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Undergraduates Admitted by Exception Their Enrollment, Persistence & Graduation at UC Davis (1983-1997)

The University of California grants each campus the flexibility to admit a small portion of applicants who do not meet undergraduate eligibility requirements (i.e., subject, scholarship and examination) but who otherwise show academic potential and personal motivation. Referred to collectively as *admitted by exception* students, neither this population as a whole nor its subpopulations are homogeneous. Although all students admitted by exception must demonstrate a reasonable potential for success at the University, not all of these students are necessarily unprepared. Some students, for example, may be technically ineligible because they lack a required course or standardized test result.

Previous research indicates that many of these students admitted by exception do persist and graduate, although at rates lower than eligible students. This report describes enrollment, persistence and graduation patterns of domestic students admitted by exception to UC Davis from Fall 1983 through Fall 1997.

Population Size

Former University policy allowed each campus to admit up to six percent of freshmen and four percent of advanced standing students in exception to eligibility requirements. In Fall 1991, a revised "Policy on Undergraduate Admissions by Exception" went into effect, increasing the proportion of advanced standing students allowable to six percent.

In addition, the revised policy explicitly states that these proportions should be based on the number of newly *enrolled* students (freshmen and advanced standing). Because acceptance rates of applicants admitted by exception are higher than those of their eligible cohorts, basing their proportions on the number *admitted* had, in the past, resulted in larger numbers (and proportions) of them enrolling at the University than the original policy had intended.

Thus, for most years covered by this report, students admitted by exception constitute well over six percent of newly enrolled undergraduates at UC Davis, as the data on Table 1 (page following) indicate.

The overall proportion of students from both high school and advanced standing students admitted by exception to UC Davis for the entire period covered by this report was 7.8%. Between 1983 and 1991 entrants admitted by exception averaged approximately 9.5% of newly enrolled students. However, among the group admitted since Fall 1991 (1992-1997), the overall proportion (5.6%) has met the six percent ceiling mandated by the 1991 revision. In Fall 1997, the figures were 5.2% (advanced standing) and 3.2% (high school).

TABLE 1
Admitted by Exception as a Percent of New Domestic Undergraduates
by Entering Class Level
Fall 1983-1997

Entered Fall	HIGH SCHOOL			ADVANCED STANDING			TOTAL ENROLLMENT		
	All <i>n</i>	By Exception <i>n</i>	Percent	All <i>n</i>	By Exception <i>n</i>	Percent	All <i>n</i>	By Exception <i>n</i>	Percent
1983	2,424	212	8.7%	1,009	111	11.0%	3,433	323	9.4%
1984	2,988	260	8.7	1,134	148	13.1	4,122	408	9.9
1985	2,698	239	8.9	994	126	12.7	3,692	365	9.9
1986	2,450	216	8.8	892	123	13.8	3,342	339	10.1
1987	3,314	259	7.8	1,008	115	11.4	4,322	374	8.7
1988	3,380	309	9.1	1,108	144	13.0	4,488	453	10.1
1989	3,099	308	9.9	1,233	147	11.9	4,332	455	10.5
1990	3,145	264	8.4	1,635	126	7.7	4,780	390	8.2
1991	2,308	218	9.4	1,093	90	8.2	3,401	308	9.1
1992	2,858	192	6.7	1,434	96	6.7	4,292	288	6.7
1993	3,122	201	6.4	1,374	79	5.7	4,496	280	6.2
1994	3,173	248	7.8	1,619	67	4.1	4,792	315	6.6
1995	3,336	233	7.0	1,564	75	4.8	4,900	308	6.3
1996	3,767	157	4.2	1,489	45	3.0	5,256	202	3.8
1997	3,636	190	5.2	1,435	46	3.2	5,071	236	4.7
1983-97	45,698	3,506	7.7	19,021	1,538	8.1	64,719	5,044	7.8

Student Ethnicity & Disadvantaged Status

UC policy permits up to four percent (within the six percent of admissions by exception) to be drawn from "disadvantaged" groups. For the period covered by this report, *disadvantaged* was defined as students from "underrepresented minorities [American Indian, Black, Chicano & Latino] or students from low economic or limited educational background."

