

# Los Angeles Times

## UC Shows Rebound in Admissions

All qualified California applicants are accepted for fall freshman class. Budget woes last year led to in-state students being turned away.

By Rebecca Trounson, Times Staff Writer

The University of California, marking a recovery from the budget-related reductions of 2004, said Tuesday that it has accepted all academically qualified California applicants for freshman admission this fall and will not require any to attend community college first.

The university has invited 50,017 California high school seniors to enroll for the fall at one or more of its campuses, according to annual freshman admissions figures released Tuesday. The figure, a record, represents a nearly 11% increase from last year but a rise of less than 1% from the last "normal" admissions cycle in 2003, UC officials said.

The state's budget woes prompted UC last year, for the first time in four decades, to turn away qualified in-state students and redirect some to two-year colleges. So on Tuesday, admissions officials spoke with some relief of this year's increases.

"We are very pleased," Susan Wilbur, director of admissions for the UC system, said in a conference call with reporters. "The university is very proud of its historic commitment to be able to accommodate all students who are UC-eligible."

Wilbur called 2005 "a year of good stability" for the university, unlike 2004, when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger required UC to cut freshman enrollment by 3,200 students as part of a long-term funding agreement. Although legislators later restored part of that funding, some students eligible for admission last year were required to attend community college as a condition of being admitted to UC as juniors.

The Legislature will not vote on this year's budget for several months but UC officials said they are confident the system will receive enough money to cover the higher enrollment as called for in the agreement with the governor. The figures released Tuesday, which are admissions offers, not actual enrollments, included invitations to join the first freshman class at UC's newest undergraduate campus. UC Merced, scheduled to open in September, accepted 5,958 out of about 8,000 applicants, for a freshman class expected to number about 800. Because of the campus' fledgling nature, officials at Merced are uncertain how popular the school will be.

Across the university system, admission was marginally easier this year. About 76% of those who applied were offered a slot at one or more campuses, compared with about 73% last year. But UCLA and UC Berkeley, the most competitive campuses, each turned away about three of every four students who applied, officials said.

Systemwide, the average "weighted" GPA of students admitted for the fall was down slightly from last year to 3.79, a figure that includes the extra weight UC gives for honors and Advanced Placement classes at high schools. That figure in 2004 was 3.80; UC officials described the change as insignificant.

Students become eligible for UC admission based on a sliding scale of grade-point averages and scores on standardized entrance exams, including the SAT and SAT II subject tests. Those minimum requirements are aimed at identifying a pool equivalent to the top 12.5% of California

high school seniors. But to gain admission to a particular UC campus, students typically must meet much tougher standards.

At UCLA, offers of freshman admission were sent to about 27% of the more than 42,200 students who applied. UCLA admissions director Vu Tran said the figure appeared to show that the Westwood campus again this year attracted more applications than any other university in the system, or the nation.

"I'm happy that we continue to bring in a very strong freshman class," Tran said. "But we do know that we have to turn away many, many talented and strong students."

The average SAT score for California residents admitted to UCLA this year was 1341, down slightly from 1346 for fall 2004. At UC Berkeley, that average for such students this year was 1354, up from 1350 last year. A perfect SAT score for that group was 1600, though that recently changed to 2400 with the addition of an essay portion.

With the admissions letters now sent, UC campuses are holding events this month to persuade accepted students to enroll. Students have until May 1 to decide.

Across UC's nine undergraduate campuses, Latinos, African Americans and Native Americans together represented 20.6% of California students offered admission this year, up slightly from 20% last year. Systemwide, Latinos constituted 16.9% of those offered freshman admission this year; African Americans, 3.2%; and Native Americans, 0.6%. Asian Americans made up 34.6% and white students 37.7%. At UC Riverside, in a continuing trend, blacks, Latinos and Native Americans were a larger combined percentage — 26.8% — of the admitted freshman class than at any other UC campus.

In contrast with previous years, such underrepresented minorities comprised a somewhat higher proportion of overall admitted students than they did last year at UC Berkeley and UCLA. At both schools, those three groups combined accounted for 16.5% of the students offered entrance this year. But at both campuses, those percentages remained below the levels of 1997, the last year the university was allowed to consider race and ethnicity in its admissions.

UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert J. Birgeneau, who was inaugurated last week, has recently expressed concern about low levels of minority representation on campus and said he does not believe that was what voters intended in 1996 when they approved Proposition 209. That statewide initiative bars the use of affirmative action in public universities and other agencies.



