

**COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS & RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS
ANNUAL REPORT
2019-2020****To the Irvine Divisional Assembly:**

The Council on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools (CUARS) respectfully submits its report of activities for the 2019-20 academic year.

I. Council Operations

CUARS is charged with making recommendations regarding policies on admissions, enrollment, and outreach activities to the administration and to the Academic Senate, and providing faculty coordination for outreach activities. The Council monitors outreach programs directed toward academic enrichment of the campus through a diverse student body and advising the campus administration on the disbursement of any funds designated for such programs. The Council maintains liaison with the systemwide Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) in overseeing all matters relating to the admission of undergraduate students.

Susana Cohen-Cory, Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior, chaired the Council in 2019-20. She also served as the BOARS Representative. Sergio Gago-Masague, Assistant Professor of Teaching in Computer Science, served as Vice Chair. Both provided leadership to the CUARS meetings as appropriate.

The Council met nine times during the year. The meetings were attended by eleven appointed members, the Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions (Ex Officio), the Librarians Association of the University of California, Irvine (LAUC-I) Representative, the Associated Graduate Students (AGS) Representative, and the Associated Students - University of California, Irvine (ASUCI) Representative. Throughout the year, the Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions kept CUARS informed of the activities and status of Admissions/Enrollment and provided comments and advice when requested.

II. Divisional Issues/Policies**A. Admissions Reports**

Dale Leaman, Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions, provided regular admissions updates to CUARS members. Reports included data on fall 2019 and fall 2020 applicants. Director Leaman presented current raw data on the number of applications overall and broken down into categories as well as the progress of reading through the applications. Highlights include an increase in overall applications and an over 10% increase in applications from domestic, out-of-state applicants. Members were also provided a timeline describing approximate due dates for notifying applicants of their status.

Director Leaman also led members through a series of screenshots demonstrating the functionality of SLATE for admissions. Members expressed concern about how admission and enrollment numbers are correlated when some majors are having high achieving students denied admission. Chair Cohen-Cory shared a concern expressed at the last Divisional Senate Assembly meeting about an outside company making

admissions decisions, and Director Leaman assured members that this was not the case, and the filters do not eliminate students individually. He could not say that the past practice of not offering admission to top students will change, but he can provide yield numbers. He also stated that selection sets are being done in a more granular way this year that ideally can provide schools with the impacts of various criteria. Director Leaman also shared initial yield predictions for the offers being made through the Campuswide Honors Collegium.

B. Admissions Operations

Tony Hwang, Executive Director of Enrollment Management, provided an overview of Admissions and Enrollment Management operations. He reviewed the operations calendar, personnel, comprehensive review, augmented review, modeling and selection, recruitment/yield activities, appeals, post selection audit and awarding transferable course credit.

C. Review of International Undergraduate Preparation Program (IUPP)

Dale Leaman noted that the Office of Admissions is completely separate from this program, and that any past preferential treatment in comprehensive review that IUPP participants may have enjoyed is no longer the case. All applicants, regardless of participation in IUPP, are assessed the same way. This remains the case whether the applicant is applying as a first-year student or as a lower division transfer.

Members expressed concern about Admission by Exception (A-by-E) in regard to international students who may be in this program. Director Leaman noted A-by-E policies are strict about the type of students who can be admitted, such as a certain percentages for athletes and international students whose secondary preparation programs did not include arts courses, and this topic would be discussed further at the upcoming meeting of all UC Directors of Admission.

D. Changing Reader Scores from 1-3 to 1-5

Members were made aware of this upcoming topic for discussion. UCI previously used a 1-5 scale, but it had recently been changed to 1-3. Members understood that a 1-3 scale had been more efficient, so they wanted to understand the rationale for changing the scale back.

Director Leaman noted that the scoring scale was originally 1-5 but a few years ago was changed to 1-3. With two cycles completed at 1-3, he has found that it is harder to differentiate more outstanding and exceptional students from the crowd, and there is less granularity in decision making. He did not feel this would be a tremendous burden on the programming end. He would like to come up with language to share with members that would distinguish each score on the scale. Members had questions about how augmented review would work with the new scale, as well as wondering about the usefulness. For instance, wouldn't an applicant earning a 4 and an applicant earning a 5 both likely not get admitted? Additionally, there are still ongoing issues regarding top applicants who had earned 1s not being admitted. Director Leaman noted that this is likely determined by major caps in admissions, and the expanded scale would help ensure 1s are truly exceptional applicants. Members who had been present for discussion of the change to a 1-3 scale noted that the policy was presented as a way to increase inclusivity and diversity and requested that Director Leaman provide data on these points for both scales before a vote would occur on the change.

