UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

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March 3, 2025

Subject: Charge of the Senate-Administration Workgroup on Admissions

This Senate-Administration Workgroup (SAWG) is established to define an updated framework for UC San Diego undergraduate admissions that is cognizant and responsive to changes in the admissions requirements, including the elimination of the use of ACT or SAT scores in admissions decisions. The SAWG will first conduct a thorough statistical analysis of the admissions process. It will then study and make recommendations regarding potential strategies to help address three significant issues impacting admissions nationwide and locally, namely math preparation of admitted and enrolled students, writing preparation of admitted and enrolled students, and distribution of students among the majors offered by the university.

Background

In 2024, UC San Diego received 134,444 applications and admitted 35,984 students through the Holistic Review (HR) process. This resulted in a fall enrollment (as of week 3 census) of 7,330 new first-year students. HR, implemented since Fall 2011, replaced the previous Comprehensive Review (CR) system. Under CR, admissions decisions were based on thirteen weighted criteria with point values assigned for each. The points were aggregated into a comprehensive admissions score, determining admission.

In contrast, HR uses a different process. After ensuring eligibility based on UCOP criteria, two readers review the entire application file holistically considering thirteen academic and personal characteristics as defined by the Board of Admissions and Relations to Schools (BOARS) and assign a score ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 indicates the best qualified applicants). If the scores differ by more than one point, a third reader evaluates the application. The final score is used for admission decisions. Until 2021, HR incorporated SAT/ACT scores, but now these scores are excluded from admissions decisions due to a Regents decision. However, students who took these tests may use their scores for placement purposes, such as opting out of the Math and Writing Placement Tests.

Understanding the admissions process is particularly urgent now due to several pressing issues:

A. Over the last decade, the UC and UC San Diego have seen changes in the level of first-year applicants' and enrollees' mathematics preparation, as measured by the course they took in high school and the first mathematics course they enroll in at university,

B. Related issues have been noted in regard to writing preparation and placement.

C. We have significant differences in the numbers of students in different majors across UC San Diego. This contributes to overcrowded classes, under-enrolled programs, and a less well-rounded student body.

Tasks

Overview of the Admissions Process
To ensure all Workgroup members have a common background, Enrollment Management, Educational Innovation, and Institutional Research will provide an overview of the current admissions process. This will include discussions on:

- Constraints related to target incoming cohort size, total enrollment size, residency status, first-year vs. transfer status, and Eligibility in the Local Context program (ELC).
- The extensive consultation process undertaken with departments and schools.
- The "backwards design" process that starts with a department's desired cohort size, considers historical data on the percentage of admittees in that major who actually enroll, and the arrival to a predicted number of students to admit.
- The admissions and waitlist timelines.

The SAWG will then investigate the following questions:

Statistical Analysis of Holistic Review (HR)
The first set of questions will focus on understanding how HR works in statistical terms:

1. How are elements of the HR process (e.g., reader disagreement, breaking ties, and supplemental review) related to the information available in the admissions files?
2. How well can we predict the final Holistic Admission Score (HAS) and the decision using the information available from the admissions files?
3. How well does the HAS predict 1st and 2nd year retention, degree progression, and placement/performance in key skills like writing and mathematics?
4. How did the removal of consideration of standardized test scores impact the way the admissions and placement processes operate?

Mathematics Preparation of Admitted and Enrolled Students

1. Are there characteristics in the application files that correlate with low Math Placement Exam (MPE) scores? Can these be used productively during the admissions process to give admitted students the best likelihood of success?
2. How have mathematics preparation and placement evolved over recent years, and how have our mathematics programs dealt with these changes to promote student success? What lessons learned and key practices from the mathematics domain might be useful for the writing domain?
3. Is there any data on connections between the removal of standardized testing scores from consideration in admissions and the level of applicants' mathematics preparation, especially in terms of MPE scores of newly enrolled students?

Writing Preparation of Admitted and Enrolled Students

1. Are there characteristics in the application files that correlate with low Writing Placement Exam scores? Can these be used productively during the admissions process to give admitted students the best likelihood of success?
2. How have writing preparation and placement evolved over recent years, and how have our writing programs dealt with these changes to promote student success? What lessons learned and key practices from the writing domain might be useful for the mathematics domain?
3. Is there any data on connections between the removal of standardized testing scores from consideration in admissions and the level of applicants' writing preparation, especially in terms of writing placement scores of newly enrolled students?

Major Distribution of Admitted and Enrolled Students

1. How do various factors impact the different enrollment levels in different majors? For instance, the department's preferred cohort size, the number of applicants to specific majors, the yield rate for students selecting that major, <u>and </u>the status of the major as selective or screening?
2. What is the university already doing to ensure a strong and diverse pipeline of applicants with an interest in a broad array of majors? What other strategies might be tried?
3. How many students switch majors? Which majors see the most switching? Are there indicators in the admissions files that predict the likelihood of switching?
4. What are we already doing to restrain the number of students in selective majors and increase enrollment in majors with more available capacity during the admissions process? What other strategies might be tried?
5. How was the adoption of the portfolio system intended to factor into admission of students majoring in the arts? What impact<u>s</u> has the portfolio system had in practice?

Timeline
The work of the SAWG will follow this timeline:

- Establishment of SAWG membership: February 28, 2025
- Work of the SAWG: February to August 2025
- Progress report to Senate Committee on Admissions: June 6, 2025
- Submission of final report to EVC and Senate Chair: August 31, 2025
- Senate Council discussion: November 2025
- Review by Rep Assembly: December 2025

Membership
Senate members: 7
1. Co-Chair: Akos Rona-Tas, Professor, Sociology and Chair, Committee on Admissions
2. Daniel F. Sievenpiper, Professor, Electrical & Computer Engineering and Vice Chair, Committee on Admissions
3. Julian Betts, Professor, Economics
4. Lisa Lampert-Weissig, Professor, Literature and Member, Committee on Admissions
5. Ross Frank, Professor, Ethnic Studies and Chair, Committee on Diversity & Equity
6. Sergey Kryazhimskiy, Associate Professor, Ecology, Behavior & Evolution
7. Avi Yagil, Professor, Physics

Administration members: 7
1. Co-Chair: Jim Rawlins. Associate Vice Chancellor – Enrollment Management
2. Lihini Aluwihare, Chair and Deputy Director for Education, Scripps Institution of Oceanography
3. Holly Bauer, Associate Director, Analytical Writing Program
4. Michael Holst, Department Chair, Mathematics
5. John Moore, Dean, Undergraduate Education
6. Paul Yu, Provost, Revelle College
7. Lisa Portes, Department Chair, Theatre & Dance

Student representatives: 1 [appointed by Associated Students]
1. Golsa Rahbari

With best regards,

Elizabeth H. Simmons
Executive Vice Chancellor

Olivia Graeve
Chair, Academic Senate

c: Robert Continetti, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor
    Rebecca Jo Plant, Senate Vice Chair
    Lori Hullings, Senate Director
    Alison Sanders, Assistant Vice Chancellor