## **UC admits more students for fall 2005**

By MICHELLE LOCKE, Associated Press Writer

Tuesday, April 19, 2005

(04-19) 14:44 PDT Berkeley, Calif. (AP) --

Returning to its long-held tradition of finding a place for all California residents who meet admissions criteria, the University of California has accepted a record 50,000 in-state freshmen for the coming fall.

The numbers represent a 10 percent increase over last year, when state budget cuts forced the rejection of some qualified students from the 10-campus system.

"We are very pleased," Susan Wilbur, UC director of undergraduate admissions, said Tuesday. "The university is very proud of its historic commitment to be able to accommodate all students who are UC-eligible."

Wilbur called 2005 a "year of good stability" following 2004, when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger asked UC to cut enrollment by 3,200 students as part of a long-term compact that promised the university future funding increases in return for making cuts and raising fees.

Lawmakers won't be voting on the state's 2005-06 budget until this summer, but UC officials say they are hopeful they will get the additional money.

The students admitted for the Fall 2005 semester included nearly 6,000 freshmen accepted at UC Merced, which expects to open this fall with an enrollment of 1,000. UC typically admits more students than it can accommodate at individual campuses since not all those admitted will choose to attend.

Numbers were up for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, looking at systemwide aggregate totals. But the number of black and Hispanic students admitted to the top campuses of Berkeley and UCLA was still below levels reached before 1998, when the university still used affirmative action in its admissions.

Looking at systemwide totals, American Indians, blacks and Hispanics — the groups counted as "underrepresented minorities" at UC — comprised 20.6 percent of all students admitted for the fall, a notch up from last year's 20 percent.

At Berkeley, where only 211 black students were admitted last fall — 108 eventually enrolled in a class of more than 3,500 — numbers were up slightly this year. Berkeley admitted 262 black students this year, according to UC figures. Hispanic admissions increased from 880 last year to 1,097.

UCLA admitted 247 black students this fall, compared to 196 last year.

Numbers released by UC are based on information as of April 7 and may differ from individual campus totals, since a small number of admissions decisions are made after that date. Berkeley released totals Tuesday showing the campus has admitted 276 black students and 1,127 Hispanics.

Those numbers were still below 1997, when the campus admitted 562 black students and 1,266 Hispanics.

Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau has promised to boost enrollment of underrepresented minorities. He says he doesn't think the low figures are what voters intended when they passed Proposition 209, the 1996 ballot measure banning consideration of race or gender in public hiring, contracting and education.

Birgeneau said he won't flout Proposition 209, but will try to work within the system to change the admissions picture, including speaking out on the issue.

"This is a problem that has got to get solved, Birgeneau said in a recent meeting with reporters. "We're not meeting our obligation as a public institution."

# San Francisco Chronicle

## Admission of Latinos rises at UC

Trend doesn't extend to blacks

Tanya Schevitz, Chronicle Staff Writer

More Latinos than ever are being accepted to the University of California system but not so for blacks in the pool of students eligible for freshman enrollment this fall, according to figures for California students released Tuesday.

Overall, 50,017 graduating high school students in California have been offered a spot at one of UC's 10 undergraduate campuses. UC admissions officials expect about 30,000 of those to accept and enroll this fall.

While whites and Asian Americans make up the majority, Latinos have seen a significant increase. A total of 8,438 Latino students from California were offered admission, compared with 5,570 in 1997 -- the last year before voters imposed the Proposition 209 ban on affirmative action.

Latinos have continued to see steady gains in the past few years, growing from 7,795 in 2003 -- the last year that is accurate to compare with because of temporary cuts in UC admissions last year due to budget reductions. They now represent 16.8 percent of total admissions, compared with 14.05 percent in 1997.

In contrast, the news is "dire" for African Americans, who remain a tiny fraction of the total number of students admitted, said Rick Callender, president of the San Jose/Silicon Valley branch of the NAACP.

"They need to be represented in the same proportion as they are in California and the United States," Callender said. "The future and hope for us to climb up the corporate ladder and have a better life is pretty dire."

A total of 1,593 black students from California were offered admission to UC, up slightly from 1,503 in 1997 but down from the 1,720 accepted in 2003. They represent only 3.18 percent of the total admissions this year.

Susan Wilbur, UC's director of undergraduate admissions, said Tuesday that the university system continues to make small gains with underrepresented minorities in general.

"UC is very focused on providing access to talented students of all backgrounds," Wilbur said. "At the same time, we are following the law. We are trying to work with our academic preparation programs to make sure we get students the information they need."

