PRESIDENT ROBERT C. DYNES

RE: Assembly’s Recommendation for Adjustments to the University of California Freshman Eligibility Requirements

Dear Bob:

As you know, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) in response to the California Postsecondary Education Commission’s (CPEC) “Eligibility Study of 2003 California Public High School Graduates,” proposed adjustments to the University’s Freshman eligibility requirements. After systemwide and campus Academic Senate discussions of the matter over the past few months, including a preliminary review at the May 12 meeting of the Academic Assembly, the Academic Council at its June 23 meeting endorsed the BOARS recommendation and forwarded it on to the Assembly for its consideration. The Assembly endorsed the recommended adjustments to the freshman eligibility requirements at its Special Meeting, today, June 30, 2004.

I have enclosed the report and a brief 2-page summary that you may wish to send to the Regents along with the report. Assembly’s report also has been placed on the academic Senate website at http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/assembly/jun2004/EligReportAssembly1.pdf.

The Academic Assembly requests that you recommend that The Regents adopt the Academic Senate’s proposed changes in eligibility requirements for freshman admission to the University of California and plan for implementation as approved by the Assembly.

Cordially,

Lawrence Pitts, Chair
Academic Senate

Encl.: 1
Copy: Academic Assembly
**Academic Senate Proposed Revisions to UC Eligibility**

The Academic Senate of the University of California is proposing revisions to UC’s freshman eligibility criteria. These revisions are intended to keep UC’s requirements aligned with the California Master Plan for Higher Education provision that UC offer eligibility to the top 12.5 percent of California’s graduating public high school students.

The faculty’s Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), Academic Council, and Representative Assembly of the Academic Senate have adopted the proposal described below. The proposal is designed to emphasize high academic achievement, keep UC aligned with the Master Plan, avoid a disproportionate impact on any single group, and avoid precipitous changes for future UC applicants.

**What eligibility is**

“Eligibility” refers to the basic academic requirements needed for admission to the UC system. UC’s *statewide* freshman eligibility criteria include: (1) completion of the “a-g” pattern of college-preparatory courses in high school; (2) the grade point average (GPA) achieved in those courses during the tenth and eleventh grades; and (3) scores on standardized tests, including the SAT I or ACT plus three SAT II subject tests. An “Eligibility Index” defines the combination of these grades and test scores required for UC eligibility. Students also can become UC-eligible by being in the top 4 percent of the class *in their own school*, based on their grades in the a-g courses; this process is known as “Eligibility in the Local Context” (ELC).

Historically, achieving eligibility has meant a guaranteed spot at one of UC’s campuses, though not necessarily the student’s campus of choice. Campuses select their incoming students from among the eligible applicants, using a process called “comprehensive review” which considers multiple indicators, both quantitative and qualitative, of academic and personal achievement.

**Need for revisions**

Every few years, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) conducts a study to assess where UC stands in relation to the 12.5 percent Master Plan target. In May 2004, CPEC issued a new report estimating that, in the class of 2003, 14.4 percent of graduating seniors had achieved UC’s eligibility requirements, up from 11.1 percent in 1996.

After CPEC eligibility reports are issued, UC’s faculty proposes adjustments to bring the University’s criteria back into line with the Master Plan target. The University believes that all students in the current eligibility pool are highly qualified and would benefit from a UC education; at the same time, UC is obliged to conform its practices to current state policy.

**The faculty proposal**

Several months ago, in anticipation of the CPEC report, BOARS began reviewing the University’s eligibility criteria and developing principles to guide the adjustment of those criteria. As a result, the Senate has made the following proposal:

1. **Ensure GPA is calculated to reflect performance in all a-g courses** in the 10th and 11th grades. (For students who take more than the minimum number of required a-g courses, the University’s current official method of calculating GPA for eligibility purposes reflects only the *best* combination of grades a student achieved in a given subject. However, students are advised to estimate their own GPA using all a-g courses taken; campuses use all a-g courses taken when they calculate GPA for purposes of selection; and ELC students already are evaluated for eligibility using all a-g courses taken. This proposal to reflect performance in all a-g courses for purposes of eligibility brings greater consistency to UC’s practices.)

2. **Require ELC students to complete UC’s course and testing requirements in order to be considered eligible.** (Students who are notified that they are in the top 4 percent of their school currently are required to complete the...
statewide course and test requirements before they enroll at UC. The Academic Senate proposal would not consider them eligible until they do so. This would not change requirements for ELC students, but only the timing of when they become officially eligible.)

3. Increase minimum GPA required for UC eligibility from 2.8 to 3.1. (This change to 3.1 would not take effect for 2 years. This new GPA might be slightly different from 3.1 and would be determined only after analysis of results from the new standardized tests.)

4. Finally, adjust the Eligibility Index as needed to bring UC’s eligibility rate to 12.5 percent. (This means that, once the above adjustments are taken into consideration, the “sliding scale” of grades and test scores required for UC eligibility would be adjusted upward as much or as little as necessary in order to achieve the 12.5 percent target eligibility rate.)

The Senate also recommends that further research be conducted into the potential effects of expanding the ELC (4 percent) program to some larger percentage, given the academic quality and breadth of student representation the program fosters.

What the faculty considered
BOARS reviewed a variety of scenarios for adjusting eligibility before settling on the current proposal. The faculty were guided first and foremost by a desire to continue admitting an entering class of high academic accomplishment, and one that includes high-achieving students from all parts of the state and all walks of life.

The Senate proposal relies principally on adjustments in GPA to achieve the Master Plan eligibility level, rather than increasing the minimum test score requirement. This is because simulations showed that adjustments to GPA were the most effective way to increase the expected academic performance of students at UC and had the least negative impact on populations that are underserved at UC, including educationally disadvantaged students and underrepresented minorities.

