely to the use of greater flexibility in the application of Compare Favorably, allowing us to admit a larger number of international applicants rather than using the waitlist. However, an unusually large number of these students qualified for California residency upon enrollment, with the “conversion rate” from admission international status to international NRT status falling to only 65% in 2024 (from 93% in 2019). As Enrollment Management seeks to understand the factors contributing to this pattern, CAFA should maintain awareness of the issues and consider how they may impact the admissions process for non-resident applicants.

### **III. Admissions Fall 2024 and Winter 2025 Cohorts and Financial Aid for Aid Year 2023-2024**

#### **A. Admissions<sup>1</sup>**

A brief summary of UC Santa Cruz admissions outcome data provided by the Division of Undergraduate Education’s Office of Enrollment Management is outlined below. Admissions is dynamic, and data, such as residency or enrollment estimates, may change.

UC Santa Cruz received 83,819 fall 2024 applications. Frosh applications totaled 71,696 (CA = 57,501, out of state = 7,782, and international = 6,413) and transfer applications totaled 12,123 (CA = 11,133, out of state = 392, and international = 598). As with last year, the campus was open for winter transfer applications in selected majors. The campus opened again for winter 2025, transfer students only. The campus received 518 applications for winter 2025 as of August 2, 2024; last winter there were 452 on the same date. The campus relies heavily on this pool to maximize opportunities to achieve the state mandate to enroll one new California transfer student for every two new California first-year students, commonly referred to as 2:1. The Jack Baskin School of Engineering and in the Division of Physical and Biological Sciences continue to open many majors for winter.

UC Santa Cruz admitted 47,307 frosh for fall 2024 & winter 2025, including 35,729 California, 6,335 out of state and 5,243 international. The frosh admission rate was 66.0%. The average high school GPA of admitted frosh was 4.01 (on a 4.4 weighted scale), same as fall 2023. Waitlist strategies were utilized to manage enrollment outcomes within an ever-changing environment. The established Computer Science capacity constraints were met. The aforementioned frosh admit number includes 301 alternate offers for winter 2025 to ensure maximum access and to address capacity constraints.

UC Santa Cruz admitted 7,807 lower division and upper division transfer students, including 7,339 California, 105 out of state and 363 international. The admission rate for all transfers was 64.4%. The total number of admits increased by 7.7% and California admits increased by 8.6% from last year. In an effort to maximize transfer access for students meeting the UC Regulation 476, all advanced standing pathways (lower and upper division) were opened. Lower division freshman level applicants who met freshman standing requirements and demonstrated ability to be successful were admitted. Lower division sophomore transfer applicants with fewer than 60 credits met freshman standing

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<sup>1</sup> Data from UCSC Data Warehouse (InfoView- AIS-Daily) and IRAPS Internal Admissions Dashboard and SIR & Melt Tracking Dashboards. Counts are gross final numbers.

requirements and completed math, English, two breadth areas and started major preparation, if required, were admitted, unless they were proposed computer science majors. Lower division sophomore transfer applicants with more than 60 credits who met the same course requirements and (where applicable) major preparation requirements as upper division transfer students, but had fewer than 90 units for transfer, were admitted. All upper division transfers who met major UC requirements and major preparation, if needed, were admitted, with the exception of computer science, which is impacted. Eligible students not admitted to computer science or their screening major due to lack of major preparation, were offered their alternate major or a non-screening major.

First-year fall 2024 Statements of Intent to Register (SIRs) total 5,566, including 4,880 California, 331 out of state and 355 international students. This reflects the SIR deadline extension to May 15th, 2024, due to the FAFSA delay, which is mentioned in the financial aid section below. California SIRs from students identifying as African American reached 5.2%, increasing from 4.8% in fall 2023; Hispanic/ Latino reached 30.3%, increasing from 28.4% in fall 2023. American Indian/ Alaskan Native reached 0.9%, same as fall 2023. First-year Winter 2025 SIRs (from fall 2024 alternate offers) total 36, all of whom are international students.

