

Characteristics of Admitted Students Across the UC Eligibility Pool

Summary

The vast majority of students admitted as freshmen to the University of California are extremely well qualified: their high school grades and admissions test scores place them in the top segments of the UC eligibility index. Among eligible students with lower qualifications, rates of socioeconomic and educational disadvantage are substantially higher than among non-disadvantaged students. Specific findings of this analysis include:

- 75 percent of admitted students have high school grade-point averages (GPAs) of 3.5 or greater.
- For students in the bottom half of the eligibility index, higher test scores tend to compensate for lower grades and vice-versa. For example, students admitted with GPAs between 3.20 and 3.24 have an average SAT I score of 1104, while those admitted with GPAs between 2.85 and 2.89 have an average SAT I score of 1214.
- Students eligible for UC under the ELC program (which admits the top 4 percent of students from every high school) are concentrated in the top GPA range of the eligibility index, but they are represented in roughly equal proportions across all test score ranges of the index.
- In the lower test scores ranges, a larger proportion of admitted students have experienced socioeconomic or educational disadvantage. For example, 75 percent of students with average SAT I test scores between 415 and 425 come from families in which neither parent has a four-year college degree, whereas among students with average test scores of 580 or greater, only 29 percent come from such families. (The charts on pages 6-8 contain a more complete presentation of the inverse relationship between socioeconomic/educational disadvantage and test scores.)

Background

“Eligibility in the Statewide Context” is the path by which most students become eligible for freshman admission to the University of California.¹ This path has three requirements: (i) students must satisfactorily complete 15 units of high school 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 (in writing, mathematics, and a third subject of the student’s choice), and (iii) students must achieve a minimum combination

¹ Under UC and state policy, UC establishes criteria that define the top 12.5 percent of the state’s public high school graduates. These students are deemed “UC eligible” and UC has historically guaranteed that all eligible students will be offered admission to at least one campus. Other paths to UC eligibility are (i) Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC), under which the top 4 percent of students from each high school are UC eligible, and (ii) Eligibility by Examination Alone, under which students qualify for UC based only upon admissions test scores. In addition, a small number of otherwise ineligible students are “admitted by exception” each year.

of grade-point average and admissions test scores, as designated by the UC eligibility index. Under this index, students in every GPA range must attain a minimum test score total, where the total is defined as: [SAT I Verbal score + SAT I Math score] + [2 × (SAT II Writing score + SAT II Math score + SAT II 3rd Subject score)]. The first two columns in the table at right present this index. The third column contains the average test score that, if achieved on each individual test, would produce the corresponding test score total. Since individual tests are scored on a range of 200-800, this average score serves as a convenient reference for interpreting the eligibility index.

UC Eligibility Index		
a-g GPA	Test Score Total	Test Score Average
3.50	3120	390
3.45	3128	391
3.40	3152	394
3.35	3192	399
3.30	3248	406
3.25	3320	415
3.20	3408	426
3.15	3512	439
3.10	3616	452
3.05	3720	465
3.00	3840	480
2.95	3984	498
2.90	4160	520
2.85	4384	548
2.80	4640	580

The diagram on page 4 displays the UC eligibility index graphically. The horizontal axis indicates a-g GPA and the vertical axis indicates average test score. Students whose GPA and test scores place them in the shaded region do not qualify for Eligibility in the Statewide Context. Students whose GPA and test scores place them in the unshaded region, at the upper right of the graph, are eligible to attend UC (provided they successfully complete the full a-g course pattern).

Analysis

The eligibility index provides a convenient basis for examining the distribution of academic and socioeconomic characteristics across the pool of admitted students. Specifically, we can divide students into groups based on either their GPAs or their test score averages. Dividing students into groups according to GPA would vertically segment the region, in the diagram, that designates eligible students; dividing students by test score average would horizontally segment this region.

The table on page 5 presents the distribution, along with academic and socioeconomic characteristics, of all students graduating from California public high schools in 2003 who were regularly admitted as freshmen to a UC campus and who met the eligibility index.² As the table shows, a large majority of admitted students have GPAs and test scores that place them at the “top” of the eligibility index: 75 percent of admitted students falls in the top GPA segment (3.50 and above), and 57 percent of admitted students falls in the top test score segment (580 and above).³ Furthermore, in the lower GPA segments, average test scores rise as GPA declines, and test scores rival or surpass those of the high GPA students. Similarly, in the lower test score segments, average GPA rises as test scores decline, and GPA rivals or surpasses the GPA for students with higher test scores.