Members viewed data on the reader scores for applicant subgroups provided by the Office of Admissions. Director Leaman felt the data indicated that the change in scores, along with changing how the training is approached, will result in better outcomes for students from underrepresented groups. Members felt, however, that without the data that connected the reader scores to admissions decisions, it was not possible to tell if the change in scoring scale would be meaningful for students from underrepresented groups.

Director Leaman noted that it was difficult for him to obtain the data requested by members, and that the initial results from the past two years did not reflect what he had expected. As a result, he withdrew his request to change the scale.

E. Admissions Updates Regarding the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Director Leaman reported that he is seeking out data on applicants with statements of intent to register (SIRs) at multiple UC campuses and will report back those numbers when he knows them. Currently, domestic out-of-state SIRs are on pace for normal numbers, but California SIRs are down slightly, but this is to be expected in the current environment. He has received questions about guaranteeing student safety on campus in the fall, and this is an ongoing question with an evolving answer. It is possible students will choose to stay closer to home or attend community college instead of typical enrollment patterns. Director Leaman is in contact with other AAU institutions about the best ways to move forward. Additionally, his office is working as closely with counselors and high schools as possible to keep students informed of updates. Members expressed gratitude to Director Leaman and the staff of the Office of Admissions for their hard work with the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

Director Leaman noted that UC President Napolitano had recently issued a statement directing the Regents to eliminate SAT and ACT testing for admissions requirements beyond the COVID-19 situation. There will still be equity issues moving forward without testing, and there are discussions ongoing about what else should be examined or emphasized for admissions decisions. Additionally, there are equity issues with many potential areas of emphasis beyond SAT/ACT testing, including AP testing. Campuses are figuring out what to do about the lack of data from second semester junior year for the next round of applicants.

Director Leaman anticipates a heavier emphasis on Eligibility in Local Context (ELC) as an admissions tool, though this score only applies to applicants from public California high schools. He noted that a separate question regarding COVID-19 impact will likely be unnecessary because students will find ways to discuss its impact in other questions.

Director Leaman shared that he was leaning toward removing the SAT score from the read sheet for readers. However, he was also leaning toward returning to SAT scores after the first read to ensure no students with exceptional scores had been left out.

Director Leaman also shared that he had considered the ELC suggestion in the Campaign for College Opportunity document, but he feels that the suggestion to admit the top 4% of students from each high school to the campus of their choice to be facile. He said that some majors, nursing for instance, would be overwhelmed if this happened. He is, however, considering ELC with some modification.

Members felt that it was a positive step to not include test scores on the read sheet. However, members also felt that there is a lack of transparency, clarity, and cohesion from the Office of Admissions regarding how the factors of holistic review are utilized. Director Leaman explained that he feels this is the perfect time to reconsider how all of these factors are utilized. Chair Cohen-Cory shared that, at BOARS, members discussed how high school GPA is problematic in many ways test scores are, and Director Leaman agreed that high achieving schools have teachers being pressured to give higher grades from administrators and parents, so ELC is especially important. He also estimated that there are 84 targets, caps, and other requirements he is required to address. Members requested that they receive a copy of all of these compiled into a single document. Members requested that there be a distillation of the requirements and processes surrounding admissions.

Chair Cohen-Cory noted that she attended reader training last year and she felt most of it was dedicated to SLATE usage, and Director Leaman acknowledged the training can be improved. He also shared that all readers and staff in the Office of Admissions will be required to complete implicit bias training.

Director Leaman shared also that he is still working on how the compare favorably requirement for domestic out-of-state applicants will work without test scores. Members expressed concern about the drop in SIRs for students from underrepresented groups for the upcoming cycle. Director Leaman noted that he feels the drop is related to COVID cases impacting these students' communities. While domestic out-of-state applications are up, he also noted that the vast majority of these are international students, especially from China, attending US high schools in other states.

F. SIR Updates

As of May 8th, the campus was 133 SIRs over target for California residents, which was a number Director Leaman feels comfortable with in consideration of expected loss of committed students ("melt") over the summer. Non-resident SIRs were 128 over target, which is slightly below where Admissions would like to be. Director Leaman noted that all campuses in the system are having issues retaining engineering students. Executive Director of the Academic Senate Kate Brigman asked Director Leaman if he felt there would be more "melt" this summer than normal, and he said yes, but this will be common around the country. Chair Cohen-Cory asked if UCI would be taking similar tactics as other campuses, particularly San Diego, regarding testing and other policies for allowing students back on campus. Director Leaman explained that our Chancellor has been extremely communicative and open about UCI's process, and that no decisions have been made yet. He also noted that there is hope for relaxing the 2:1 policy and that transfer admissions will likely be impacted by COVID-19 for the foreseeable future.

