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## GAMING THE SYSTEM



### ***INFLATION, PRIVILEGE, & THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA***

Robin Nicole Johnson, Cynthia Mosqueda, Ana-Christina Ramón, & Darnell M. Hunt

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## Abstract

The admission rate of African Americans has declined in the UC system, most severely at its top institutions, since 1996 when Proposition 209 was passed in California. Prop. 209 amended the California constitution by banning the consideration of race in admissions at state institutions. Prop. 209 has had a disastrous effect on diversity at most major UC campuses, resulting in the low matriculation of African American, Latina/o, and American Indian students. In 2002, as a response to this crisis, the UC system implemented “comprehensive review,” which is designed to consider a full range of student accomplishments (e.g., leadership, musical or athletic talent) while also taking into account a student’s experiences and circumstances. According to the University of California Office of the President, comprehensive review was instituted “to improve the quality and fairness of admissions decisions at the University of California.” Comprehensive review does not consider a student’s race.

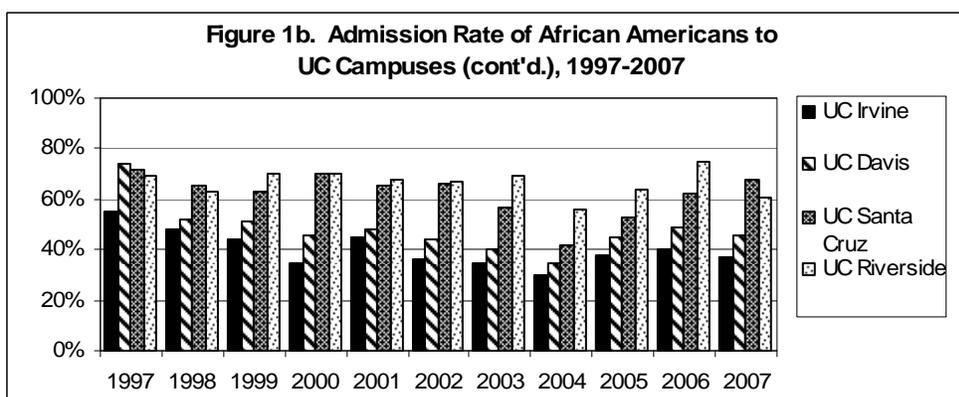
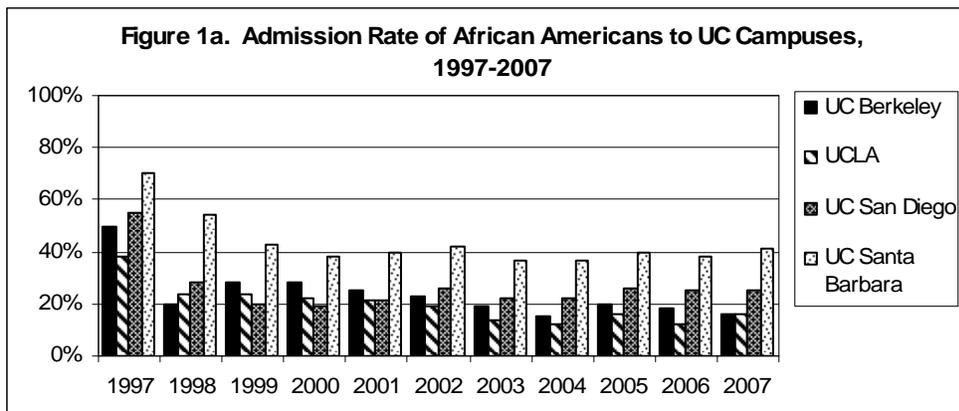
The latest *Bunche Research Report*, “Gaming the System,” examines how each UC campus has operationalized comprehensive review and, more specifically, how each campus’ admissions process affects African American access to the UC system. The report assesses how well comprehensive review at each UC campus (except UC Merced which does not employ comprehensive review) addresses educational disparities and ensures ethnic and racial diversity. The report presents recommendations on what the UC system, each UC campus, and the community can do to increase and preserve diversity at each UC campus.