Transfer SIRs total 1,591, including 1,541 California, 14 out of state and 36 international students. California SIRs from students identifying as African American reached 5.5%, slightly decreasing from 5.8% in fall 2023; Hispanic/ Latino reached 30.0%, increasing from 28.3% in fall 2023; American Indian/ Alaskan Native reached 1.0%, slightly decreasing from 1.4% in fall 2023. Continued close collaboration among Admissions, EM, UE, CAFA, CEP, programs and the disciplinary divisions helped to maximize transfer admission offers to qualified transfer applicants. UC Santa Cruz expects to fall short of 2:1 this year, currently estimated at 2.8:1 for the academic year, compared to 3.4:1 last year.

## **B. Financial Aid and Scholarships**

In 2023-24, the Division of Undergraduate Education's Financial Aid and Scholarships Office provided support to 13,537 undergraduate students (77% of undergraduate population) and 1,968 graduate students (99.6% of graduate population). The types of aid provided included grants, scholarships, fellowships, loans and/or work-study assistance.

### ***1. Award Program Updates***

At a federal level, the primary impact to students remains with the Federal HEERF funding. After 3 separate rounds of funding since March 2021 (CARES, CRRSAA, and ARP), the campus has received a total of \$44,692,560 for direct distribution to students as grant aid. As of June 2024, the campus has disbursed \$44,692,560 (100%) of the funds to a total population of 13,506 undergraduate and graduate students.

At a state and institutional level, there have been many new programs introduced or implemented over the past calendar year or in the coming year.

### ***2. Federal Policy Updates***

**FAFSA Simplification:** The 2024-25 federal financial aid application and need analysis experienced the most significant changes in at least twenty-five years, largely as a result of the FAFSA Simplification Act.

- The application itself is changed, which introduced outreach and administrative challenges for colleges and universities, including a shortened filing period in its first year from January 1st. to March 2nd.
- The first preliminary awards were delayed until May 2nd. Prior to this, a new aid estimator was launched to provide students and families as much information as possible until preliminary awards could be made.
- Removal of the number of family members in college from the eligibility calculation.
- The possibility for an SAI (Student Aid Index formerly known as Expected Family contribution (EFC)) to be a negative number, with a minimum SAI of -\$1,500 instead of zero.
- Key issues:
- Looking ahead to 2025-26 - Federal Student Aid bulletins have indicated the rollout will again be delayed.

### ***3. University Policy Updates***

**Tuition Stability Plan:** In July of 2021, the Board of Regents approved a multi-year tuition plan that includes different tuition levels by cohort. The entering cohort for Fall 2023 will be the third cohort with this tuition plan.

**Debt Free UC:** UC rolled out a model providing a debt free path for a subset of students in 2022-23 as a first step toward the Governor’s goal of every undergraduate debt free by 2030, both through UC and State financial aid programs. (See MCS 2.0 below.) In 2023-24 phase two of this program will provide a debt free path to all new California students with a \$0 Expected family Contribution (EFC) and continuing students who were debt free in the prior year. The estimated investment of \$38M is expected to benefit nearly 15,000 UC students who will have a loan and/or work expectation (self-help) of \$7,900.

**Native American Opportunity Plan:** Starting in fall 2022, the University of California provided \$2.3M in financial aid to 211 students to ensure that in-state-systemwide mandatory tuition and fees are fully covered for California residents who are members of federally recognized Native American, American Indian and Alaska native Tribes.

**Residence Determination Process Improvement:** UCOP is continuing to work with campuses to implement an earlier residence determination process, letting students know before they need to accept an offer of admission if they are residents for tuition purposes.

### ***4. State Policy Updates***

The State of California has many expanded and new programs:

**Middle Class Scholarship (MCS) 2.0:** The Middle Class Scholarship Program is being expanded significantly.

- MCS funding for the 2021-222 academic year was \$38M program serving 11,700 UC students
- The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) estimated the program funding will grow to a \$248M program serving 94,374 UC students in 2023-24.
- As of June 2023 UCSC had paid \$12,914,760 in MCS awards for the 22-23 academic year to 6,635 students. Final figures are pending reconciliation in Sep 2023.
- Each award requires file exchanges with CSAC.
- Provides awards without regard to EFC, which significantly complicates coordination with federal student aid rules.