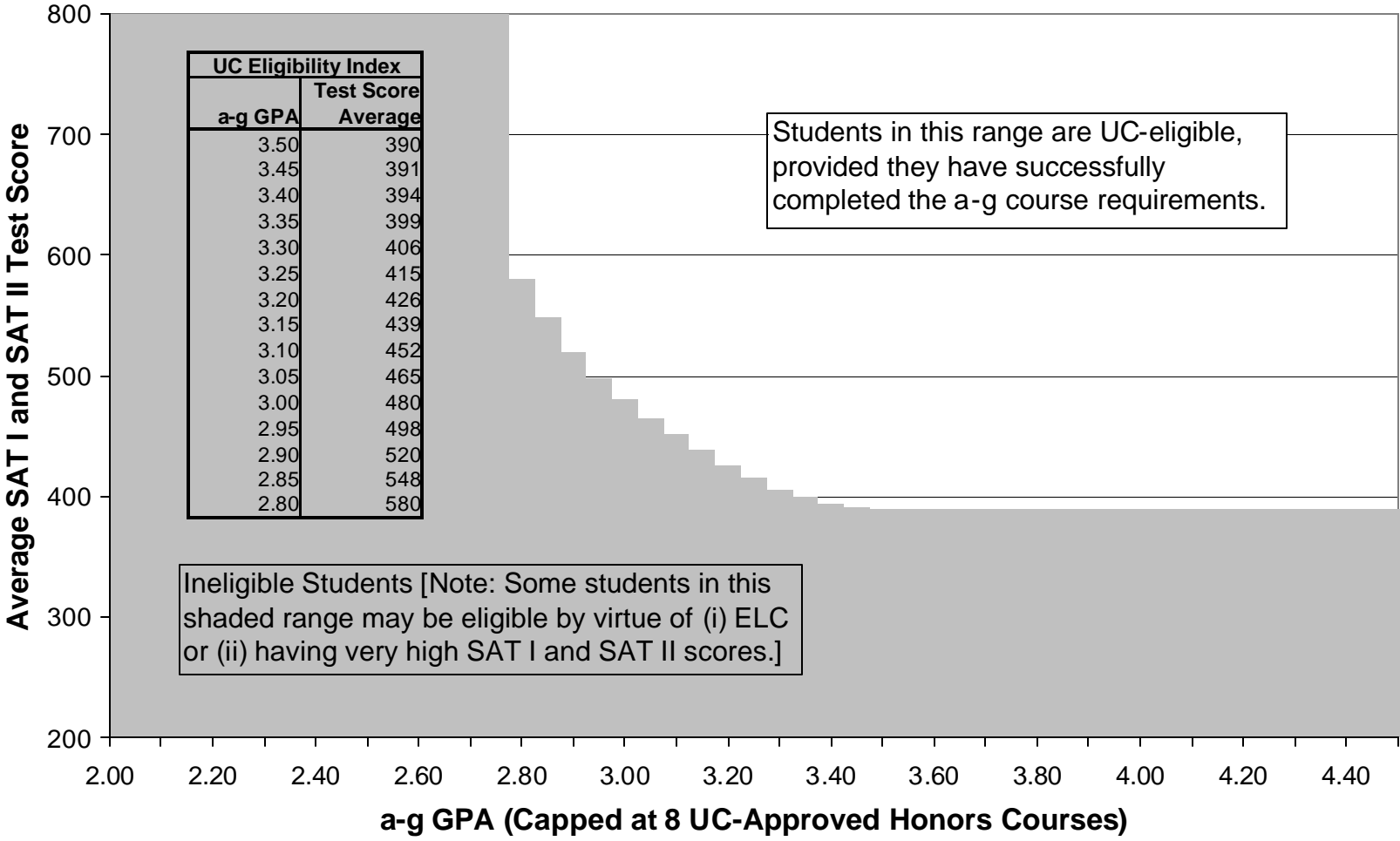
² Eligible students who did not apply to UC, students admitted under the ELC program or by test scores alone who were not also statewide eligible, and students admitted by exception are not included in this table. (See footnote 1.)

³ Since all eligible applicants are admitted, this table also suggests that a large majority of *eligible*, not just admitted, students have GPAs and test scores that place them at the top of the eligibility index.

Since ELC-eligible students come from the top 4 percent of their high school class, as ranked by a-g GPA, these students reside overwhelmingly in the top GPA segment of the eligibility index. These same students, however, are distributed fairly evenly across SAT segments, constituting 12 to 18 percent of each segment except for the topmost (of which they constitute 28 percent). Similarly, underrepresented minorities (URMs) are distributed fairly evenly across both the GPA and test-score segments, except that they constitute a smaller percentage of the topmost segments. The very lowest test-score segments contain higher proportions of both ELC and URM students, but these statistics should be interpreted cautiously because these segments contain very few total students.

