

Admissions by Exception

Throughout its history, UC's eligibility and admissions criteria have consistently acknowledged the value of maintaining some flexibility to admit students who do not meet the University's strict numerical criteria, but nonetheless demonstrate high potential for academic success and leadership. The 1960 Master Plan called for "freshman admission through special procedures outside the basic requirements of recommending units of high school work or aptitude tests or both (such as specials and exceptions to the rules)" for two percent of freshman admission at both UC and CSU.

The percentage of admissions by exception (then called "special action" admissions) was increased by UC in 1968 to four percent and in 1979 to six percent. By the mid-1980s, UC policy (1984) and practice was to use two-thirds of the six percent (four percent) for "disadvantaged" students — primarily underrepresented minorities but also low income students and those who had experienced educational disadvantage — and the other two percent for adults, veterans, students with special talents, and for other special circumstances such as for students attending non-traditional schools. The 1984 policy also specified a target of four percent special action in transfer admissions.

In the 1989 Master Plan review, UC and CSU were specifically mandated by the legislature to use at least four percent for underrepresented students:

“Beyond the formal definition of regular admission, both segments shall continue to use special admission standards and procedures to enroll at least four percent of each first year class, intending to increase the participation rates of historically underrepresented groups. These students must be assured of adequate support services to facilitate their success, particularly through early outreach and summer bridge programs.”

In 1991, UC amended the 1984 policy to target a percentage of *enrolled* rather than *admitted* students. The new targets were six percent of new enrolled freshmen and four percent of new enrolled transfers (revised to six percent of new enrolled freshmen and six percent of new enrolled transfers in 1996). The language was also revised to say “up to” the target percentages and a phrase was added to the policy to state that “students admitted by exception to eligibility requirements must have a reasonable potential for success at the University.” It retained the provision that up to two-thirds of the six percent (four percent) was for disadvantaged students—defined as “underrepresented minorities or students from low economic or limited educational background.”

In 1996, the Policy on Undergraduate Admissions by Exception was modified to conform to Regents' Resolution SP-1. “Disadvantaged” was redefined as “students from low socio-economic backgrounds or students having experienced limited educational opportunities.” The policy also directed campuses to use the thirteen criteria in the 1996 regular admissions policy for evaluating candidates for Admissions by Exception. It further stated that Admissions by Exception was to “continue to be used systematically to test alternative methods of selecting students for admission.”

In 2002, the legislature's Joint Committee to create a new Master Plan for all of education recommended that CSU and UC “should continue to be authorized to admit up to eight percent and six percent, respectively, of their new undergraduates annually through the use of non-traditional criteria.” However, particularly as demand from regularly eligible applicants has increased, the number and proportion of students admitted by exception have declined. As recently as Fall 1994, roughly six percent of newly enrolled freshmen were admitted by exception. By Fall 2002, that percentage had declined to less than two percent.

Percentage of New Undergraduates Admitted by Exception^a
Fall 1992 to Fall 2002

Regents' policy states: "The proportion of students admitted by exception shall be up to 6% of newly enrolled freshmen and up to 6% of newly enrolled advanced standing students at each campus."

Freshmen									
	UCB	UCD	UCI	UCLA	UCR^b	UCSD	UCSB	UCSC	U-wide
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fall 1992	4.9	5.6	4.7	3.9	5.8	2.7	6.4	9.4	5.2
Fall 1993	4.0	6.4	5.3	4.2	11.0	3.8	8.1	8.3	6.0
Fall 1994	2.9	7.5	5.4	3.4	12.9	3.5	8.4	10.1	6.0
Fall 1995	3.3	6.5	4.0	2.8	10.5	0.3	6.0	11.1	4.9
Fall 1996	5.8	3.7	2.9	2.7	8.4	0.7	5.4	8.3	4.3
Fall 1997	4.7	5.6	2.2	2.7	7.2	0.3	3.9	5.0	3.8
Fall 1998	2.7	5.2	1.5	2.3	3.3	0.2	2.4	4.0	2.7
Fall 1999	2.0	4.7	1.6	2.6	0.6	0.2	1.1	3.5	2.1
Fall 2000	1.0	4.6	2.1	2.8	1.3	0.1	1.4	2.3	2.1
Fall 2001	1.9	3.7	1.5	2.5	2.5	0.1	1.5	3.2	2.1
Fall 2002	1.5	3.1	1.1	3.3	0.9	0.0	1.0	2.9	1.8

Transfers									
	UCB	UCD	UCI	UCLA	UCR^b	UCSD	UCSB	UCSC	U-wide
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fall 1992	1.7	6.7	5.5	8.0	9.7	6.8	4.9	4.1	5.8
Fall 1993	2.0	6.5	3.1	6.6	16.2	5.6	8.4	3.3	6.0
Fall 1994	1.9	4.8	4.0	5.7	10.5	4.4	8.2	4.7	5.2
Fall 1995	2.0	4.9	4.7	3.8	9.1	1.3	5.8	4.1	4.2
Fall 1996	2.5	3.2	2.5	2.2	8.6	0.3	5.7	3.0	3.3
Fall 1997	1.3	3.3	2.0	1.2	6.3	0.5	4.9	3.1	2.6
Fall 1998	1.5	6.5	2.5	2.5	7.4	1.4	5.3	1.9	3.6
Fall 1999	1.1	4.7	3.3	2.0	3.3	0.6	5.4	2.7	2.8
Fall 2000	0.2	6.9	2.1	0.2	4.0	0.7	1.4	1.0	2.1
Fall 2001	1.0	7.1	3.7	2.0	5.3	2.0	3.7	2.8	3.3
Fall 2002	0.8	5.0	2.7	1.7	4.8	2.1	3.0	2.1	2.7

- a. Based on fall term enrollment of all freshmen and transfers.
- b. For several years, UC Riverside had a short-term policy of expanding its admits by exception in a campus-specific outreach program to boost enrollments.

Source: Student Academic Services, “Application Flow Report for New Students by Level and Campus,” and Corporate Student System Longitudinal databases.

POLICY ON UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS BY EXCEPTION

Issued by the Office of the President¹

July 1996

It is the policy of the University of California that:

- (1) It is essential that its campuses have the flexibility to admit a small proportion of students by exception to the eligibility requirements.
- (2) Students admitted by exception to the eligibility requirements must demonstrate a reasonable potential for success at the University.
- (3) The proportion of students admitted by exception shall be up to 6 percent of newly enrolled freshmen and up to 6 percent of newly enrolled advanced standing students at each campus.
- (4) Within the 6 percent designations, up to 4 percent may be drawn from disadvantaged students and up to 2 percent from other students.
- (5) Disadvantaged students shall be defined as students from low socio-economic backgrounds or students having experienced limited educational opportunities.
- (6) The percentages in (3) and (4) above shall be understood as limits within which Chancellors can exercise their initiative to further the goals specified in the University of California Policy on Undergraduate Admissions adopted by The Regents on May 20, 1988 and in Section 9 of SP-1, Policy Ensuring Equal Treatment-- Admissions, endorsed by The Regents on July 21, 1995, subject to the constraints of this policy and of Sections 2 and 3 of SP-1.
- (7) In evaluating the academic and personal background of candidates for admission by exception it is recommended that campuses utilize a combination of the criteria 1 through 13 outlined in the revised Guidelines for Implementation of University Policy on Undergraduate Admissions, issued in July, 1996.
- (8) The Admissions by Exception program continue to be used systematically to test alternative methods of selecting students for admission.

This policy shall be effective with applicants seeking admission for the spring quarter of the 1997-1998 academic year.

¹ Presented for consideration to the Committee on Educational Policy on May 16, 1996.