Kenny Zepeda, 17, a Latino senior at Mission High School in San Francisco who moved from Guatemala just five years ago, was admitted to UC Berkeley and won a \$30,000 annual scholarship from the campus. He had a 4.16 grade point average and a score of 1,000 (out of 1,600) on the SAT, he said.

When he got a call telling him of his acceptance, he was filled with emotion.

"I thought about everything that I went through and all the work I put in to get that. It was really something important for me," said Zepeda, who lives with his mother, a hotel housekeeper who doesn't speak English. "I always wanted to go to college because I knew that was the only way to get a better life."

At UC's two most selective campuses, UC Berkeley and UCLA, the number of accepted Latinos, African Americans and American Indians still lags noticeably behind the totals of the affirmative action years. According to figures released by the UC Office of the President, 1,097 Latino students from California were admitted to UC Berkeley for fall 2005, making them 12.9 percent of the total. That compares to 1,216 Latino students in 1997, when they were 17 percent of the admissions.

UC's report released Tuesday includes only California students, who make up more than 90 percent of UC admissions. This year, UC Berkeley admitted 262 blacks from California, making them 3.08 percent of the total. That compares with 525 black students in 1997 when they were 7.35 percent of the total. A total of 42 American Indian students were admitted to the freshman class at UC Berkeley in the fall, making them 0.49 percent of the admissions. That compares with 61 admissions in 1997, when they were 0.85 percent of the total. UC Berkeley is working to come up with ways to increase minority enrollment. A five-year slide in the number of African American students stopped this year.

"I'm modestly encouraged," said UC Berkeley's assistant vice chancellor for admissions, Richard Black. "The drop ended and we did admit a few more."

Earlier this month, UC Berkeley's chancellor, Robert Birgeneau, said the university is facing a diversity crisis.

Noting that there were only 108 African American students enrolled in a class of 3,600 freshmen last fall, Birgeneau called for research on refining admissions standards and finding the best ways to create a more multicultural campus. The next hurdle for UC will be getting students from underrepresented groups to accept their admissions offers, Black said. Students have until May 1 to decide, and UC campuses have been busy wooing the students.

Last weekend, UC Berkeley invited students from low-income and poor- performing schools to the campus to attend classes and panels describing the campus experience, Black said.

Wilbur said that this year's admission of 50,017 is a record for California students. The increase is in large part due to a growing population of high school graduates, Wilbur said.

Systemwide, UC accepted 76 out of every 100 students who applied. At UC Berkeley and UCLA, which have higher admissions criteria, only 28 of every 100 applicants were accepted. Many of those rejected by UC Berkeley and UCLA are eligible for UC's other undergraduate campuses.

White students continued to make up the majority of admitted students, growing to 18,844 -- or 37.6 percent -- of those admitted this year, up from 18,640 in 2003. Asian American students also saw an increase in admissions to 17,297 -- or 34.6 percent -- this year up from 16,125 in 2003.

# The Mercury News

**50,000 freshmen admitted by UC**  
FIGURES INCREASE OVER LAST YEAR

By Becky Bartindale

The University of California has admitted a record number of the state's freshmen for fall -- 11 percent more than last year when the campuses turned away eligible students, creating a statewide uproar.

The 50,000 new admittees are a talented lot, said Susan Wilbur, director of undergraduate admissions. Their average GPA was 3.79, and the students took an average of 23 required courses, eight more than the minimum required.

As always, competition was particularly keen to get into UC-Berkeley and UCLA, the most sought-after campuses. Only 27.7 percent of those who applied there were admitted.

The admission figures, released Tuesday, include the inaugural class for UC-Merced, the first UC campus to open in more than 30 years. Some 6,000 potential freshmen were admitted, but not all will accept the offer to become pioneers. The campus expects to open this fall with 1,000 students.

The proportion of underrepresented students, including African-Americans and Latinos, increased slightly across the system, from 20 percent a year ago to 20.6 percent, a gain of 1,280 students. Their percentage at UC-Berkeley increased from 14.8 percent a year ago to 16.5 percent this year. But the number of black and Latino students who got into Berkeley still lags behind the numbers from 1997, the last year that race could legally be considered in admissions in California.

UC-Berkeley reported admitting 276 African-Americans for this coming fall, up from 211 last fall, and 1,127 Latino students, up from 955 a year ago.

Robert Birgeneau, UC-Berkeley's new chancellor, said in a campus publication last month that Proposition 209, which banned consideration of race, has created an unfair system because it dramatically reduced the representation of certain groups of qualified students.