Two-step implementation timeline
The Senate proposes to make process-oriented adjustments (#1 and #2 above) quickly, and these adjustments are estimated to bring UC’s eligibility level to roughly 13 percent. The other changes (#3 and #4 above) would take effect later, both to provide adequate notice to students and schools of the increased minimum GPA requirement and to reflect the fact that new standardized tests will be introduced in 2006, and UC’s Eligibility Index should reflect those new tests. The proposal is:

**Fall 2005 entering class:** Changes in calculation of GPA and determination of ELC eligibility take effect.

**Fall 2007 entering class:** Increase in minimum GPA takes effect, and Eligibility Index is adjusted to complete the movement back to the 12.5 percent target, based on student performance information from the new tests taking effect in 2006.

For additional information please refer to the Academic Senate website:

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC SENATE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
JUNE 30, 2004

IN RESPONSE TO THE CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION’S ELIGIBILITY STUDY OF 2003 CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education, the University of California establishes its freshman eligibility standards such that the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of the graduating public high school class will be deemed UC-eligible each year. These eligibility criteria determine who can be admitted to the UC system as a whole. Selection for enrollment on an individual campus is based on additional criteria and an evaluation system known as comprehensive review. Changes to eligibility criteria do not affect either campus-level selection or the comprehensive review policy.

The actual percentage of UC-eligible applicants fluctuates from year to year, and the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) conducts periodic studies to estimate the percentage of students who meet University eligibility criteria in a specific year. CPEC’s recent University Eligibility Study for the Class of 2003 indicates that 14.4 percent of California public high school graduates are achieving UC eligibility. In response to this finding, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) and the Academic Assembly propose a series of changes to the University's eligibility criteria to ensure that the eligibility rate remains near the Master Plan target of 12.5 percent. These recommendations are based on a set of principles regarding eligibility criteria developed by BOARS, and adopted unanimously by the Academic Assembly on May 12, 2004. The following changes in eligibility proposed by BOARS and adopted by Academic Assembly on June 30, 2004 focus on preserving high academic achievement and likely success at UC, while also maintaining access for high-achieving students from a breadth of backgrounds.

Students currently have three paths to gain eligibility for admission to UC: Eligibility in the Statewide Context, Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC), and Eligibility by Examination Alone. UC’s eligibility criteria rely on five measures of academic preparation: completion of the “a-g” required course pattern that also is used by the California State University; the grade point average (GPA) achieved in the “a-g” courses taken during the tenth and eleventh grades; scores on standardized tests; UC’s Eligibility Index (a sliding scale that allows applicants to balance higher grades with lower test scores, and vice versa, to achieve eligibility); and a student’s ranking within his or her high school class, based on UC-computed GPA in “a-g” courses. BOARS simulated a range of changes in each of these eligibility programs and criteria and looked at the effects of each.
Overall, these simulations showed that changes in the minimum GPA required of students were effective in increasing the academic quality of the eligibility pool and the expected academic performance of students enrolled at UC. Raising the GPA also had the least negative impact on populations that already are underserved at UC (e.g., students from schools with high concentrations of low-income, first-generation college students and students from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in the current UC eligibility pool).

In developing its recommendations, BOARS considered the factors above as well as a number of others, including:

- the desire to maintain and/or increase the clarity and simplicity of UC eligibility requirements;
- the need to identify changes that can be effected quickly with relatively less disruption for students already in high school;
- the likely impacts of changes to UC’s admissions test requirements already approved for implementation in Fall 2006.

Based on all of these factors, the Academic Senate recommends that the following changes to UC freshman eligibility requirements be implemented in a phased plan over the next three years.

1. The GPA calculation for statewide eligibility should be changed so that a student's GPA reflects his or her performance in all "a-g" courses completed in the tenth and eleventh grades. Since this change was made for ELC-eligible students two years ago, this recommendation provides greater consistency between these two paths to eligibility.

2. The ELC program should be revised to:
   a) require that, to achieve final UC eligibility, graduates identified as ELC at the beginning of their senior year complete UC’s course and testing requirements by the end of their senior year (also consistent with statewide eligibility); and
   b) increase the minimum GPA required from 2.8 to 3.1, consistent with the change for statewide eligibility (#3 below).

3. The minimum high school GPA required for UC Eligibility in the Statewide Context and for ELC should be increased from 2.8 to 3.1. This recommended GPA of 3.1 may ultimately be slightly different depending on the outcome of studies that will be available for the entering class of 2006 done after the adoption of the new ACT/SAT I tests.

4. The Eligibility Index and/or other factors for students Eligible in the Statewide Context should be adjusted as necessary to bring UC’s overall eligibility rate to 12.5 percent, given all of the above changes.

Recognizing the success of the current ELC program, and to ensure broad access to UC for high achieving students, the Academic Senate also recommends that BOARS conduct a study of the effects of increasing the percentage of graduates from each California high school who are identified as eligible.
With regard to timing, the Academic Senate also recommends a three-year plan that is designed to (1) bring eligibility rates substantially into compliance with the statewide target within the first year; (2) provide adequate notice to students regarding significant changes such as the increase in minimum GPA; and (3) allow final adjustments to the Eligibility Index or other factors to be made based on the best data available regarding scores from the new admission tests, which may change significantly beginning with the class entering in 2006.

Under this proposal, the changes described above would be phased in as follows:

- **Students Entering in Fall 2005**: Adjustments to calculation of the GPA for students Eligible in the Statewide Context (#1 above) and course and test requirements for students identified as ELC (#2a above) would be put in place. These changes are projected to bring UC’s eligibility rate from 14.4 percent to 13 percent. BOARS and the Academic Assembly support early implementation of these changes because they provide immediate advantages in returning the size of the pool closer to the 12.5 percent target and increasing the clarity and consistency of UC requirements.