We can also examine the distribution of admitted students according to socioeconomic characteristics—characteristics that help describe the circumstances of students' achievement. The table on page 5, and the charts that follow, present data on (i) average parental income, (ii) parental education, and (iii) rank of high school as determined by the California Department of Education's "Academic Performance Index" (API). Across GPA bands, average income is essentially flat, as are the proportion of students for whom neither parent has a four-year college degree and the proportion of students who come from the bottom 40 percent of California public high schools. Across test score bands, however, the pattern differs: students from lower bands are more likely to face economic or educational disadvantage. The chart on page 6 demonstrates that students in the lower test-score bands come from lower-income families. For example, average parental income for students with a test score average between 406 and 414 is \$40,116; average income for those with a test score average of 580 or greater is \$98,309. Similarly, the charts on pages 7 and 8 show that students in the lower test-score segments are more likely to have less educated parents and to have attended lower-performing high schools.

UC Eligibility Index



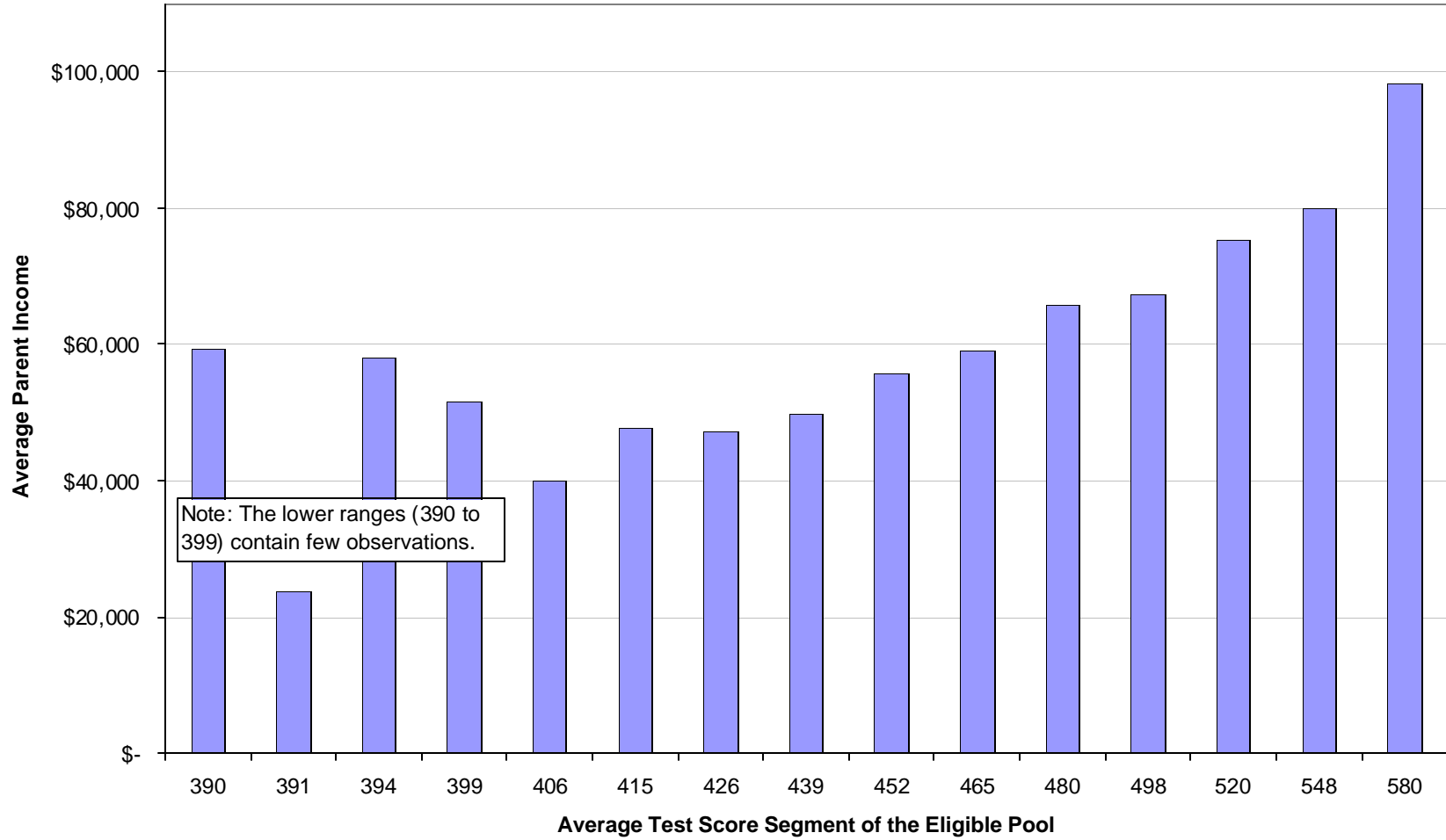
**UC Systemwide Distribution of Regularly Admitted Applicants, 2003
(Unduplicated Admits, Public High Schools Only)**