Last year, because of state funding cuts, the UC system directed 10 percent of its eligible freshmen to community colleges, saying they could transfer to UC as juniors. Although the Legislature eventually restored funding to admit all the freshmen, by that time many had made other college plans.

"To be able to offer admission to students who worked hard to meet our eligibility requirements is something we are very pleased about," Wilbur said Tuesday. "The university is very proud of its historic commitment to be able to admit all students who are UC eligible."

Wilbur said the turnaround was made possible by a compact made last year between UC and the governor that promises funding increases for enrollment growth over the next five years. For this decade at least, the number of California high school graduates is expected to continue growing, Wilbur said, then probably will level off. And this year, a larger proportion of them applied to UC, with notable increases in the Bay Area and Northern California.

Traditionally, all eligible students are guaranteed a place in the system but not necessarily at the campuses of their choice. UC breaks its process into two parts: eligibility, based on grades, test

scores and required courses; and selection of students by the individual campuses. Eligible students who are not selected by a campus to which they applied are offered admission at another campus.

For fall 2005, freshman applicants applied to an average of 3.6 UC campuses.



## **UC admits a record number of new students for the fall**

Nine campuses still try to boost minority freshmen representation

By Michelle Maitre, STAFF WRITER

Admissions are back on track at University of California, following a disappointing showing last year in which thousands of eligible students were turned away because of budget cuts.

A record 50,017 California students were offered fall freshman admission at UC's nine undergraduate campuses, including nearly 6,000 offered admission to the newest campus opening in Merced, according to preliminary admissions data released Tuesday.

Admissions are up nearly 11 percent from fall 2004, when 45,136 California students were offered admission. But UC officials called the 2004 admissions cycle "anomalous" because of the state's budget crisis, when state officials said they wouldn't provide the university with additional money for enrollment growth.

A better comparison is fall 2003, when 49,669 students were offered admission. Fall 2005 admission numbers are up about 1 percent from 2003, which UC officials said is consistent with expected annual growth.

"This year appears to be a year of good stability for us, with no real surprises in this year's data," said UC Director of Undergraduate Admissions Susan Wilbur. "We're very pleased we were able to offer a space at the university to every eligible student."

While the number of admitted students in every major racial and ethnic category increased from 2004, the numbers show that underrepresented minorities — African Americans, Latinos and American Indians — increased only slightly as a total proportion of admitted students. In 2004, underrepresented minorities were 20 percent of the total admissions pool but increased to 20.6 percent for fall 2005.

A campus-by-campus breakdown of the data show that UC Berkeley continues to struggle to attract and admit underrepresented minorities.

UC Berkeley admitted 276 African-American students for fall, up from 211 in fall 2004. In fall 2003, the campus admitted 298 African-American freshmen.

The number of Latino students admitted to UC Berkeley also increased — to 1,127 from 955 in fall 2004.

UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau has identified increasing enrollment of African-American and Latino students as a main priority. Birgeneau, who joined the campus in September, said he was appalled by the low numbers of underrepresented minorities at the flagship campus.

"We're pleased that we are representing all California communities better, but these are only modest increases," said Richard Black, associate vice chancellor for admissions and enrollment.

Overall, UC Berkeley extended admissions offers to 9,664 prospective freshmen, up from 8,887 for fall 2004. The campus continues to admit about 25 percent of its overall application pool.

Officials expect to enroll about 4,015 students in the fall. Campuses traditionally extend admissions offers to more students than they can accommodate because not every student offered admission will enroll.

Students have until May 2 to notify campuses if they intend to register for the fall.

Visit [www.berkeley.edu](http://www.berkeley.edu) for more information UC Berkeley's admissions figures. Visit [www.ucop.edu](http://www.ucop.edu) for admissions information from the University of California. Contact Michelle Maitre at [mmaitre@angnewspapers.com](mailto:mmaitre@angnewspapers.com).



## **UC sets admissions record, says 'yes' to 50,000 freshmen**

By Lesli A. Maxwell -- Bee Staff Writer

Published 2:15 am PDT Wednesday, April 20, 2005

The University of California admitted a record number of the state's high school graduates for fall 2005, a major turnaround from last year when the university turned down thousands of eligible applicants.

More than 50,000 students from California were offered freshman admission to at least one of UC's nine undergraduate campuses, including the new campus in Merced, according to figures released Tuesday by the university. That's an increase of nearly 4,881 applicants, or 10.8 percent, over 2004 and represents an all-time high in admission offers from UC.