A new UC policy (July 1996), adopted to conform to Regents' SP-1 (*Policy Ensuring Equal Treatment—Admission*), deletes ethnicity: "Disadvantaged students shall be defined as students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or students having experienced limited educational opportunities." This policy became effective with Spring 1998 entrants.

TABLE 2
New Domestic Undergraduates Admitted by Exception: Enrollment by Ethnic Group
Fall 1983-1997

Entered Fall	NEW ENROLLMENT BY EXCEPTION					
	Total* <i>n</i>	Black <i>Percent</i>	Chicano <i>Percent</i>	Latino <i>Percent</i>	Asian <i>Percent</i>	White <i>Percent</i>
1983	323	23.8%	6.5%	4.3%	10.2%	43.3%
1984	408	21.1	10.3	4.9	12.0	40.2
1985	365	19.5	13.7	2.7	11.5	41.9
1986	339	22.7	10.9	5.3	10.0	40.1
1987	374	16.3	11.0	6.7	9.6	47.1
1988	453	20.8	13.9	6.6	9.9	34.7
1989	455	23.3	16.5	7.5	9.7	35.8
1990	390	21.8	19.2	7.2	12.8	32.6
1991	308	19.5	14.6	8.1	12.3	39.3
1992	288	18.1	12.5	9.7	13.9	36.1
1993	280	15.0	18.9	3.9	21.1	32.1
1994	315	21.0	19.4	8.6	18.4	25.7
1995	308	14.3	18.5	11.0	25.0	24.4
1996	202	15.3	14.9	8.4	18.8	32.2
1997	236	11.9	19.1	7.6	16.5	34.7

* Totals include American Indian, Filipino, Other & Decline to State. Data are not presented separately for American Indian and Filipino students; in Fall 1997, they each reflected only 1.7% of all entrants admitted by exception.

As Table 2 illustrates, Whites constitute the largest group of new students admitted by exception in Fall 1997 (34.7%), followed by Chicano (19.1%), Asian¹ (16.5%), Black (11.9%) and Latino (7.6%) students. In Fall 1997 only 40% (95) of the applicants benefiting from the admissions by exception policy came from "underrepresented minorities."²

¹Asian includes Japanese, Chinese, Pacific Islander, Korean, Vietnamese and Other Asian.

²For a discussion of the importance of diversity, see *A Declaration of Community: Report of the Universitywide Campus Community Task Force* (University of California, 1993)

Although most ineligible students do not come from underrepresented ethnic groups, they do constitute a disproportionately large share of some of these groups. A comparison of the data on Tables 2 and 3 illustrates this point. Although 34.7% of all new ineligible students enrolled in Fall 1997 were White, only 3.6% of all new White students were admitted by exception. Conversely, while Black students made up only 11.9% of new students admitted by exception enrolling in Fall 1997, 20.9% of all new Black students were admitted by exception.

TABLE 3
Admitted by Exception as a Proportion of New Domestic Undergraduates
by Ethnic Group
Fall 1983-1997

NEW DOMESTIC ENROLLMENT

Entered Fall n	Black		Chicano		Latino		Asian		White	
	All Percent	Exception n	All Percent	Exception n	All Percent	Exception n	All Percent	Exception n	All Percent	Exception n
1983	132	58.3%	89	23.6%	69	20.3%	465	7.1%	2,423	5.8%
1984	160	53.8	139	30.2	79	25.3	627	7.8	2,760	5.9
1985	157	45.2	178	28.1	67	14.9	553	7.6	2,429	6.3
1986	155	49.7	141	26.2	76	23.7	558	6.1	2,027	6.7
1987	139	43.9	189	21.7	104	24.0	788	4.6	2,701	6.5
1988	192	49.0	228	27.6	112	26.8	839	5.4	2,587	6.1
1989	209	50.7	261	28.7	136	25.0	830	5.3	2,511	6.5
1990	197	43.1	294	25.5	143	19.6	885	5.6	2,681	4.7
1991	137	43.8	279	16.1	162	15.4	635	6.0	1,810	6.7
1992	160	32.5	265	13.6	177	15.8	923	4.3	2,267	4.6
1993	147	28.6	330	16.1	140	7.9	1,143	5.2	2,200	4.1
1994	190	34.7	396	15.4	166	16.3	1,255	4.6	2,226	3.6
1995	165	26.7	359	15.9	208	16.3	1,351	5.7	2,208	3.4
1996	148	20.9	315	9.5	176	9.7	1,537	2.5	2,328	2.8
1997	134	20.9	323	13.9	179	10.1	1,395	2.8	2,308	3.6
1983-97	2,422	40.5%	3,786	19.3%	1,994	17.0%	13,784	4.9%	35,466	5.2%

