

Additional Analyses of the Proportion of 2002 California Public High School Graduates Meeting UC Eligibility Requirements

Overview

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) is responsible for conducting periodic studies to determine the percentage of California public high school graduates who, under current policy, are eligible for freshman admission to the University of California. The most recent CPEC study, for the class of 1996, determined the UC eligibility rate to be 11.1 percent. A CPEC study for the class of 2003 will be completed in May 2004. Using a methodology that differs from that used by CPEC, UCOP staff, however, have conducted a *preliminary and unofficial* analysis of the proportion of 2002 California public high school graduates who meet UC's current eligibility requirements. The UCOP estimates suggest that about 15.2 percent of California public high school graduates in 2002 may have been eligible for admission to UC.

Details

“Eligibility in the Statewide Context” is the path by which most students become eligible for freshman admission to the University of California. This path has three requirements: (i) students must satisfactorily complete 15 units of UC-approved college preparatory coursework across six subject areas, referred to as the “a-g” subjects; (ii) students must take the SAT I or ACT examination and three SAT II subject examinations; and (iii) students must achieve a minimum combination of grade-point average (GPA) in a-g coursework and scores on the aforementioned examinations, as designated by the UC Eligibility Index. The other two paths by which a student can become UC-eligible are (i) “Eligibility in the Local Context,” under which a student must be in the top 4 percent of his or her high school class as ranked by a-g GPA and (ii) “Eligibility by Examination Alone,” under which a student with sufficiently high admission test scores qualifies for UC admission irrespective of his or her high school record. Under current policy, all eligible students who apply to UC are admitted to at least one campus and are deemed “regularly admitted.” (UC policy also permits a small number of otherwise ineligible students to be “admitted by exception” each year.)

Since, by definition, applicants to UC who are regularly admitted must be UC-eligible, the pool of eligible public high school graduates should be at least as large as the pool of regularly admitted California-resident freshman applicants from California public high schools. In 2002, there were 43,320 such students, constituting 13.3 percent of California's 325,297 public high school graduates. 13.3 percent, therefore, is a minimum estimate of the UC eligibility rate.

Admission data do not allow a determination of eligibility for students who have not applied to UC. Data from the College Board and ACT, however, permit estimates to be

made of how many test-takers from the 2002 cohort of high school graduates achieved test scores and grades sufficient to satisfy the UC Eligibility Index. Adding together (i) all regularly admitted UC applicants and (ii) California public high school graduates who are estimated to have met the eligibility index but did *not* apply to UC yields a maximum estimated UC eligibility rate for 2002 of 16.2 percent.

While the College Board and ACT data provide information on high school grades and test scores, they do not contain reliable information on whether students have satisfied the a-g subject requirement. Therefore, while the minimum estimate of 13.3 percent is likely to be too low due to the exclusion of non-applicants, the maximum estimate of 16.2 percent is likely to be too high due to the inclusion of students who failed to complete the required high school course pattern. A mid-range estimate can be constructed by appealing to historical data, developed in conjunction with earlier CPEC eligibility studies, indicating that 85 to 90 percent of all UC-eligible students apply to UC in any given year. Relying on the midpoint of this range, if 13.3 percent represents 87.5 percent of all UC-eligible students, then the corresponding mid-range estimate of the UC eligibility rate for 2002 is 15.2 percent (87.5% of 15.2 equals 13.3). The chart below presents the full set of estimates of the UC eligibility rate for 2002.

It should be noted that these are preliminary analyses that may differ substantially from the results of the CPEC 2003 study. (Similar projections performed in advance of the 1996 study overestimated the number of UC-eligible graduates.) The CPEC study will rely on a more thorough methodology, based on complete high school transcript data for all graduates from a representative sample of California public high schools. These data, in combination with testing data from ACT and the College Board, will permit an exact determination of each student's UC-eligibility. CPEC's estimate of the statewide 2003 eligibility rate will be determined by extrapolating from the sample schools.

Preliminary Estimates of UC Freshman Eligibility, 2002