- **Students Entering in Fall 2007**: Increase to 3.1 the minimum GPA for both statewide eligibility (#3 above) and ELC students (#2b above). Making these changes effective for students entering Fall 2007 provides time for UC to inform students of the changes at the beginning of their sophomore year in high school. Based on data currently available from the CPEC Eligibility Study, these changes would bring the size of the eligibility pool to 12.7 percent. The Eligibility Index would also be adjusted as needed to bring UC’s eligibility rate to 12.5 percent. In Fall 2006, UC’s new admission test policy, which uses the new versions of the ACT/SAT I tests that first will become available in 2005 and changes the required pattern and weighting of SAT II subject examinations, will become effective. At that time, students will be required to take the revised ACT/SAT I examination as well as two SAT II subject examinations in different “a-g” subjects. Because this already-approved modification of the testing requirements doubles the choice which students have regarding which subject exams to take, BOARS currently has insufficient data to model accurately the effects of this new admission test policy. Deferring implementation of a new Index until 2007 will allow UC to use new data on student performance on the new pattern of required examinations and more accurately determine the Eligibility Index needed to reach the Master Plan target. It is also possible that, based on these new data, BOARS could recommend other, minor, adjustments in the GPA as well.
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ACADEMIC SENATE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA FRESHMAN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

JUNE 30, 2004

IN RESPONSE TO THE CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION’S ELIGIBILITY STUDY OF 2003 CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

I. BACKGROUND

The University of California Board of Regents has delegated, subject to its approval, the authority to determine the University’s admissions requirements to the Academic Senate, which in turn acts on proposals from its Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS). The University of California sets standards for freshman admission to the UC system through its freshman eligibility requirements. Historically, the University’s eligibility requirements have played a number of important roles:

- They set a clear standard for California high school students regarding the level of preparation required to attend the University of California.

- They ensure that admitted students have attained a high level of academic preparation and a strong likelihood of success at UC.

- They send a clear message to high schools about the curricular offerings they must provide for their graduates to succeed in postsecondary education.

UC’s eligibility requirements have served to identify this top 12.5 percent of California public high school graduates, who are eligible under the Master Plan to attend the University. The California Master Plan for Higher Education of 1960 allocates high school graduates to the various segments of higher education in the following manner: the community college system accepts any high school graduate or person over eighteen years of age who applies; and the California State University (CSU) draws from the top one-third and the University of California from the top one-eighth (12.5 percent) of public high school graduates. These Master Plan criteria help to maintain a balanced proportion of students that attend each higher education segment and to ensure that students are admitted into the most appropriate institutions for their level of academic preparation. The Master Plan also authorizes the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) to conduct periodic studies to estimate the proportion of California public high school graduates who meet the eligibility requirements of the UC and the CSU system. Typically, after release of an eligibility study, BOARS studies the eligibility data and conducts additional analyses for a period of months or even years prior to recommending changes. For example, following the 1996 CPEC study, which was released in 1997, BOARS developed a series of recommendations for changes to the eligibility requirements that were brought by the Senate to The Regents two years later, in November 1999, and implemented for the class entering in Fall 2001.
This year, particularly because of the fiscal crisis that has affected state funding for enrollment, the Academic Senate has acted to propose changes more quickly. In May 2004, CPEC published its most recent study, which found that 14.4 percent of California public high school graduates were UC-eligible.\(^1\) This result was consistent with internal analyses conducted by the Office of the President in 2003. Thus, in anticipation of CPEC’s findings, BOARS began discussing options for reducing the size of the eligibility pool in the Fall of 2003. The specific recommendations in this report were developed during a series of intensive meetings in April through June 2004 and adopted by the Academic Assembly on June 30, 2004, to be implemented in a three-year phased plan, beginning with the Fall 2005 admission cycle (which begins in November 2004).

II. PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE ACADEMIC SENATE’S DELIBERATIONS ON ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

BOARS’ first step in approaching the question of potential changes to the eligibility requirements was to develop a set of principles to guide its deliberations. BOARS assumed that primary importance should be assigned, as it has been in the past, to quantitative criteria that correlate with academic success at the University. In addition, eligibility criteria should be clear and understandable to the public and provide a stable goal for high schools and students to pursue. BOARS recognizes that the University’s eligibility criteria motivate students to achieve the necessary academic preparation for college, and high schools to offer rigorous courses.

Some eligibility factors are currently in flux. In particular, changes to the University’s admission test requirements proposed by the Academic Senate in 2002 and adopted by The Regents in July 2003 will become effective for applicants applying in November 2005 for admission in Fall 2006. At that time, the content of the examinations, the pattern of examinations required, and the weighting of different components of the examination requirement relative to one another will all change. These changes, as well as the absence of data on how California high school graduates will perform on the new examinations, complicate the task of analyzing and recommending changes in eligibility requirements.

BOARS also noted that grades and test scores are imperfect and incomplete measures of student achievement and potential. The development nationwide of other measures that can assess the depth and breadth of students' knowledge, as well as other qualities that may correlate with academic success at the University of California, is on-going. The Academic Senate will continue to monitor actively this work and look for opportunities that new measures may provide to improve the usefulness and validity of UC’s eligibility criteria.

At a time like this, when more than 12.5 percent of high school graduates are meeting UC’s criteria, many excellent students must be displaced from the pool simply in order to return to the Master Plan target of 12.5 percent. The Academic Senate believes that these displaced students

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are fully qualified and would benefit from a UC education. Therefore, the cutoff at 12.5 percent is, to some extent, an arbitrary one with which we must abide.