Admissions by exception now accounts for a diminishing proportion of new students from underrepresented groups. Whereas 47% of Blacks were admitted by exception in 1983-92, only 27% were so admitted in 1993-97. Similarly, in the most recent five-year period, 14% of Chicanos were admitted by exception, down from 23% in the previous ten-year period. Latino entrants admitted by exception were also down, from 21% to 12%.

The last campus *Undergraduate Student Affirmative Action Plan: 1990-1995* (March 1991), while reaffirming the value and importance of this admissions policy, recommended that the campus eventually hold the number of students admitted by exception from targeted groups to within "the proportion permitted by UC policy (6%)." Although this goal has not been achieved, the campus admissions process is coming closer to achieving it.

Persistence & Graduation

Students admitted by exception do not persist or graduate at rates equal to those of their eligible cohorts.¹ This finding is not surprising, given the large number of these students who enter with some academic skill deficiency and/or come from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

As Table 4 indicates, ten-year cohorts from high school admitted by exception entering in 1983-92 had an average fourth-quarter persistence rate of 86% (compared with 94% for eligible students). Advanced standing students admitted by exception during this same ten-year period persist to fourth-quarter at a slightly lower rate (84%), as do eligible students (91%). The gap between persistence rates of both high school and advanced standing entrants admitted by exception and those of eligible students mostly decreased or held steady since Fall 1993.

For undergraduates admitted by exception who entered 1983-92, fourth-quarter persistence rates (85%) are much higher than for the comparable cohort entering 1974-83 (76%). Persistence rates also increased for eligible students, going from 87% for the earlier cohort to 93% for the more recent one. These rates appear to have now stabilized, perhaps suggesting the upward limits of support programs serving undergraduates admitted by exception.

Graduation rates of students admitted by exception, while generally increasing over time, show considerable variability. As Table 5 (page following) shows, ten-year graduation rates among advance standing admits (65%) are considerably higher than those among high school student admits (54%).

¹RESEARCH SYNOPSIS No. 76 (December 1998) contains a list of recent campus research on persistence and graduation of UC Davis undergraduates

TABLE 4
Undergraduates Persisting Four or More Quarters
by Admission Status and Entering Class Level
Fall 1983-1996

Entered Fall	HIGH SCHOOL		ADVANCED STANDING		TOTAL	
	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>
1983	93%	83%	88%	79%	91%	81%
1984	94	84	88	81	92	83
1985	92	85	90	82	91	84
1986	93	88	90	81	92	86
1987	94	85	91	85	93	85
1988	94	87	91	88	93	87
1989	95	88	92	83	94	86
1990	95	84	92	87	94	85
1991	94	84	93	93	93	87
1992	94	87	92	79	93	84
1983-92	94%	86%	91%	84%	93%	85%
1993	94	87	93	87	94	87
1994	94	85	92	87	93	85
1995	92	82	93	85	92	82
1996	93	82	90	76	92	81

Note: Persistence rates as of Spring 1998.

TABLE 5
Graduation Rates of Undergraduates Admitted by Exception
by Entering Class Level
Fall 1983-1992

Entered Fall	HIGH SCHOOL		ADVANCED STANDING		ALL BY EXCEPTION	
	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>
1983	212	47%	111	65%	323	53%
1984	260	52	148	64	408	56
1985	239	53	126	59	365	55
1986	216	56	123	69	339	60
1987	259	58	115	70	374	62
1988	309	57	144	65	453	59
1989	308	62	147	60	455	61
1990	264	54	126	67	390	58
1991	218	53	90	72	308	58
1992	192	49	96	64	288	54
1983-92	2,477	54%	1,226	65%	3,703	58%

Note: Graduation rates as of Spring 1998.