University officials were relieved to avoid a repeat of last year's painful admissions process when proposed state budget cuts and a mandate to shrink enrollment forced them to withhold offers to nearly 8,000 qualified applicants. It was the first time the university could not guarantee admission to at least one of its campuses to every eligible applicant.

"This year appears to be a year of stability for us," said Susan Wilbur, UC's director of undergraduate admissions. "The fact that we were able to admit this very talented pool of students is something we are very pleased about."

A deal struck last year with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger promises money for enrollment growth at UC and California State University next fall, though the Legislature won't approve a final state budget until summer.

UC Davis offered slots to more than 17,000 applicants - up from 15,000 last year - and expects to enroll 4,600 this fall, campus officials said.

Admission rates for African American and Latino students improved modestly at most campuses, but their numbers remain well below 1997 levels at Berkeley and UCLA, the most competitive campuses. The university stopped using affirmative action in its selection of freshmen after 1997. At UC Berkeley this year, 262 African Americans were admitted, a rise over last year when 190 were offered a slot. In a class of 3,500, 108 blacks eventually enrolled; fewer than 40 were men, according to UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau.

Latino applicants made up 1,097 of Berkeley's admission offers, also an increase over 2004 when 880 such students were admitted.

Birgeneau, new to the campus last fall, told a group of reporters earlier this month that he will look for ways to increase minority enrollment at the prestigious campus. One strategy, he said, is to examine the legal constraints of Proposition 209 (the voter-approved ban on affirmative action passed in 1996) and "see if we've been too conservative in our comprehensive admissions." UCLA admitted 247 African Americans for the fall, up from 196 last year, and 1,396 Latinos, an increase from 1,108 in 2004.

"These are not large numbers, but they are nevertheless an improvement," Wilbur said. "UC is focused on access for students of all backgrounds at the same time that we are fully compliant with the law."

Systemwide, African American, Latino and American Indian students combined represent 20.6 percent of the total pool of admitted applicants, up slightly from 20 percent last year. Asian American students constitute 34.6 percent of UC's newly admitted class; white students make up 37.7 percent.

The average "unweighted" grade point average for admitted freshmen is 3.79. Students have until May 1 to accept UC's offers.

The San Diego  
 **Union-Tribune.**

**UC admits a record 50,017 state freshmen for the fall, up 11%**

By Eleanor Yang

UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

April 20, 2005

The University of California has admitted a record number of freshmen for the coming fall, signaling a confidence that the upcoming budget cycle will provide money for additional new students.

UC's nine undergraduate campuses admitted 50,017 California resident students, nearly 11 percent more than last year, when the state's budget crisis forced UC to take the unprecedented step of rejecting thousands of eligible students.

Last-minute negotiations by state legislators allowed university officials to later offer freshman admission to all eligible students, but many had already chosen other schools.

The increase in the admissions reflects rising applicant numbers, which are a result of demographics and a growing interest in a UC education, said Susan Wilbur, director of UC undergraduate admissions.

The fall opening of the UC campus in Merced also helped boost the numbers. About 6,000 students were accepted to fill Merced's first freshman class, which is proposed to have 1,000 students. The reason the campus admits more than it can accommodate is that not all accepted students choose to attend.

Students admitted in each ethnic group were also up from last year when combined across the system. Among African-Americans, Latinos and Native Americans – those deemed by the university to be "underrepresented minorities" – admissions grew by 1,300, or roughly 14 percent.

The increases helped assuage concerns raised earlier in the year when UC reported a dip in African-American applications across the system. African-Americans admitted were up at every campus except UC Riverside.

"UC is very focused on providing access to talented students of all backgrounds, but also being fully compliant with the law," said Wilbur, referring to Proposition 209. The 1996 voter-approved initiative bars the state's public colleges and other agencies from considering race in admissions or employment.

At UCSD, where African-American applicant numbers have fallen for two consecutive years, the number admitted was up 16.5 percent this year. A total of 346 African-American students applied to UCSD this year, making up less than 2 percent of all applicants.

The number of Latinos accepted rose 3.7 percent, Asian-Americans grew 8.9 percent and whites increased 4.5 percent.

Overall, UCSD accepted about 630 more students than last year, a 3.7 percent increase.

UCSD remains the third most selective campus in the system, behind Berkeley and UCLA. About 44 percent of 40,514 applicants to UCSD were admitted. The campus accepted 17,787 for a freshman class of 3,900 students.