In March 2004, BOARS proposed a set of six principles to serve as the foundation for its work in revising UC’s eligibility requirements. These principles were subsequently adopted by the Academic Assembly on May 30, 2004.

- **Eligibility Principle #1: Students should be able to determine prior to application whether they have met the criteria for eligibility.** A fundamental strength of UC’s eligibility criteria is that they provide potential students clear direction as to what is required for admission to the UC system. This means that students know before their application whether or not they will be admitted to at least one campus and can plan accordingly. The Academic Senate reaffirmed the importance of simplicity, clarity, and predictability in the eligibility determination. BOARS also discussed the value of the qualitative information students provide in their admission applications and questioned whether such information could be incorporated into eligibility criteria, thus making the eligibility determination both richer and more consistent with the evaluation for admission purposes of student achievement and potential. BOARS concluded that this direction merits further study and will continue to explore these issues in future years.

- **Eligibility Principle #2: The University of California should be accessible to the best students from every high school in the State.** Despite recent improvements in K-12 schools across the state, California’s high schools continue to face great inequities in resources to meet students’ varying academic needs. Many students with outstanding potential attend schools that struggle to offer the curriculum, teaching quality, and other resources students need to attain UC eligibility. Access to UC is not equitably distributed across all high schools in the state, but rather tends to be dominated by a relatively small number of schools with the greatest resources. BOARS members found that an overall tightening of eligibility requirements exacerbates this uneven access and that this effect should be mitigated to the extent possible, while maintaining the high academic quality of the eligible pool.

- **Eligibility Principle #3: The high school record in “a-g” courses has the greatest predictive validity of success at UC, and therefore should retain the highest importance among the criteria.** Studies\(^2\) of the relationship between different measures of student achievement and student success at UC confirm national data\(^3\) indicate that the strongest indicator of students’ success in college is their record of performance in high school. Grades earned reflect not only students’ mastery of material, but also the discipline,

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work ethic, and sustained performance over time required to do well in college preparatory courses.

• **Eligibility Principle #4:** UC should continue to provide admission paths for students who may be educated in non-traditional schools and programs, and for those who might not meet statewide eligibility. A “bright-line” conceptualization of eligibility benefits students and the state: a student is or is not eligible, based on simple, quantitative academic factors that are easily known and understood. However, such a concept is inherently rigid. Some qualified and talented students do not meet UC’s requirements because of anomalies in their academic backgrounds that do not reflect their potential for success. For example, they may have attended non-traditional schools that are not accredited by mainstream accrediting agencies or do not offer a full array of UC-certified courses. Other students may offer extraordinary talents in some areas but not perform uniformly across all of UC’s eligibility requirements. Historically, the Admission by Exception process has been an important pathway for these students and a valuable complement to standard eligibility. As more families and communities avail themselves of alternatives to the traditional comprehensive high school, this path is more important than ever. The Academic Senate affirms the value of access paths like Admission by Exception and BOARS will shortly issue a series of guidelines to assist campuses in making effective use of this path.

• **Eligibility Principle #5:** BOARS should monitor statewide high school examinations and other tests that might be considered in the future for helping to determine eligibility to UC. BOARS has carefully studied the role of admission tests in UC’s eligibility criteria. While BOARS concludes that admissions tests provide important information about students’ levels of preparation and serve as an external validation of the GPA, they also note that UC’s requirement places burdens on students in terms of both time and expense. If students are required to take tests that are not administered universally in the public schools, some qualified students may be excluded from the eligibility pool who simply are unaware of, or unable to complete, the test requirements. Several years ago, BOARS evaluated the tests currently administered to California high school students and concluded that these examinations do not currently provide sufficient breadth and rigor to be useful in determining UC eligibility; new SAT I and ACT tests are to be used soon to replace current tests. BOARS also observed that this field is changing rapidly, and will continue to monitor the development of new assessments that are widely administered to high school students and might be incorporated into UC’s eligibility criteria.

• **Eligibility Principle #6:** The definition of eligibility should be monitored and adjusted on a regular basis to comply with UC admissions goals. Prior to 2003, CPEC had a laborious process of gathering sample transcripts from every high school in the state and manually examining these to determine eligibility rates. The 2003 study incorporated new technology that enables transcripts to be gathered electronically now on at least part of California’s public high school students and to be evaluated by a combination of computer-based and human analysis. While acknowledging that eligibility studies remain time-consuming and expensive even with the new technology, BOARS affirms the value of more regular monitoring and adjustment of eligibility rates, probably every three or four years.
III. CURRENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND OPTIONS FOR CHANGE

A. Current Eligibility Requirements

The University of California currently provides three paths to freshman eligibility. By far the most common is “Eligibility in the Statewide Context.” Students achieve Eligibility in the Statewide Context by (1) completing the required “a-g” pattern of 15 year-long college preparatory courses in specific subject areas; (2) achieving a minimum GPA of 2.8 in these courses; and (3) taking the ACT/SAT I and three SAT II examinations, in Mathematics, Writing, and a third subject of the applicant’s choice, and achieving scores, that, when combined with the GPA, allow determination of eligibility using UC’s Eligibility Index (a mathematical formula that allows higher grades to compensate for lower test scores and vice versa).4

In addition to Eligibility in the Statewide Context, students can become eligible by two other pathways, “Eligibility in the Local Context” (ELC), or “Eligibility by Examination Alone.” Students achieve ELC by (1) completing by the end of their junior year a specific pattern of at least 11 year-long “a-g” courses that puts them on track to complete the full course requirement in their senior year and (2) achieving a GPA (as calculated by UC) in their “a-g” courses that places them in the top four percent of their high school class.5 Students who achieve Eligibility by Examination Alone do so by earning very high scores on the examinations UC requires for admission—regardless of whether they have completed the “a-g” pattern or achieved UC’s minimum GPA. ELC and Eligibility by Examination Alone are complementary to Eligibility in the Statewide Context. The statewide context relies on a balance of grades and test scores; ELC makes eligible students with high GPAs, regardless of test scores; and Eligibility by Examination Alone makes eligible those with high test scores, regardless of courses and grades.