By GPA Segment of the Eligibility Pool														
Index Group (By GPA Segment)	Number	% of Total	Average HS GPA	Average SAT I	Average SAT II	ELC Students	ELC % of Index Group	URM Students	URM % of Index Group	Average Income (\$)	Neither Parent has B.A. Degree	"No B.A." % of Index Group	Low API School (Bottom 40%)	Low API School % of Group
2.80	67	0%	2.81	1257	1904	0	0%	11	16%	97,952	19	28%	9	13%
2.85	137	0%	2.86	1214	1813	0	0%	20	15%	114,169	43	31%	8	6%
2.90	236	1%	2.91	1178	1759	1	0%	49	21%	98,520	97	41%	30	13%
2.95	239	1%	2.95	1157	1729	1	0%	58	24%	95,302	104	44%	42	18%
3.00	712	2%	3.02	1142	1709	1	0%	156	22%	93,516	288	40%	143	20%
3.05	558	1%	3.07	1124	1673	2	0%	140	25%	85,776	233	42%	97	17%
3.10	673	2%	3.12	1120	1677	0	0%	186	28%	80,989	301	45%	131	19%
3.15	799	2%	3.17	1113	1667	5	1%	199	25%	84,060	361	45%	162	20%
3.20	946	2%	3.21	1104	1656	1	0%	234	25%	82,568	390	41%	199	21%
3.25	1174	3%	3.27	1105	1654	8	1%	311	26%	81,136	552	47%	270	23%
3.30	1317	3%	3.32	1116	1674	8	1%	336	26%	83,013	571	43%	274	21%
3.35	1285	3%	3.37	1112	1664	12	1%	325	25%	81,279	560	44%	275	21%
3.40	1438	3%	3.41	1123	1679	29	2%	325	23%	84,627	641	45%	311	22%
3.45	1297	3%	3.46	1130	1696	26	2%	321	25%	83,984	582	45%	264	20%
3.50	33440	75%	3.92	1217	1835	9782	29%	6007	18%	86,157	12743	38%	6703	20%
All	44318	100%	3.76	1194	1797	9876	22%	8678	20%	86,218	17485	39%	8918	20%
By Test Score Segment of the Eligibility Pool														
Index Group (By Test Score Segment)	Number	% of Total	Average HS GPA	Average SAT I	Average SAT II	ELC Students	ELC % of Index Group	URM Students	URM % of Index Group	Average Income (\$)	Neither Parent has B.A. Degree	"No B.A." % of Index Group	Low API School (Bottom 40%)	Low API School % of Group
390	3	0%	3.84	780	1170	1	33%	1	33%	59,467	2	67%	2	67%
391	18	0%	3.74	790	1176	8	44%	11	61%	23,767	17	94%	11	61%
394	39	0%	3.63	802	1187	4	10%	16	41%	58,095	29	74%	29	74%
399	56	0%	3.64	795	1211	10	18%	20	36%	51,716	45	80%	33	59%
406	118	0%	3.61	816	1235	20	17%	45	38%	40,116	93	79%	72	61%
415	214	0%	3.60	847	1256	32	15%	90	42%	47,754	161	75%	122	57%
426	370	1%	3.59	877	1293	53	14%	139	38%	47,276	250	68%	180	49%
439	511	1%	3.57	904	1332	60	12%	177	35%	49,782	360	70%	259	51%
452	727	2%	3.56	927	1370	87	12%	242	33%	55,751	483	66%	327	45%
465	1167	3%	3.57	960	1409	176	15%	372	32%	59,085	715	61%	469	40%
480	1993	4%	3.56	991	1461	254	13%	682	34%	65,941	1180	59%	762	38%
498	2907	7%	3.59	1030	1522	409	14%	959	33%	67,414	1635	56%	989	34%
520	4851	11%	3.62	1077	1598	764	16%	1390	29%	75,277	2502	52%	1359	28%
548	5904	13%	3.67	1132	1690	985	17%	1464	25%	79,964	2712	46%	1400	24%
580	25440	57%	3.86	1300	1975	7013	28%	3070	12%	98,309	7301	29%	2904	11%
All	44318	100%	3.76	1194	1797	9876	22%	8678	20%	86,218	17485	39%	8918	20%

