



OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT –
STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES

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Status Report on Admissions Processing Task Force December 2004

"The surge in the volume of potential and actual UC applicants, coupled with recent admissions policy changes, necessitates a thorough review and rethinking of admissions application processing, at both the UC systemwide and campus levels."

Future Vision: Student Services at the University of California (May 2001)

Background. Concerned about the growing cost of student services and workload for student affairs units, in 2001 the Student Affairs Vice Chancellors undertook a study to address current and future needs for the delivery of student services. The report – *Future Vision: Student Services at the University of California* – was presented at the May 2001 Regents meeting.

The Vice Chancellors identified admissions processing as an area requiring attention. They felt that better use of technology might result in substantial process improvements. One of the first actions to come out of the Future Visions report was the establishment of the Admissions Processing Task Force (APTF) – a faculty and administrative group appointed to identify new strategies to improve admissions processing. This group quickly noted that not only was UC's applicant pool growing at a rapid rate annually, but also that there was a large overlap in where students were applying. Analysis showed that campuses that share a large proportion of their applicant pool tend to have high rate of admission decision agreement – in some cases, campuses tend to agree on up to 85 percent of admissions for specified segments of their application populations. There are opportunities for sharing campus workload.

First-Year Outcomes (2002-2003)

- Recommended and approved **new personal statement prompts**; the new prompts were designed not only to be more informative for the comprehensive review process, but also to support the transition in Admissions Offices to more on-line reading.
- Developed the electronic **Work in Progress/Application Update** form, an efficiency that allows transfer applicants to submit course enrollment information in a timely manner on-line. The information is available to all campuses to which

the applicant has applied, thereby saving time not only for the applicant but also reducing the redundancy of data collection. The Work in Progress effort represents an important step toward campus efficiency – information is collected once and shared by all campuses to which the student applied. (Note: Work in Progress has been renamed “Application Update” to represent a more generic post-application update for freshman and transfer. As of this time, there is no freshman component.)

- UCLA and UC San Diego faculty and admissions staff met to discuss the possibility of shared freshmen evaluation. While these discussions did not result in a shared freshmen evaluation review for the fall 2004 cycle, it did lead to the development of a pilot project for shared transfer review (UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara) – see CETAD, below.

Second-Year Outcomes (2003-2004)

- **Increase in Pathways applications.** For Fall 2004, Pathways received 83,992 applications, representing 84.6 percent of 99,237 total on-time undergraduate applications and a 24 percent increase in on-line usage. Increased applicant use of the Pathways application will enable campuses to improve application processing (for example, Berkeley has expressed an interest in customizing the information received to strengthen the evaluation process – this opportunity is currently not possible in a mixed paper/electronic environment).
- **Collaborative Exchange of Transfer Academic Data (CETAD).** Three campuses (UCLA, UCSD, UCSB) piloted a shared transfer evaluation project with the goal of reducing the number of times an application is reviewed by sharing evaluation information with participating campuses.
- **The Three-Point Proposal for Streamlining Undergraduate Admissions Processing.** Encouraged by the work completed to date, in November 2003 the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) asked the Admissions Processing Task Force (APTF) to develop a set of forward-looking proposals to further improve the efficiency in admissions processing, and specifically to reduce the redundancies in current processing. The Student Affairs Vice Chancellors have also supported this direction. The APTF was instructed to focus on reducing redundancies in admissions processing and on eliminating wasted effort and expense. The proposal consists of:
 - **Phase I: improvements in the accuracy of academic information provided to the campuses,** e.g. update the admissions review guidelines to facilitate more accurate electronic review of applications (approved by BOARS 7/19/04). Once straightforward, simplified working rules are in place, centralized systems such as Pathways can be more fully utilized to ensure reliable data. This will be followed by enhancements to the Pathways application system in time for 2005-2006 application processing.

