

IMPROVING ADMISSIONS COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS

The challenges UC faces in communicating a complex admissions process are distinct:

- **UC is public.** Our audiences expect openness and predictability of admission.
- **UC is a multi-campus system.** Students fill out a single application and each campus uses that same data, but weighs it differently as it chooses its class.
- **UC is highly selective.** Meeting the minimum eligibility requirements doesn't guarantee students will get into their campus of choice – an outcome associated more with private than public institutions.

Factor in the rapid introduction of new admissions policies since 2001 (comprehensive review, ELC and DAP) and families are understandably uncertain about what it takes for students to win admission to their chosen UC campus, and why seemingly comparable applicants get different results.

Our Tasks

1. Answer more clearly and completely two fundamental questions: What does UC look for in a successful applicant? How do campuses choose whom to admit?
2. Clearly convey the values and goals met by UC's selection criteria and processes and why they matter to students.

Our Existing Approach

Currently, UCOP provides prospective students and parents with systemwide information about eligibility requirements, admission and selection policies, financial aid, and how to apply.

Primary audiences: Prospective students, parents and high school and community college counselors (with increasing outreach to teachers, administrators and community organizations – see below)

Vehicles: Print publications (English and Spanish), websites, counselor conferences, immediate outreach, public service announcements, press releases (see attached inventory for detailed list and distribution).

In explaining admissions policy and process, we provide:

- Broad descriptions of the Master Plan and the difference between meeting minimum eligibility requirements and competing at a selective campus
- Lists of criteria used in selecting freshman and transfer students
- Profiles of academic qualifications of applicants and admitted freshmen
- Text descriptions provided by campuses of their selection processes
- Descriptions of each path to UC (statewide eligibility, ELC, DAP, and exam alone)

Although there are no national standards for how institutions communicate details of their admissions processes, a limited UCOP survey of 15 AAU institutions in 2002 found most list the factors considered in admissions on their web pages and provide some numerical guide such as averages or ranges for test scores and grades.

Our Improvements and Changes In Progress

BOARS and UCOP staff have initiated changes this year to (1) improve the clarity, consistency, and reach of systemwide communications and (2) improve the application process itself. They include:

Clarity

- Provide more clarity and prominence in describing the two steps of the admission process: UC determines which applicants are eligible (evaluation against a standard) then from that pool, each campus selects its class (evaluation against each other and against campus-specific goals).
- Reorganize web-based admissions information under one central site (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu>). Tailor paths through the information by user (student, parent, teacher, counselor).
- Reevaluate the freshman profiles to improve display and include more of the academic factors considered in comprehensive review.

Consistency

- Create clear, comparable descriptions of how each campus reviews applications. These will describe the roles of different admission factors, how information is weighed and evaluated and how selectivity impacts decisions. Common language will be used across systemwide and campus vehicles (print and web).
- State and disseminate the goals of comprehensive review more clearly. This should convey the value to students of being part of a vibrant learning community where they will learn as much from their fellow students as they will from class.
- Establish common definitions and ratings for key evaluation elements.

Reach

- Establish more direct communication channels with parents, teachers and community organizations to extend reach of information:
 - Bilingual admissions brochure updated in second year of printing
 - Training held with representatives of faith-based initiatives in using the online application
 - Resource website for teachers to access quick-hit admissions information and handouts is in development
 - Profiles of students and how they financed their UC education launched on web
- Continue ongoing efforts with campuses to emphasize breadth of opportunities within the UC system, and to educate the public more broadly on college choice (strategies for families to find the right match).

Online application

- This year's redesign created a clear, step-by-step path through the application, with tips and computer prompts to reduce student mistakes.
- Students can get immediate notification of which majors are open to them, and whether or not they qualify for fee waiver.
- We created a virtual tour of the application to walk users through each step before they begin. (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions/apptour>)

[Publications Inventory](#)