Data from the 2003 CPEC Eligibility Study confirm that most students (92.5 percent of all eligible graduates) achieve eligibility through the statewide path. Of all eligible public high school graduates, 6.3 percent are ELC-eligible only and 1.3 percent achieve eligibility by examination alone. In addition, there is substantial overlap among the three paths. For example, 57.6 percent of eligible graduates qualify for both statewide eligibility and ELC, and 16.2 percent of eligible graduates qualify by all three paths.

B. Components of Eligibility and Options for Change

This summary of UC eligibility requirements indicates that UC relies on five measures of academic preparation:

• completion of the required “a-g” course pattern;

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4 It should be noted that the majority of UC-eligible applicants achieve at levels that place them well above the minimums in the Eligibility Index. For example, more than 75 percent of eligible 2003 applicants from California public schools earned GPAs above 3.5. More than 80 percent had average test scores above 500.

5 It should be noted that UC’s ELC program differs in important ways from “percent plans” operating in other states because it relies on courses in UC-approved college preparatory courses only, because the ranking is done by the University, based on its own calculation of the GPA, and because the percentage of students made eligible from each high school is currently quite low.
• grades earned in these courses;
• scores earned on the required admission tests;
• the combination of grades and test scores embodied in the Eligibility Index; and
• a student’s ranking within his or her high school class, based on UC-computed GPA in “a-g” courses.

Thus, changes to eligibility require changes in any one of the above factors or in some combination of them. BOARS used these factors as “knobs” that can be adjusted, singly or in combination, to recalibrate the size of the eligibility pool. “Turning” each of these “knobs” has different effects in terms of the academic and demographic characteristics of the students remaining in, and eliminated from, the eligibility pool. BOARS considered carefully the advantages and disadvantages, on both educational and policy grounds, of adjusting each of these factors and analyzed multiple simulations using combinations of factors.

BOARS’ fundamental objective when considering options was to find a combination of changes that best served the following goals:

• to make substantial progress in a relatively short period of time toward aligning the size of the eligibility pool with the Master Plan target;
• to recommend new eligibility requirements that are straightforward and relatively simple to understand and that will have minimal disruptive effects on students and schools.
• to ensure that the students remaining in the eligibility pool are those who are academically qualified;
• to ensure that, to the degree possible, students remaining in the eligibility pool reflect roughly the same socioeconomic and demographic mix of students as the current pool and, to the degree possible, to mitigate reduction of numbers of students from educationally underserved backgrounds;

The discussion below summarizes BOARS’ findings with respect to the value and impact of changes to each of the five components of eligibility discussed above.

1. Changes to Course Requirements

The “a-g” course pattern required for eligibility has been adjusted multiple times over the past 20 years to add additional years of required courses in English (1983), mathematics (1986), college preparatory electives (1986), laboratory science (1990), history/social science (1990), and, finally, in 2000, one year of coursework in a new required subject area: visual and performing arts (VPA). With the addition of the VPA requirement, UC’s course requirements are now fully
aligned with those of the CSU system, providing a single, clear college preparatory curriculum for all California students.

Changes to the “a-g” requirements affect many organizations outside UC: not only must high schools reconfigure course offerings to meet the new requirements, but CSU faculty and administrators must also be consulted to ensure that proposed changes meet their objectives as well. Because students need time to plan for and complete additional courses, changes to the course requirements also require longer implementation times. Furthermore, because most graduates who meet UC criteria in other areas complete well above the minimum number of required courses, changes in this requirement must be substantial in order to have any significant impact on the size of the pool. These factors led the Academic Senate to conclude that changes in the “a-g” course pattern are neither desirable nor necessary at this time.

2. Changes to the GPA Requirement

a) Minimum Required GPA. The Academic Senate's eligibility principles stress the importance of grades earned in college preparatory courses as the single best measure of academic achievement and preparation. In examining data on eligible and enrolled students, BOARS found that a modest rise in the minimum GPA required of students would increase the average academic performance of students enrolled at UC. In addition, changes to the eligibility criteria that rely primarily on the GPA (rather than test scores) are less likely to affect negatively those students who are the first in their families to attend college and those from underserved schools. For example, students from the bottom fifth of California public high schools (as measured by a school's Academic Performance Index) would constitute 16 percent of the pool of eliminated students if test scores alone were used to reduce the eligibility rate to 12.5 percent; in contrast, these students constitute 12 percent of the pool of eliminated students if GPA alone is used to achieve the reduction. (In both cases, these students’ share of the pool of students remaining eligible would decline from its current 7.2 percent.)

