

Eligibility Policy Development (1997 to present) and Current Characteristics of the Eligibility Pool

- Following its review of the 1996 study, and based on studies that demonstrated that the SAT I was a relatively weaker predictor of academic performance in the freshman year, BOARS added SAT II scores to the eligibility index and weighted them twice as heavily as SAT I/ACT scores. Requiring SAT II scores of all eligible applicants reduced confusion over the existence of a “potentially eligible” pool because it was no longer possible for students to meet the requirements of the eligibility index without presenting scores on the SAT II. These changes and the overall findings of the 1996 Eligibility Study were discussed with The Regents at three Board meetings in 1998 and 1999.
- To respond to the 1996 CPEC Eligibility Study finding that only 11.1 percent of California’s public high school graduates met UC’s eligibility requirements, UC was faced with a need to expand the eligibility pool. Rather than relaxing its course, scholarship, or testing requirements, BOARS proposed a new “path” to eligibility: Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC), which identified the top four percent of graduates in every public and accredited private high school in California, based on grades earned in a-g courses taken through the end of the 11th grade. ELC was adopted by The Regents in 1999. Subsequent studies have shown that virtually all of the students identified as ELC-eligible have also earned the grades and test scores necessary to achieve eligibility in the statewide context.
- Studies of eligible students admitted to the University in recent years indicate that the majority of eligible applicants substantially exceed minimum eligibility requirements and that students are graduating from UC at higher rates than at any time in the University’s history.
- In July 2003, following extensive study on the part of BOARS and approval by The Regents, UC adopted a new testing policy covering use of new admissions tests being developed now by ACT, Inc. and the College Board, as well as broader curricular coverage in the pattern of five test scores applicants must submit. In doing so, BOARS tied the testing requirement more closely to the fundamental purpose the eligibility requirements have traditionally served: to enunciate standards for college preparation and communicate these standards to students and high schools. These requirements will take effect for students entering in the Fall 2006 term. BOARS has recommended reweighting of the individual components of the test portion of the academic index but will not develop a new index until additional data on the new tests are available. BOARS has recommended that this work be done in concert with the development of revised criteria, if necessary, in response to the 2003 eligibility study, so as to avoid the confusion for students, parents, and schools associated with changing requirements multiple times.

- A CPEC study of eligibility rates for 2003 California public high school graduates is due to be completed in spring 2004. Following traditional practice, BOARS over the coming academic year will review the findings of this study, identify potential changes needed to the eligibility criteria, develop recommendations, and present these for approval to the Board. In order to give students and high schools adequate notice, these requirements would be phased in over the coming years.