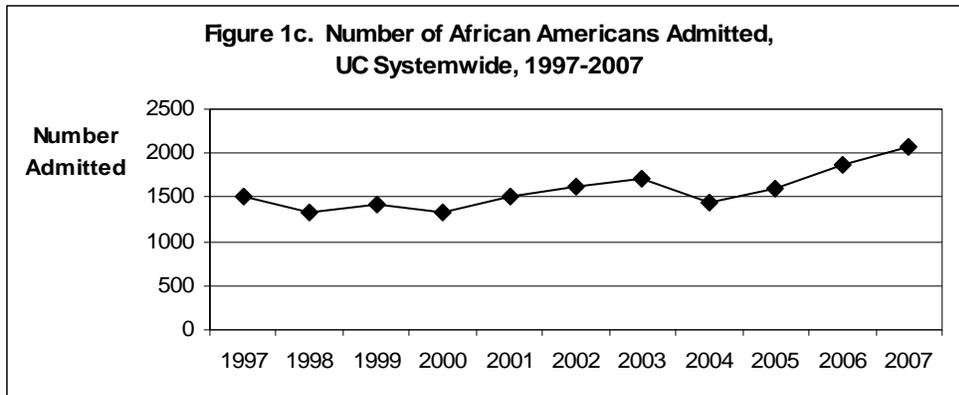
In general, analysis of the operationalization of comprehensive review at each UC campus indicates a commitment to evaluating students beyond traditional indicators of merit. All of the campuses have found ways to use information about applicants’ personal achievements and life challenges to determine their admissions decisions. However, the campuses still rely too heavily on traditional indicators of merit in the admissions process, which – when combined with the stratospheric demand for freshman slots (particularly at the most prestigious campuses) – leads to inflated admissions “prices” that underrepresented minorities are often unable to pay due to K-12 disparities throughout the state. Indeed, the majority of the universities surveyed in this report do not make adequate efforts to account for the disadvantages experienced by African Americans and other underrepresented minorities in K-12 education. In the end, the campuses’ over-reliance on inflated numbers dilutes the impact that a consideration of other important indicators of merit (e.g., tenacity, creativity, commitment to community service, or academic achievement *within the context* of challenges) could and should have in the admissions process. In light of this, the recommendations in the report call on the UC system and each UC campus to rely less on traditional indicators of merit in the admissions process and to increase outreach efforts; the community is also advised to monitor admissions at the UCs, take steps to have their opinions heard, and to become involved as readers in the admissions process.

The findings in this report are key to uncovering best practices in California, but may also provide valuable lessons to other states across the country that are experiencing the dismantling of affirmative action, such as Texas and Michigan that have already passed anti-affirmative action initiatives similar to California, as well as states such as Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma that may soon eliminate affirmative action. California may be the best example of both the disastrous consequences and the promising solutions to anti-affirmative action initiatives.

## Introduction

For nearly every University of California (UC) campus, the admit rate of African American undergraduates has declined dramatically since 1997 (see Figures 1a and 1b).<sup>1</sup> African Americans today constitute the lowliest admitted group of students at each UC campus. Although systemwide the raw number of African American admits has *increased* about 30 percent over the period (see Figure 1c), the number of all admits has increased as well, resulting in a *decrease* in the proportional representation of African American freshmen on each UC campus<sup>2</sup> - 22 percentage points, on average (UCOP, 2007a; UCOP 2007b). In other words, the number of students admitted into the UC system has grown in size, but the number of new African American freshmen has not kept pace. This decline in African American representation is steepest at UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego – the three most selective campuses in the system – which posted drops of 34, 22, and 30 percentage points, respectively, since 1997. Ironically, the number of African American students who meet UC’s eligibility requirements has more than doubled over the same period. Between 1996 and 2003 alone, the percentage of UC-eligible African American high school graduates rose from 2.8 percent to 6.2 percent (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2004). It should also be noted that the number of African American applicants to UC campuses has increased by 65 percent since 1997 (UCOP, 2007b; UCOP 2007c).





Since the mid-1980s, the admit rates for all groups of students have declined steadily as the supply of UC freshman slots has failed to keep up with ever-increasing student demand. For the most popular UC campuses like UCLA and UC Berkeley, applications for admission nearly doubled in a single year following changes in UC rules in 1986 that permitted students to apply simultaneously to more than one campus. But the admit rates of African Americans on these campuses took their biggest plunge following the passage of California Proposition 209 in 1996, pushing African American applicants to the bottom of the admissions heap.

Proposition 209 amended the California constitution by banning the consideration of race in admissions at state institutions. It has had a disastrous impact on diversity at most UC campuses, resulting in a significant decline in the matriculation of African American, Latina/o, and American Indian students over the past decade. In 2002, as a response to this crisis, the UC system implemented “comprehensive review,” new systemwide admissions guidelines that are designed to consider a full range of student accomplishments (e.g., leadership, musical or athletic talent), while also taking into account a student’s experiences and personal circumstances. According to the UC Office of the President, comprehensive review was instituted “to improve the quality and fairness of admissions decisions at the University of California.”<sup>3</sup> As per Proposition 209’s mandate, comprehensive review does not take into consideration an applicant’s race.

Supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation, UCLA’s Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies established the College Access Project for African Americans (CAPAA) in 2002 to examine the crisis of severe underrepresentation confronting African Americans in California’s public institutions of higher education. For the past two years, CAPAA researchers have focused their efforts on studying the comprehensive review process at each UC campus. The present report—the fifth and final installment in the series—examines how each UC campus has operationalized comprehensive review and, more specifically, how each campus’ admissions process affects African American access to the UC system. The report assesses how well comprehensive review at each UC campus<sup>4</sup> addresses educational disparities and the degree to which it serves the goal of ethnic and racial diversity. The report presents recommendations on what the UC system, each UC campus, and their respective communities can do to increase and preserve diversity on the campuses.

The findings in this report are key to uncovering best practices in California that may also provide valuable lessons for other states across the country that are experiencing the dismantling of affirmative action. Indeed, Texas and Michigan have already passed anti-affirmative action initiatives similar to California's, while states such as Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma<sup>5</sup> may soon do so. California may be the best example of *both* the disastrous consequences of anti-affirmative action initiatives *and* promising solutions for ensuring diversity absent racially sensitive policy tools.

Finally, it should be noted that this report focuses on the UC system – as opposed to the larger California State University system, community colleges, or private institutions – because of the unique role that the UC plays in the state of California. The UC is the state's elite, public, land grant institution charged with serving the greater good by producing cutting-edge research and educating the state's future leaders – activity that powers the state's economy and makes the most of the state's social challenges and opportunities. When key racial and ethnic groups are woefully underrepresented in this process, we submit, the greater good is ill served. This is particularly true when minority exclusion rests on dubious notions of merit.

### **Affirmative Action and the Myth of Meritocracy**

Affirmative action is a diverse set of policies devised by the US government and private sector entities to increase the representation and participation of traditionally marginalized and oppressed groups in the education and employment sectors. These policies are intended to remedy past and present discrimination of groups based on race, age, gender, disability, and ethnic origin. Affirmative action policy originated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The federal government adopted additional policies to prevent discrimination in the workforce based on executive orders by President Johnson in 1965 and 1967.<sup>6</sup> After affirmative action in the workplace was crafted and enforced by the federal government, affirmative action policies in college admissions were implemented throughout the 1960s and 1970s at post-secondary institutions. These policies were developed out of the desire of colleges and universities to increase campus diversity, as well as in response to pressures created by student protests (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Special consideration given to traditionally marginalized groups in college admissions was meant to serve as a modest means to address the enduring racial inequalities in K-12 education that prevent underrepresented groups from accessing higher education. In the period since affirmative action policies were introduced in the higher education arena, African American enrollment numbers have increased at many American colleges and universities, particularly on elite campuses. African American enrollment at Ivy League colleges, for example, rose from 2.3 percent in 1967 to 6.3 percent in 1976 (Karen, 1991).

In the absence of affirmative action, selective colleges and universities tend to rely almost exclusively on GPA and standardized test scores in admission decisions. These measures are believed to be the most accurate and "objective" measures of "merit," of who deserves admission to competitive institutions. Students with higher GPAs and standardized test scores are considered to be smarter, to have dedicated more time and effort to their studies, and to have a greater capacity to graduate from

college than students with lower GPAs and test scores. Meritocracy can be defined as a system in which opportunity and progress rest on rewarding ability and talent. The idea that our educational system is a meritocracy is rooted in the “reasonable” assumption that GPAs and standardized test scores are valid indicators of the best and brightest – those who most deserve the opportunity to benefit from an elite college education (and who will make the most of that benefit).

### ***K-12 Inequalities***

In reality, racial inequalities run rampant in K-12 education (see *California Educational Opportunity Report*, 2007), confounding what many consider unbiased and objective measures of “merit” with the continuing effects of racial and socio-economic inequality in this country. Public schools in California today are racially segregated and unequal. On average, schools with majority white and Asian populations have better resources, better qualified teachers, and more college preparatory and honors courses than majority African American and Latina/o schools (*Bunche Research Report*, 2004, 2005, 2006a; Martin, Karabel, & Jaquez, 2005; Teranishi, Allen, & Solórzano, 2004; Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2006). Segregated and unequal schooling conditions prevent a large number of African Americans and Latina/os from accessing college, particularly elite campuses like those in the UC. These inequities make it virtually impossible for African Americans to compete on equal footing in the “college admissions game” with their white and Asian American counterparts, students who typically enjoy better schooling conditions and greater resources. Research clearly shows that unequal schooling conditions have a tremendous impact on college-attendance. In fact, one study reveals that whites and Asians who attend African American and Latina/o majority schools have lower college-going rates than their counterparts who attend majority white and Asian schools (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 2004). Tellingly, this pattern holds for African Americans and Latina/os as well. The data show that black and Latina/o students who attend majority white and Asian schools (which are better resourced) are more likely to go to college than their counterparts who attend majority minority schools (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 2004).