Based on these factors, BOARS identified increasing the minimum GPA as a desirable way of changing eligibility requirements and analyzed scenarios that, in combination with other changes, raised the minimum GPA required for statewide eligibility from 2.8 to 3.0, 3.1, or 3.2. BOARS did not examine increases above 3.2 because this was seen as too drastic a change to make at one time and rejected increases that were expressed more finely than one-tenth of a grade point (e.g., 3.05, 3.18) as a means of keeping eligibility requirements simpler.

b) Method of Calculating the GPA for Statewide Eligibility. BOARS also noted an inconsistency in the way that the GPA is calculated for statewide, versus ELC, eligibility. Earlier in UC’s history, most campuses had capacity to admit all UC-eligible applicants and admissions officers often worked to identify “borderline” students who could become eligible. Also during this time, a large proportion of applicants reported the minimum number of “a-g” courses. Admissions officers noted that, when students took more than the minimum number of courses, the GPA could sometimes be improved using a calculation based on only the minimum

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6 The attached table shows the different impacts of changes to the eligibility requirements that rely primarily on each of the factors discussed here, and gives a quantitative sense of the impacts that different changes have on various academic and demographic characteristics of students.
number of courses required. (This occurred because courses in which students received grades of A or B could be substituted for those in which they received a B or C.) This method of calculating the GPA was adopted for purposes of determining statewide eligibility because it was the most advantageous for students and ensured that those who took higher numbers of courses were not “penalized” for that in the GPA calculation. The students who benefited from this practice were primarily those who took more than the minimum number of courses but received some grades of C or lower.

This method of calculating the GPA, known as “best of pattern,” has remained the University’s official method of calculating the GPA for statewide eligibility. Roughly two years ago, BOARS examined a number of cases involving ELC students where the “best of pattern” calculation led to clear anomalies in the ranking of students from the same school: students who had earned grades of only A and B were ranked lower than some who had earned C’s, because the “best of pattern” calculation eliminated those lower grades. Based on this evidence, BOARS eliminated the “best of pattern” GPA calculation for students being considered for ELC and instead recommended the use of a GPA calculation based on all grades earned in “a-g” courses taken in tenth and eleventh grades. In addition, most campuses use the simpler calculation based on all grades when calculating the GPA to select students for enrollment on a specific campus.

In its discussions of the GPA requirement, BOARS concluded that the “best of pattern” GPA should be eliminated for statewide eligibility. This change increases the quality of the eligibility pool and, in particular reduces the number of students with inconsistent records that include grades of C or D. In addition, it clarifies and simplifies UC’s practices and increases consistency between statewide and ELC eligibility, and between eligibility requirements and campus admissions processes. Because most students are unaware that this alternative method for calculating the GPA exists, changing it will not have a significant impact on their planning. (BOARS also noted that in terms of impact, this change overlaps substantially with a change to the minimum GPA—that is, both serve to remove from the pool students with marginal GPAs.)

3. Changes to the Testing Requirement

BOARS recently studied the testing requirement in depth and in 2002 proposed substantial changes that were approved by The Regents in 2003 and will take effect for the class entering UC in Fall 2006 (these students complete their tenth grade in June 2004). The new testing policy has three important components:

- It substitutes for the current ACT/SAT I new examinations being developed by the testing agencies now, in response to UC’s concerns. These tests will be administered for

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7 The GPA calculation for ELC also differs slightly from that used for Statewide Eligibility in that in order to be able to rank students from within the same school—where the differences among GPAs earned by top students may be very fine—the ELC calculation includes the “bonus” points for all honors-level classes taken in 10th and 11th grade. For purposes of Statewide Eligibility, the GPA calculation caps these additional points at 8, in recognition that students from different schools have differing levels of access to such courses.

8 See Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, “The Use of Admission Tests by the University of California,” University of California Office of the President, January 2001, and Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, “Proposal for the Use of Supplemental Subject Matter Tests in the UC Admissions Process,” University of California Office of the President, September 2001, available at:  http://www.ucop.edu./senate/reports
the first time in Winter 2005 and data on student performance on them will be available shortly thereafter.

- It requires applicants to take two, rather than one, SAT II subject examinations in subject areas of their choice. Applicants are currently required to take the SAT II examinations in Writing and Mathematics, but this requirement will be dropped because the content of these examinations will now be covered in the new ACT/SAT I. Because most California high school students currently have no strong incentive to take more than one SAT II examination in a field other than Writing or Mathematics, UC has few data with which to predict student behavior on the second SAT II examination.

- It changes the weighting of the examinations in the Eligibility Index. Currently, SAT II examinations are weighted twice as heavily in the Index as the components of the SAT I examination. Under the new policy, the three components of the ACT/SAT I (Mathematics, Verbal, Writing) will each be weighted the same as scores from the two required SAT II examinations. Again because UC does not have data on performance on the new ACT/SAT I nor on the second SAT II examination, the effects of this change cannot be modeled accurately at this time.

UC eligibility requirements currently specify a minimum average test score across the five components of the test requirement that is equivalent to 390 (out of 800) for students with GPAs of 3.5 or higher. In addition, the Eligibility by Examination Alone path specifies minimum test scores that enable a student to become eligible regardless of coursework and grades. As a means to reduce the size of the eligibility pool, BOARS considered both raising the average minimum test score for students Eligible in the Statewide Context and eliminating or modifying the Eligibility by Examination Alone path.

BOARS rejected these options for several reasons. First, test scores have a weaker correlation with student performance than do grades and BOARS concluded that adjusting the minimum GPA was a sounder academic strategy. Second, very few eligible students actually submit scores near the minimum, so it would have to be raised substantially in order to have an appreciable effect on the size of the pool. Similarly, although the Eligibility by Examination Alone path has limitations, it also affects very few students and BOARS concluded that it provides a useful alternative for students from nontraditional academic backgrounds, as well as an appropriate complement to Eligibility in the Statewide Context and Eligibility in the Local Context. Finally, the currently available CPEC data on 2003 graduates who achieved UC eligibility do not allow UC accurately to model changes to the test score component after the 2006 changes are put into effect. As part of its review of the implementation of the new testing requirement, BOARS has already committed to conducting in-depth analyses of the results of the new tests once they become available. The Academic Senate concluded that the soundest course would be to defer any changes to the test score requirement until better data are available with which to identify the magnitude and effects of possible changes.
4. Changes to the Eligibility Index

As the diagram below illustrates, UC’s requirements for Eligibility in the Statewide Context can be conceived of as defining an area on a graph that plots students’ average test scores on the vertical axis and their GPA in “a-g” courses on the horizontal axis. Eligible students are found in the upper right (northeast) part of this graph. The entire graph encompasses only 34% of California’s public high school graduates, i.e. those who take the full “a-g” pattern. UC’s minimum GPA requirement (currently 2.8) defines the vertical boundary of this area and the minimum average test score (currently 390 out of 800) required in the Eligibility Index defines the horizontal boundary.