- **Phase II: the development of common definitions for comprehensive review factors.** The APTF believes that identifying a core set of comprehensive review factors and standardizing definitions will introduce greater consistency and eliminate redundant processes. APTF is developing a proposal regarding common definitions for comprehensive review factors such as socio-economic status, leadership and service, to name several examples. The common definitions work group has already met twice and a proposal is expected during the 2005-2006 year.
- **Phase III: shared application review.** The APTF proposes that the labor-intensive work of comprehensive review be distributed across campuses, thus reducing the amount of time staff spent on reading applications and the expenses of staff time as well as program costs. This will require implementation of centralized reading protocols and a centralized norming process. This work depends on the implementation of Phase I and II. While this phase has not yet begun, the early success of the CETAD project serves as a prototype of future collaborative efforts.
- **Increase in Application Fee.** An application fee increase was approved in September 2004 for the 2005-06 application cycle. The intent of the fee increase was to augment current undergraduate applications processing.
- **The Electronic Application (Pathways) Opened for Winter Term.** Campuses identified in advance a selected group of applicants who were authorized to apply online. Those authorized were provided a User ID and personal identification number (PIN) for the online application. Pathways applications were pre-populated with identification information, along with campus and major choice.

Third-Year Outcomes (2004-2005)

- **ASSIST in Pathways.** Beginning with the 2005-2006 application cycle, transfer applicants' coursework is validated against the ASSIST database. Just as the Doorways database tags all approved "a-g" courses and courses with honors status for freshmen applicants, the ASSIST database shows which courses are transferable and which courses may be used to meet the English, Math or third subject requirement for transfer applicants. Together with improved logic for calculating the transfer GPA, this enhancement is expected to facilitate an improved, expedited, and accurate evaluation of transfer records.
- **Enhanced application facsimile to improve freshman and transfer evaluation.** The course information from Doorways enables the Application Processor to create an annotated electronic facsimile (application) that expedites the review of freshman applicants. Doorways approved courses are visibly marked and certified honors are noted. The addition of ASSIST data enables the Application Processor to create an annotated electronic facsimile that expedites the review of transfer applicants. ASSIST certified courses are visibly marked, ASSIST courses used to

satisfy the English, Math and third subject requirements are shown, and a transfer GPA using only ASSIST-validated courses is included along with a transfer GPA for all courses.

- **Increase in Pathways applications.** For Fall 2005, Pathways received 96,594 applications, representing close to an 11 percent increase in on-line usage and 96 percent of all applications received. This increase validates the plan to revise the application facsimile to display computations that are only available for all-electronic applications.
- **Campus Imports Pathways Data into Local System.** UCOP transmits Pathways data to UC Davis to augment their campus admissions data and evaluation systems. The Davis model serves as a prototype for further systems enhancements and offers the potential for a completely online review of applications.
- **Expansion of CETAD.** Based on the first year success of this initiative, four additional campuses (Davis, Irvine, Merced and Riverside) are participating for the fall 2005 transfer review. UCOP is conducting centralized services to expedite CETAD implementation.
- **Continuation of work on Three-Point Plan.** The work of the Common Definitions subcommittee will continue throughout 2004-2005. This project will provide the necessary preparation and impetus to begin the exploration of shared review of freshmen applications (for future implementation).
- **RFP for UC Admissions Processing contract (November 2004).** At its July 7 meeting, APTF members discussed current and future directions for application processing, with a focus on enhanced services to students and campuses, efficiency, and cost. APTF members support a vision that enables UC to meet the needs of today with an infrastructure that secures our ability to ensure what we envision for the future. To this end, the task force supports:
 - identifying and integrating emerging technologies to strengthen the linkage between advising tools for pre-matriculantes and the application process;
 - off-loading routine campus-based admissions processes and functions that can be done centrally;
 - assisting campuses to customize application information according to campus needs;
 - reducing redundancy in processing; and
 - eliminating paper-based functions.

It is anticipated that a vendor for the new admissions processing system – Centralized Admissions and Scholarship Application (CASA) – will be awarded in May 2005. The transition to the new system will begin immediately upon award of the contract.

Fourth Year Objectives (2005-2006) ~ planned

- **Uploading California Colleges and Gateways student data to Pathways.** The groundwork began this year to facilitate an upload of student data from prospective student systems including California Colleges and Gateways. To date the work on the Gateways – Pathways interface has been impressive. Together with the Gateways team, the Pathways team has succeeded in determining the possible number of Gateways users for the Fall 2005 application cycle, begun the mapping of Gateways data to Pathways fields, created and received a valid XML data set, and validated Gateways data in Pathways.
- **Opening Pathways year-round** for Winter/Spring 2006 or Fall 2006 operations.
- **Electronic Transcripts.** UCOP is currently working with campuses to facilitate the transmission of electronic transcripts. As a first step, some campuses received a PDF version of selected transcripts last summer. This is an important building block for campuses to receive electronic transcripts in the future, including transcripts in a format that can be imported directly into and manipulated by the application system.

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