**Other New or Expanded State Financial Aid Programs:**

- NEW: Community College Cal Grant Entitlement Program
- NEW: One-time \$15M in State emergency grants
- NEW: Dreamer Service Incentive Grant
- NEW: Augmented Cal Grants for student parents and former foster youth
- EXPANDED: Augmented MCS for former foster youth
- EXPANDED: Golden State Teachers Grant Program

**B. Current Financial Aid Funding Model and Data**

The UC Education Finance Model (EFM), which uses approximately 33% return-to-aid (RTA) from tuition and fees to support low income students, continues to be closely reviewed by the system-wide EFM committee. This model will be changing with cohort tuition, with subsequent increases to tuition levels having a 45% RTA. The University of California Office of the President (UCOP) EFM committee meets quarterly regarding issues that affect the determination of the Cost-of-Attendance and the cross-campus allocation of aid funds.

When tuition and campus fees are combined with other elements of the student budget, such as housing/dining and health care, the average cost for new UC Santa Cruz CA resident students living on campus in 2023-24 will be \$41,283, the 4th highest in the system. Non-residents will have an additional \$32,574 tuition charges, bringing the non-resident on-campus budget to \$73,857. Under EFM, 2023-24 UC Santa Cruz undergraduates who qualify for need-based assistance must pay approximately the first \$12,450 of their need from loan and/or work resources. Debt Free UC eligible students will have to pay approximately \$7,900 from loan and/or work resources. After subtracting the loan/work expectation and the family contribution (from FAFSA/DREAM App data), grant aid can help pay the remainder of the total estimated total cost.

The Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan guarantees that students from families with incomes under \$80,000 will receive enough gift aid (from all sources) to pay UC tuition and fees. Virtually all students in this category already receive enough gift aid to meet this commitment. However, under the Plan some students who would not normally receive gift aid (due to high asset equity) receive gift aid.



In 2022-23 the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office administered \$298 million in financial assistance to about 77% of our undergraduates, as compared to \$295 million / 77% in 2021-22. (See table)

<b>2022-23 Source of Aid</b>	<b>Percent of Undergraduates</b>	<b>Aid Distributed</b>	<b>Average Award</b>
Gift Aid (all sources)	63%	\$ 222,573,237	\$ 20,308
UCSC Scholarships*	14%	\$10,096,464	\$ 3,999
Federal Pell Grants*	34%	\$ 32,934,876	\$ 5,614
Student/Parent Loans	33%	\$64,463,921	\$11,096
Federal Work-Study	4%	\$ 1,517,557	\$ 2,156
MCS	37%	\$12,914,760	\$2,003
Cal Grant	35%	74,575,621	\$12,357
* Included in gift aid			

Of the UC Santa Cruz students receiving bachelor’s degrees in 2021-22, 43% of those who originally enrolled as first-year students borrowed student loans while attending. Those students have an average debt of \$20,895. However, the debt can be as high as \$57,500 on an individual basis, which is the federal cumulative maximum amount an undergraduate student may borrow. Nationally, 62% of seniors graduating in 2019 had student loan debt, with an average of \$20,191 per borrower (<https://ticas.org/our-work/student-debt/>). National Data for students graduating in 2020-2021 and 2021-22 is not yet available.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education calculates cohort default rates for loans by campus. The national 3-Year average was 2.3% for 2019 (per Dept. of Ed.). The rate for the campus has been exceptionally low in recent years.

<b>UCSC Year</b>	<b>3-Year Draft Default Rate</b>	<b>3-Year Official Default Rate</b>
2017	2.9%	2.9%
2018	2.9%	2.9%
2019	1.3%	1.3%

Campus undergraduate scholarship programs are administered by various campus departments as well as by the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office. Listed below are data for major scholarship programs administered by the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office:

<b>2022-23 Scholarship Program</b>	<b>Recipients</b>	<b>Amount Received</b>	<b>Average Award</b>
Regents Scholarships	176	\$ 836,714	\$4,754
Campus Merit Scholarships	167	\$ 315,381	\$1,889
Pister Leadership Opportunity Awards	25	\$ 174,890	\$6,996

While issues relating to financial aid are also in CAFA’s purview, most issues are governed by state and federal law and Regental policy, so there is seldom any issue that comes before the committee, and there was none in this cycle. The Office of the President maintains numerous reports regarding student financial support on the following website:

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter>

Respectfully submitted,

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