The diagonal stair-stepped line shown in the graph above corresponds to UC’s Eligibility Index—the combination of grades and test scores required of students who have GPAs below 3.5 or average test scores below 580. The last time this Index was adjusted (in 2000), this line was set to define a combination of test scores and grades that together predict that students have at least a 70 percent chance of achieving a C average in their first year at UC. For students seeking Eligibility in the Statewide Context, raising the Index—the equivalent to shifting the diagonal line on this graph toward the upper right (northeast)—increases the average test score required for those with GPAs between 2.8 and 3.5 and increases the GPA required of those with average test scores below 580. This has the effect of increasing to more than 70 percent the chances that students whose grades and test scores place them at the Index minimum will achieve a C average in their freshman year.
BOARS concluded that raising the Eligibility Index is an academically sound way of reducing the size of the eligibility pool and examined multiple scenarios that rely in part on a change in the Index to decrease the size of the pool. However, BOARS members observed that because the Index includes test scores, modeling it at this time presents all of the challenges described above associated with changes to the test score requirement.

5. Changes to Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC)

The ELC program was put in place in 2001, as a means of increasing the size of UC’s eligibility pool, which, according to the 1996 Eligibility Study, had fallen to 11.1 percent, and of bringing students to UC from a wider range of schools. ELC was expected to increase the size of the pool by approximately 1.4 percent, bringing the total back to the target of 12.5 percent. Student response to ELC has been very positive and three-fourths of the applicants who qualify for ELC also are Eligible in the Statewide Context. While we cannot determine which of these applicants who qualify under both paths are newly eligible students who were stimulated by the ELC program, increased numbers of applications from schools that historically have not sent large numbers of applicants to UC suggests that this aspect of the ELC program has been successful. ELC applicants tend to be very well qualified and some campuses regard ELC status as a positive attribute during comprehensive review. During its deliberations, BOARS considered two different kinds of changes to ELC.

a) Changes to ELC Requirements. The Academic Senate concluded that some changes to the ELC program would help make eligibility requirements both clearer and more consistent.

The first change is to clarify the relationship between test- and course-taking requirements and final eligibility determination for ELC students. At present, ELC students are declared eligible at the beginning of the 12th grade—prior to completion of their senior year courses and before most students complete the full pattern of required tests. ELC-eligible applicants who apply and are admitted must complete the “a-g” requirements and the test pattern before enrollment, consistent with what is expected of all applicants. These requirements are generally enforced through “conditions of admission” students receive with their admission offers and which must be met before they can enroll at UC. However, for purposes of calculating statewide eligibility rates, graduates who were identified as ELC at the end of eleventh grade, but did not complete their “a-g” or test requirements by the end of their senior year, were still counted as eligible. The Academic Senate concluded that the same requirements for course and test completion used to calculate Eligibility in the Statewide Context should also be applied to ELC students, i.e. they become eligible upon completion of all required tests and “a-g” requirements.

The second of these changes is to raise the minimum GPA required of ELC students. BOARS concluded that, in order to maintain consistency of academic quality across the two pools, any increase in minimum GPA (discussed above to bring the size of the eligibility pool closer to 12.5 percent) for students Eligible in the Statewide Context, should also apply to ELC students.

b) Changes to the Percentage of Students From Each School Considered ELC. The final area of potential change to eligibility that BOARS examined was the percentage of students from each high school who are identified as ELC. Early in their deliberations, BOARS members observed that ELC is presently the University’s best available tool for maintaining the academic
quality of the eligibility pool while still achieving the goal expressed in Eligibility Principle #2, i.e. maintaining access for the best students from all high schools in California. For this reason, BOARS examined a series of scenarios that left the ELC percentage at 4 percent or increased it above 4 percent. This analysis showed the effects of increasing the ELC percentage. Increasing the ELC percentage somewhat (e.g. from 4 percent to 5 percent) improves the academic quality of the eligible pool. The GPA of students made newly eligible by such an increase would be 3.85, in contrast to the students who would be eliminated whose GPA would be 3.29. A change from 4 percent to 5 percent would marginally lower the average SAT I from 541 for the pool of eliminated students to 534 for the pool of newly eligible students.

Increasing the ELC percentage increases the percentage of eligible students from low API schools and from schools that enroll large numbers of students whose parents do not have college degrees or who are English language learners. The impact of increasing the ELC percentage from 4 percent to 5 percent on total proportions of students from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups was very small, with slight decreases in the number of eligible African-American students and a slight increase in the eligible Latino student population.

