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May 2, 2008

Michael Brown
Chair, UC Academic Council

In Re: Systemwide Senate Review of the BOARS' Revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy"

Dear Michael,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Systemwide Senate Review of the BOARS' Revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy." Upon receipt of the proposal, I asked the Committee on Undergraduate Education and Relations with Schools (CUARS), the Undergraduate Council (UgC), and the Executive Board to opine. All three committees voted in support of the proposal; thus, I am able to report that the UCLA Division supports the proposal.

CUARS members in support found the revised eligibility requirements to "maintain quality" while reaching out "to all high schools in California." Additionally, CUARS found the proposal to "represent twin goals: seeking the best talent and broadly representing the state of California."

The UgC members "were largely sympathetic to BOARS' arguments that the potential for success of incoming students would be increased with a larger applicant pool." The UgC members also supported elimination of the SAT II Subject Test, but agreed that schools should be allowed to continue recommending that students take the test.

Both CUARS and UgC have articulated persuasive reasons for supporting the proposal in some detail. I submit them to you for consideration as this proposal is further vetted.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any service with this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth L. Bjork".

Elizabeth Ligon Bjork
UCLA Academic Senate Chair

Cc: María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director, Chief of Staff, UC Academic Senate
Jaime R. Balboa, Ph.D., CAO UCLA Academic Senate

April 29, 2008

Elizabeth Bjork
Academic Senate Chair

In Re: Undergraduate Council Response to the BOARS' Revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy"

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for the opportunity to opine upon the BOARS' revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy", dated February 2008. In response to recommendations from the divisions, BOARS' modified the proposal to reform UC's freshman eligibility construct by including an extensive admission guarantee with both school-based (i.e. local context) and statewide components. In addition, the revised proposal contains more complete data analysis with explanations of reasoning and rationale.

The Undergraduate Council discussed the report at its meeting on April 18, 2008. The Council faculty and student members voted to endorse the Report. The vote was eleven members in favor of endorsement, zero opposed, and two abstentions. The student vote was five in favor of endorsement, zero opposed, and zero abstentions.

We invited Professor Sylvia Hurtado, Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools and Vice Chair of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, to brief the Council membership on the proposal. As stated by BOARS and presented by Professor Hurtado, the principle goal for the proposal is to enable the University of California to draw from the state's most promising graduating high school seniors. The current eligibility construct falls short of that goal, in that it excludes some students whose accomplishments significantly exceed the standard. Under the new proposal, an estimated 10% will be guaranteed admission. This is accomplished through a combination of guarantees: 1) a statewide guarantee criterion for the top 5% based on a combination of GPA and test scores, and 2) a local guarantee criterion for the top 12.5% based on a fully-weighted a-g GPA. BOARS' is also proposing an elimination of the SAT subject test requirement, and an entitled to review (ETR) construct. It is our understanding that it is the ETR that is designed to prevent labeling many (otherwise qualified) students UC-ineligible. In the proposal, BOARS argues that the increase in applicant pool will inevitably lead to better-qualified admits (and enrolled students).

As the Council vote indicates, UgC members were largely sympathetic to BOARS' arguments that the potential for success of incoming students would be increased with a larger applicant pool. Members recognized also that the campuses most significantly impacted by the proposed changes to admissions policy were those taking students under the referral pool, and were generally supportive of changes that have the potential to positively transform the pool. I should note that there was some skepticism of this claim; it is possible this was a contributing factor for those who chose to abstain in the vote.

The Council supports the elimination of the SAT II Subject test. This was deemed uncontroversial because it is not usually an effective method for predicting success at UC campuses. However, there are exceptions, and Council notes that schools can continue to recommend that students take the subject test.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Brown", is centered below the closing. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stuart Brown
Undergraduate Council Chair

Cc: Jaime Balboa, CAO Academic Senate
Dayna Baker, Senior Policy Analyst
Linda Mohr, Assistant CAO Academic Senate

April 28, 2008

Elizabeth Bjork
Academic Senate Chair

In Re: CUARS Response to the BOARS' Revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy"

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for the opportunity to opine upon BOARS' Revised "Proposal to Reform UC's Freshman Eligibility Policy", dated February 2008. In response to recommendations, BOARS' modified the proposal to reform UC's freshman eligibility construct by including an extensive admission guarantee with both school-based (i.e. local context) and statewide components. BOARS' addressed many of the issues raised by campus divisions and took into consideration UCLA's specific recommendation to be more clear with the goals. In addition, the revised proposal contains more complete data analysis with explanations and rationale.

The Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Relations with Schools (CUARS) discussed the report at its regular meetings on March 14 and April 11, 2008. The Council faculty and student members voted to endorse the report along with the following comments. The vote was 3 members in favor of endorsement, 1 opposed, and 1 in abstention. (Two voting members were absent for the vote and were aware it was to occur on the 11th). The student vote was 0 for endorsement, 1 opposed, and 1 abstention.