The average academic qualifications for admitted students continued to rise, if slightly. The average SAT scores of students admitted to UCSD rose from 1,307 to 1,314, out of a total possible score of 1600. The average high school grade-point average, which factors in honors and Advanced Placement classes, remained unchanged at 4.05. (These figures vary from the chart because they include foreign and out-of-state applicants.)

Results can be found on the Web at [www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/fall2005adm.html](http://www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/fall2005adm.html).

# The Fresno Bee

## Offers go out for UC Merced

By MELANIE TURNER

BEE STAFF WRITER

A record 50,017 California residents have received freshman admission offers from the University of California for the fall semester, including 5,958 from UC Merced, the system's latest addition.

UC Merced will be the first new campus to open since UC Santa Cruz made its debut 40 years ago. The university is set to open Aug. 29 with an enrollment of 1,000 freshmen, along with transfer and graduate students.

Downey High's Emalee Sharp was so anxious to know if she got into UC Merced that she had her school counselor help her check her status online. "It like popped up," Sharp said. "'You've been accepted!'"

She said she's not attending "just because it's a UC" — three schools she applied to were California State University campuses — but because "I think it's really cool that we'll be the first graduating class."

UC Merced sent acceptance letters to about 6,000 students, said Susan Wilbur, director of undergraduate admissions for the University of California. Based on past trends, the university expects about three of every five applicants to accept, said Ravi Poorsina, spokeswoman for the UC Office of the President.

More than 200 students have submitted their intent to register at UC Merced, said university spokeswoman Sheryl Lichtig Wyan.

"I think it's real positive," said Encarnación Ruiz, director of admissions at UC Merced. "The valley's always exporting and now we're importing students."

Preliminary numbers show about 11.5 percent — about 650 — of UC Merced's offers went to students from the Central Valley.

Students from elsewhere will bring new perspectives to the valley, Ruiz said, adding that many of those students will choose to stay after graduation.

"This will be the beginning of cutting off some of that brain drain," he said.

Students received their acceptance letters in March. At Downey High in Modesto, Sharp and at least four other students were accepted out of about nine who applied to the new university. Three already have decided to attend.

Jennings Lee is a first generation Hmong-American who has five older sisters who attended UC campuses. His sisters inspired him, he said, to pursue an education at a UC school.

Even though his grade point average was 3.5 — above the 2.8 minimum required for California residents to apply to a UC school — he didn't get into Davis, San Diego or Santa Cruz.

"It's getting more competitive these days," said Barbara Liese, a college counselor at Downey. "I think it'll probably be like a great experience," said Lee, who hasn't decided on a major yet.

Another Downey student, Almon Sorisho, got into three CSU campuses and two UCs. The first-generation Assyrian-American chose UC Merced because it's close to home but far enough away from his brother and sister, who both go to UC Davis.

Sorisho also was accepted at Davis, but wants to be different, he said. Plus, his parents plan to visit every couple of weeks, so it makes them happy, too, he said.

"It wasn't really a concern for me, it being small," Sorisho said, adding that every year he's there it will get a little bigger.

UC officials estimate the Merced campus will grow by about 800 students each year. By the time Sorisho is a senior, there should be about 3,400 students.

He wants to be a computer engineer and said he heard technology will be a big area of study at UC Merced. "That's really good for me."

Cutting-edge technology also was an attraction for Sharp. Her aunt, who lives in Merced, has been telling her great things about the school.

"That's really cool to be part of that," said Sharp, who plans to study psychology.

She's seen the campus, but from outside a tall, wire construction fence. She's excited about Bobcat Day on Saturday, when she gets to step on campus for an open house.

On a UC Merced brochure, under clubs and activities, "it doesn't really say anything," Sharp said. Instead, it invites students to show off their leadership skills and help develop UC Merced's first clubs and activities, she said.

Not everybody who is extended an offer from UC Merced, or any UC campus, will take it. On average, students systemwide applied to 3.6 campuses. Freshmen have until May 1 to decide where they would like to go.

Downey High students Andria Jiminez and Helen Chan each were accepted by UC Merced, but are leaning toward UC Santa Cruz.

Jiminez said she's deciding between Mills College in Oakland and UC Santa Cruz because they are more established, she said. "That's the sort of thing I'm going for."

Jiminez also said UC Merced doesn't have an orchestra and she wants to continue to play the cello.

Chan also wasn't so sure about attending a new campus. "Nobody's gone there and you're not sure how they're going to do anything," she said.

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