After examining a variety of scenarios, BOARS concluded that additional research is needed on the effects of the ELC program and that changes in the percentage of students from each school who are ELC-eligible should be deferred until this work is complete. However, the positive effect that increasing the ELC percentage has on the quality of the eligible pool, combined with the opportunity it appears to offer for increasing representation from a broad spectrum of schools and communities, argues for a close examination of this issue. BOARS will take up this work in the coming months.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Section III above outlines the considerations and general conclusions that the Academic Senate reached regarding the best way to change UC’s eligibility requirements. The change can be summarized as one that:

- clarifies requirements and makes them more consistent;
- increases predominantly the required GPA to reduce the size of the eligibility pool;
- plans changes to the Eligibility Index (after increasing the minimum GPA) to reach the Master Plan target of 12.5 percent after data are available to model accurately the effects of adopting the new ACT/SAT I tests; and
- supports further investigation of the effects of an increase in the percentage of students from each high school made ELC.

To move from this general approach to a specific proposal, BOARS modeled in greater detail the effects of different combinations of factors that included the following:
• full implementation of all of the changes to the GPA calculation and to ELC described above;

• increases in the minimum GPA to between 3.0 and 3.2; and

• ELC percentages of 4, 5, 6, and 8 percent, combined with changes to the Eligibility Index (modeled imperfectly by assuming the current test requirement) necessary to bring the overall size of the pool to 12.5 percent.

For each scenario, BOARS examined the resulting size of the pool, the academic characteristics of the pool, and the impacts on students from different kinds of schools and a breadth of socio-economic backgrounds.

Based on all of these factors, the Academic Senate recommends the following changes to UC freshman eligibility requirements be implemented in a phased plan over the next three years.

1. The GPA calculation for statewide eligibility be changed so that a student’s GPA reflects his or her performance in all “a-g” courses completed in the tenth and eleventh grades. Since this change was made for ELC-eligible students two years ago, this recommendation provides greater consistency between these two paths to eligibility.

2. The ELC program be revised to:

   a) require that in order to achieve UC eligibility, graduates identified as ELC at the beginning of their senior year complete UC’s course and testing requirements by the end of their senior year consistent with the requirements for statewide eligibility;

   b) increase the minimum GPA required from 2.8 to 3.1, consistent with the change for statewide eligibility (#3 below).

3. The minimum high school GPA required for UC Eligibility in the Statewide Context and for ELC be increased from 2.8 to 3.1. Reducing the size of the pool by increasing the minimum GPA above 3.1 would increase the academic quality of the pool and would have a less negative impact on underserved students and schools when compared with changing only the Eligibility Index or minimum average test score. The Academic Senate concludes that an increase from 2.8 to 3.1 is a significant increase to make at one time and additional increases should not be undertaken at this time. This recommended GPA of 3.1 may ultimately be slightly different depending on the outcome of studies that will be available for the entering class of 2005 done after the adoption of the new SAT I and ACT tests.

4. The Eligibility Index and/or other factors for students Eligible in the Statewide Context be adjusted as necessary to bring UC’s overall eligibility rate to 12.5 percent, given all of the above changes.
Additionally, the Academic Senate recommends that BOARS conduct a study of the effects of increasing the percentage of graduates from each California high school who are identified as Eligible in the Local Context.

**Recommended Timing of Changes.** BOARS and the Academic Senate recommend a three-year plan that is designed to (1) bring eligibility rates substantially into compliance with the statewide target within the first year; (2) provide adequate notice to students regarding significant changes such as the increase in minimum GPA; and (3) allow final adjustments to the Eligibility Index and other factors to be made based on the best data available regarding scores from admission tests, which will change significantly beginning with the class entering in 2006.

Under this proposal, the changes described above would be phased in as follows:

- **Students Entering in Fall 2005:** Adjustments to calculation of the GPA for students Eligible in the Statewide Context (#1 above) and course and test requirements for students identified as ELC (#2a above) would be put in place. These changes are projected to bring UC’s eligibility rate from 14.4 percent to 13 percent. The Academic Senate supports early implementation of these changes because they provide immediate advantages in returning the size of the pool closer to the 12.5 percent target and in increasing the clarity and consistency of UC requirements.

- **Students Entering in Fall 2007:** Increase to 3.1 the minimum GPA for both statewide eligibility (#3 above) and ELC students (#2b above). Making these changes effective for Fall 2007 provides time for UC to inform students of the changes at the beginning of their sophomore year in high school. (Grades earned in the sophomore and junior year are used to calculate the GPA.) Based on data currently available from the CPEC Eligibility Study, these changes would bring the size of the eligibility pool to 12.7 percent.

Also for Fall 2007, the Eligibility Index would be adjusted as needed to bring UC’S eligibility rate to 12.5 percent. In Fall 2006, UC’s new admission test policy, which uses the new versions of the ACT/SAT I that will first become available in 2005 and changes the required pattern and weighting of SAT II subject examinations, becomes effective. At that time, students will be required to take the revised ACT/SAT I examination as well as two SAT II subject examinations in different “a-g” subjects. Because this already approved modification of the testing requirement doubles the choice that students have regarding which subject examinations to take, BOARS currently has insufficient data to model accurately the effects of this new admission test policy.

These proposed changes in UC eligibility were adopted by the Academic Assembly on June 30, 2004 and are now sent to the President with the recommendation that he forward them to the Board of Regents with the request that they adopt the changes as proposed.
## BOARS Recommendation for Achieving a 12.5% University of California Eligibility Rate

### Criteria

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*The current calculation is "best of pattern" – only the best grades earned are used to calculate the GPA when more than the minimum number of courses is presented.

** The Eligibility Index is a combination of grades and test scores, specifically: Index = Test Score Average + (316 x HS GPA).

*** High school GPA is calculated using a-g courses in 10th and 11th grade and includes an extra grade point for up to 4 years (i.e. 8 semesters) of UC-approved honors courses in which a grade of C or higher was earned. (This reflects existing policy.)

**** Projections of test scores and revisions to the eligibility index are speculative due to upcoming changes in test requirements.