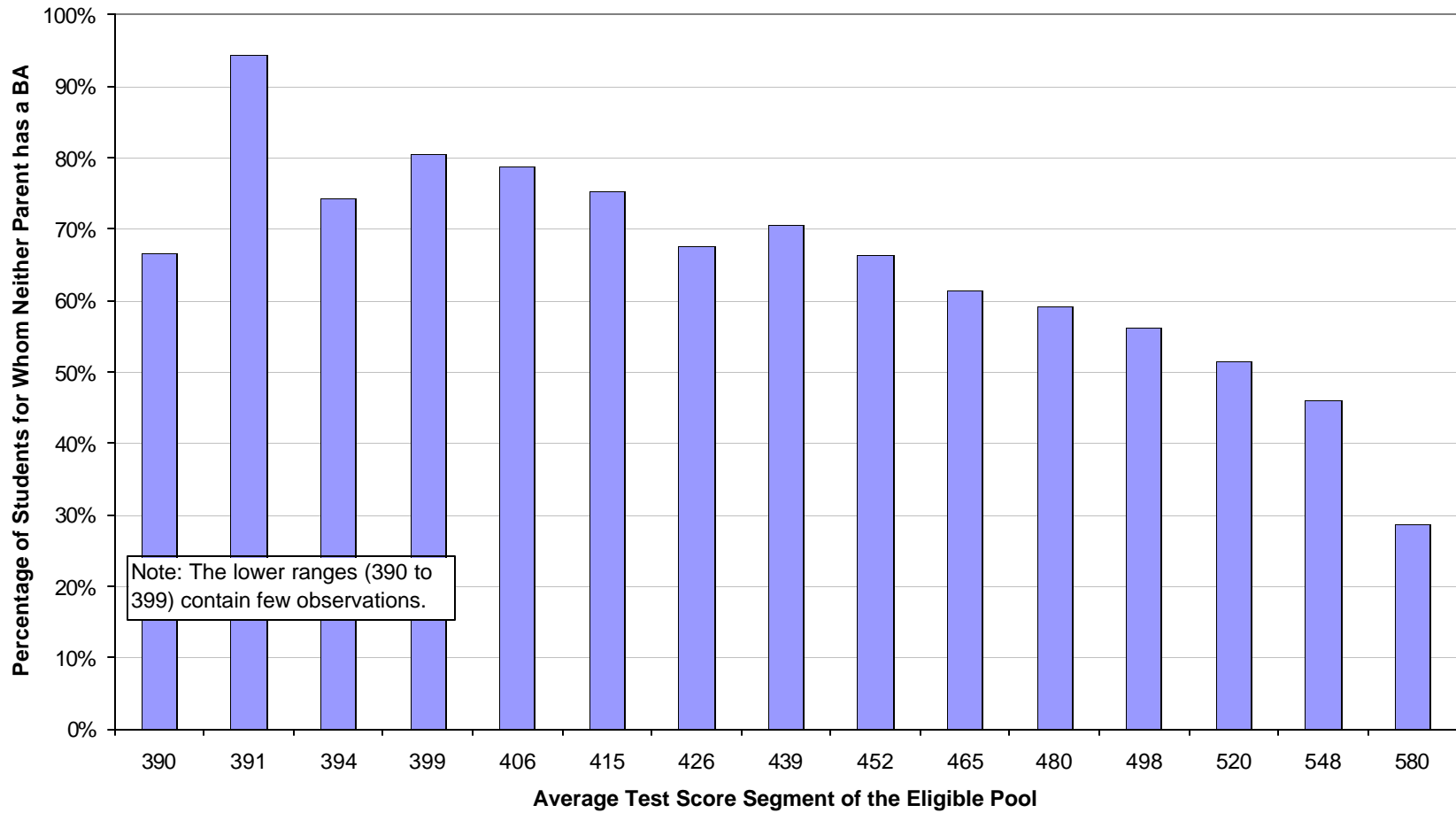
Note: The data used in these tables consist of fall term, California resident, freshman applicants for whom UC data contained non-missing high school GPA and admissions test scores.

UCOP/SAS: Admissions Research, November 12, 2003

Average Parent Income Within Test Score Segments of the Eligible Pool
2003 Regular Admits, Public High Schools Only



**Percentage of Students for Whom Neither Parent has a BA
by Average Test Score Segment of the Eligible Pool**
2003 Regular Admits, Public High Schools Only



**Percentage of Students From Low API Schools
by Average Test Score Segment of the Eligible Pool**
2003 Regular Admits, Public High Schools Only