G. Increasing Engagement and CUARS Duties in 2020-21

Chair Cohen-Cory shared an email from Academic Senate Executive Director Kate Brigman and Senate Chair James Steintrager that outlined suggestions for increased engagement and oversight for CUARS in 2020-21. This includes a 3-4 hour training session prior to the beginning of the regular meeting calendar where members would be given all of the information needed to understand the details of the admissions process, requesting regular updates on specific items from Admissions, and an overall increase in member engagement.

H. Admissions Changes in Light of Regents' Testing Decision

Over the summer, CUARS met three times with Director Leaman to create a draft admissions policy in light of the Regents' decision to eliminate the requirement for standardized testing for undergraduate admissions throughout the UC System and in light of limited SAT/ACT testing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Director Leaman proposed a plan that members offered suggested revisions to, including specifying further the predictive factors used for yield modeling as well as providing detail on the options listed for quantitative measurement for certain majors. Director Leaman submitted a revised proposal which CUARS approved. Members also approved the motion that UCI adopt a completely test-blind admissions policy.

III. Systemwide Issues/Policies**A. Standardized Testing Task Force**

Chair Cohen-Cory noted the report considers the possibility of developing a University of California specific entrance exam, though more research would be needed as to how that exam would look and how it would be used. Vice-Chair Gago-Masague noted that multiple simulations were discussed in the report that showed GPA alone actually decreased diversity in admissions. Members asked if those simulations were in the report, and at this point, they are not. Members also expressed concern regarding the legitimate research that shows systematic bias in standardized testing such as the SAT. To that end, members voted to send a statement to the Chair of BOARS recommending the STTF report to BOARS include a recommendation to the appropriate body to study the feasibility and implication of subsidized SAT testing for all California high school students, especially in terms of diversifying the college applicant pool.

Chair Cohen-Cory went over the recommendations from the STTF report and gave members a chance to discuss the findings. Director Leaman noted that he supports the idea of adding quantitative factors to comprehensive review such as number of successfully attempted AP courses. The report recommends expanding the 9x9 program, but Director Leaman noted this may not be possible due to a lack of capacity. During discussion of the STTF report findings, members felt that although there is evidence of the test being discriminatory, there is also evidence that it is predictive of student success. Members wondered how the UC system influences what happens at local high schools. It was agreed for the comments to be sent to Cabinet - to reflect the respect for the report's belief in the value of the test, but also to state that CUARS believes that structural barriers do exist. Independent of the STTF report findings, members expressed continued frustration at not having clarity on how admissions decisions are made at UCI and that Admissions is not open to questions.

B. BOARS Recommendation to Eliminate ACT/SAT Essay

Chair Cohen-Cory noted that the essay has not been taken into consideration in the admissions process for the last few years. Members felt it was a waste of time and money for students to continue requiring the essay component of the tests. CUARS members voted to agree with the BOARS recommendation to eliminate the essay requirement on these tests.

C. UCOP Application Verifications

Director Leaman noted it isn't necessarily accurate that 2% of UCI applications were rejected in this process. He explained that UCOP utilized a new program to compare

online written responses to one another and to essay selling websites. There were a number of applications that had extremely similar responses to one another and others that were similar to ones posted online. In most of these cases, the applications were cancelled, and most of these applicants were likely rejected. Chair Cohen-Cory noted that a BOARS concern around this issue was a higher population of students from underrepresented groups among the cancelled applications, and Director Leaman said Admissions was working with college counselors to communicate about the issue with applicants.

D. Revisions to Senate Regulation 424.A.3 (Area D)

Director Leaman noted the main concern regarding this change is changing “lab science” to simply be “science” in order to allow schools with fewer resources to meet the change in regulation. Members recommended having a minimum threshold of science requirements by a school before we ask students to meet the increased requirement. Director Leaman also noted this expansion is meant to allow for computer science classes, but will need to be revisited frequently to ensure proper utilization.

IV. Guests

James Steintrager, Chair, Academic Senate
Tony Hwang, Executive Director, Enrollment Management
Bryan Jue, Senior Director of Outreach and Recruiting, Office of Admissions
Kate Brigman, Executive Director, Academic Senate

V. Council Membership

Members

Susana Cohen-Cory, Biological Sciences, Chair
Sergio Gago-Masague, ICS, Vice Chair
Stanley Bailey, Social Sciences
Emily Penner, Education
Candice Odgers, Social Ecology
S. Ama Wray, Arts
Jayne Lewis, Humanities
Kevin Bradford, Business
Daniel Mumm, Engineering
David Kirkby, Physical Sciences
Robert Spitale, Health Sciences
Morton Pincus, Business (term ended 12/31/19)

Ex Officio

Dale Leaman, Executive Director of Undergraduate Admissions

Representatives

Krystal Tribbett, Librarians Association of the University of California, Irvine
Sylvie Xu, Associated Students University of California, Irvine
Levys Juarez Maciel, Associated Students - University of California, Irvine
Eric Hernandez Barraza, Associated Graduate Students University of California, Irvine