The numbers of graduates admitted by exception within some ethnic groups are small and fluctuate widely from year to year, making it difficult to identify patterns or trends; however, the ten-year data on Table 6 indicate that graduation rates for Blacks, Chicanos and Latinos are fairly similar and, as a group, differ from rates for Asians and Whites.

Rates for all groups have improved over time. Thus, graduation rates rose among all students admitted by exception when compared to an earlier ten-year cohort: Blacks, from 34% (entering Fall 1974-83) to 49% (1983-92); Chicanos, from 38% to 51%; Latinos, from 35% to 54%; Asians, from 54% to 62%; and Whites, from 51% to 65%.

TABLE 6
Graduation Rates of Undergraduates Admitted by Exception
by Ethnicity
Fall 1983-1992

Entered Fall	BLACK		CHICANO		LATINO		ASIAN		WHITE	
	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>	Entrants <i>n</i>	Graduates <i>Percent</i>
1983	77	34%	21	52%	14	43%	33	70%	140	65%
1984	86	44	42	50	20	50	49	59	164	60
1985	71	52	50	34	10	30	42	71	153	60
1986	77	57	37	35	18	44	34	56	136	70
1987	61	48	41	63	25	72	36	64	176	66
1988	94	55	63	59	30	60	45	62	157	61
1989	106	58	75	55	34	62	44	68	163	67
1990	85	52	75	47	28	68	50	62	127	65
1991	60	50	45	64	25	32	38	58	121	67
1992	52	31	36	47	28	54	40	50	104	73
1983-92	769	49%	485	51%	232	54%	411	62%	1,441	65%

Note: Graduation rates as of Spring 1998. Because of the small number of American Indian and Filipino students admitted by exception, data are not presented separately for them. Ten year graduation rates (1983-92) for these students are 43% and 58%, respectively.

When compared with previous ten-year cohorts, graduation rates among students admitted by exception have increased. Thus, only 42% of the students who entered Fall 1974-1983 graduated, compared with 58% in the 1983-1992 cohort. Similarly, graduation rates among all eligible undergraduates rose from 70% (1974-83) to 81% (1983-92).

As seen in Table 7, graduation rates of students admitted by exception continue to lag behind those of regularly admitted students. The greatest gap exists among students admitted from high school: 34 per-

centage points for the ten-year cohort. But even among advanced standing students, where it is only half as large, the gap shows little likelihood of abating in the near future.

Despite these gaps in persistence and graduation rates, admissions by exception continues to be an important avenue to success for some students. For example, 26% of the 948 Black students entering UC Davis during 1983-92 who graduated were admitted by exception. Without this policy, the number of graduates from this group would be even smaller.

TABLE 7
Graduation Rates of Undergraduates
by Admission Status and Entering Class Level
Fall 1983-1992

Entered Fall	HIGH SCHOOL		ADVANCED STANDING		TOTAL	
	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>	<i>Eligible</i>	<i>By Exception</i>
1983	79%	47%	83%	65%	80%	53%
1984	80	52	81	64	80	56
1985	77	53	81	59	78	55
1986	81	56	83	69	82	60
1987	81	58	84	70	82	62
1988	82	57	84	65	83	59
1989	81	62	83	60	82	61
1990	81	54	84	67	82	58
1991	79	53	84	72	81	58
1992	76	49	83	64	78	54
1983-92	80%	54%	83%	65%	81%	58%

Note: Graduation rates as of Spring 1998.

Data Source

Data for this report come from the Composite Undergraduate File (CUF), a longitudinal database of undergraduates derived directly from the Student Records System (SRS) and maintained by Student Affairs Research & Information. Data herein come from the Spring 1998 CUF update. Because of record changes and error corrections, the contents of both the SRS and CUF change over time. Accordingly, these data represent our best current knowledge but may differ slightly from those released in previous reports or from other University sources.

Data used for this report appear in our standard reports: *Persistence & Graduation Rate Tables: UC Davis High School Admits, Advanced Standing Students and Undergraduates—Domestic Students by Admission Status & Ethnicity: 1983-1997*. These tables, as well as this report, appear in electronic form on our World Wide Website:

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