The proposal takes into consideration three very important goals: 1) The Regents' charge to seek the most academically talented or personally accomplished students who are broadly representative of the state, 2) The need to create greater alignment between changes in tests and admissions processes now in place, and 3) Improve the ability to identify students rendered invisible by the current eligibility requirements. The new requirements would make students visible in the application process that are prepared for a UC education and improve the quality of students who receive an admissions guarantee. The revised proposal eliminates the SAT Subject requirement and reintroduces a stronger guarantee that improves the quality of those students. It expands the pool of students to allow campuses to exercise their authority in selection. High School GPAs are raised for guaranteed students, with clear directives for Entitled to Review (ETR) in meeting a-g course requirements. All campus-based standards are controlled by their own selection processes. Each year about 15% of California-resident freshman applicants (~10-11K students) are found to be ineligible and over 90% are denied admission. Recent data shows about 4000 of these students have a-g GPAs over 3.2 and the minimum GPA for eligibility is 3.0. Essentially all of these students have taken the SAT core exam, about half have taken SAT core + 2 SAT Subject exams, as required by UC, their test scores exceed those required by the index for eligibility, 25-30% have very high GPAs (3.8+), and they have virtually the same number of a-g courses as eligible applicants. A far larger proportion belongs to underrepresented minority groups, have less-educated parents, and come from lower-income households.

The proposal achieves optimal academic outcomes: guaranteed students will have a higher GPA than currently guaranteed eligible students; state-wide index sets a higher standard, requiring a 4.0 to compensate for scores at the national average; and predicted freshmen GPA is about the same, or slightly higher, for all guarantees. Better representation is also achieved across the state: racial/ethnic

representation is preserved and has a more diverse ETR pool; geographic representation is improved; and representation of API school is improved. A greater UC presence will be evident in schools across the state. Schools are encouraged to maintain and improve a-g offerings. This creates a “recruitment effect” by generating pressure in parents and community to improve quality of education. CSU also uses a-g. The revised proposal will broaden the potential pool by not requiring the SAT Subject Tests. Two major pathways to guaranteed admissions include: 1) Rank in the top 12.5% of one’s high school, complete ‘a-g’ curriculum, and take the SAT or ACT; or 2) Rank in the top 5% of the statewide eligibility index (GPA and test scores) of public high school students. This combined equals 10% of California’s public high school graduates and maintains guaranteed admission to the UC system via the referral pool.

Concerns raised about the proposal include the following: Students are hypothetically guaranteed admission to UC, but in reality, the guarantee is to campuses who have not met their enrollment targets. This is currently the same process in place today and will not change unless campuses agree to admit the guaranteed students who apply to them. The SAT II Subject test assists the School of Engineering with their selectivity; however, the Math subject test is currently only strongly recommended. It is likely that students may include subject tests as strongly recommended but some may decline to do so. (Two members of BOARS whom are Engineering faculty are satisfied with the proposal).

Members of the committee not in support of the proposal felt uninformed and that they were only getting benefits from the reports. They wanted more information of the disadvantages of the proposal. They were concerned about the average SAT scores decreasing by 20 points. Those who abstained from the vote had similar reactions as those against. One member feared this was a step in the direction of eliminating the SAT. It is clear that opposition centered on maintaining the SAT, and this proposal does not intend to eliminate the SAT reasoning exam since it has recently been strengthened with the writing test.

The students liked the idea of a minimum SAT score and wanted to see a set standard. They were uncomfortable with the subjective nature of campus review and uneasy with the message sent to students regarding scholastic aptitude. They agreed this new proposal can potentially help high schools improve educational practice; however, there may be more effective, direct, and explicit routes to reform K-12 education. UC can have a major role in setting initiatives for the state.

Those in support feel the revised eligibility requirements maintain quality and reaches out to all high schools in California. They support the idea of having schools be more accountable in educating students with a-g requirements and this will lead to more prepared college students. One member opined that if students ranked high but did not have the appropriate a-g coursework, or could not send the top 12.5% to UC, this would renew parent and teacher interest in ensuring their schools did a better jobs of preparing students for college.

In conclusion, the proposal represents twin goals: seeking the best talent and broadly representing the state of California. Simulations in the proposal indicate UC will be better representative racially, ethnically, geographically; while raising GPAs. The prediction shows a 20 point difference in SAT scores, which is not scientifically significant for decision-making purposes. Standards will not be lowered as grades are a more predictive measure of freshmen achievement than SAT scores. This proposal identifies college-prepared students for UC while the selection processes for campuses will remain the same.

Thank you again for the opportunity to opine. Please contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvia Hurtado". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sylvia Hurtado
CUARS Chair

Cc: Jaime Balboa, CAO Academic Senate
Linda Mohr, Assistant CAO, Academic Senate