A key disparity in California public schools that impacts student access to the UC is the number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered at each school. AP courses allow students to learn college-level material while still in high school. After completing an AP course, students have the option of taking a standardized AP examination and an opportunity to earn college credit upon passing the examination. College admissions processes throughout the country look favorably upon the successful completion of AP courses. In many schools, students who successfully complete AP courses are awarded an additional grade point. A ‘B’ grade in an AP course, for example, would be recorded as an ‘A’ grade, and so on. This treatment of AP courses explains why many students who take them are able to earn GPAs in excess of 4.0. In fact, the *average* GPA of students admitted to UC Berkeley and UCLA has exceeded 4.0 in recent years.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, a great disparity in access to AP courses in California public high schools exists and runs along racial lines. Of the state’s top 50 high schools that offer the most AP courses to their

students, whites make up 49 percent of the student population at these schools, Asians make up 29 percent, Latina/os make up just 16 percent, and African Americans only 5 percent (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004). In other words, whites and Asians are overrepresented at these AP-rich public high schools, while African Americans and Latina/os are underrepresented.<sup>8</sup> The racial disparities only increase when we consider what private high schools have to offer.

An additional disparity is that African Americans and Latina/os have inadequate access to basic courses required by the University of California (as well as the California State University). These courses, commonly referred to as “a-g” courses, provide students with base level knowledge in subjects such as English, Math, Science, and the Arts. African Americans and Latina/os typically attend California public high schools that do not provide the minimum “a-g” coursework (Oakes, et. al., 2006). Indeed, a study conducted by Ali, Oakes, and Rogers (2007) found that 60 percent of African Americans and Latina/os attend public high schools that offer an insufficient number of “a-g” courses, compared to just 40 percent of whites and Asians.

### ***The Standardized Test Trap***

SAT scores constitute another measure of “merit” that is, in actuality, clearly impacted by racial and economic disparities. Historically and currently, a national test-score gap exists, with African Americans and Latina/os having lower scores on average than white and Asian students (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Geiser and Santelices (2007), along with other scholars have found that SAT I<sup>9</sup> scores are correlated with school API<sup>10</sup>, parent education, and family income. In other words, SAT I scores are related to both the quality of a student’s high school, and his or her socioeconomic status (SES). Since African Americans and Latina/os are more likely than their white and Asian counterparts to attend low API schools and reside in the lower socioeconomic strata of this country, it should come as no surprise that these groups traditionally score lower on this allegedly valid measure of a student’s potential for academic achievement.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, there is an all-too prevalent notion that the SAT I exam is an objective measure of academic ability. However, the SAT I measures a set of skills that are not directly influenced by innate abilities or school curriculum (see Steele, 1999). It is also commonly believed that higher SAT I scores point to greater potential to succeed in college. Thus, most colleges (particularly those that are most selective) rely heavily on the test to determine admissions. But research reveals that the standardized exam does a poor job of predicting how students will perform once they are admitted to college. According to a study conducted by the UC Office of the President (UCOP) (Geiser & Studley, 2001), the SAT I only predicts 13 percent of the variance in UC freshmen GPA.<sup>12</sup> This means, that 87 percent of the variance in UC first-year college GPA is not explained by how students perform on the SAT I. Nationwide, the SAT I alone predicts about 18 percent of the variation of freshman GPA (Steele, 1999). Those with higher SAT I scores will not necessarily perform better in college than those with lower SAT I scores. Steele (1999) finds that a score difference as large as 300 points makes very little difference in student

performance as measured by GPA. Vars and Bowen (1998) found that a 100-point increase in an SAT I score might only raise a student's predicted GPA by one-tenth of a grade point. African Americans and Latina/os who have lower test scores, largely due to the disadvantages they face in the K-12 context, will not necessarily perform worse in college than their majority counterparts who attain higher SAT I scores.

It should be noted that the SAT I is an even poorer predictor for African Americans than it is for the general population. For African American freshmen in the UC system, the SAT I only predicts 10 percent of the variation in their GPAs (Geiser & Studley, 2001).<sup>13</sup> Thus, a whopping 90 percent of the variation in how well African Americans perform during their first year of college on a UC campus is left unexplained by their performance on the SAT I. Not only is the SAT I a weak measure in terms of gauging student academic potential, but its conflation of achievement and privilege (or the lack thereof) actually works to reproduce inequality when it is used to exclude otherwise deserving, underrepresented minority students.

Moreover, African American students are particularly vulnerable to being underestimated and mislabeled by standardized tests like the SAT. Research shows that African Americans often earn lower SAT scores due to "stereotype-threat" (Steele, 1992, 1997, 1998), the anxiety or stress triggered by the fear that one might fulfill or be associated with a relevant stereotype. Steele has found that African Americans taking standardized exams such as the SAT often experience anxiety or fear that their performance on the exam will confirm the stereotype that African Americans are intellectually inferior. This anxiety and fear, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, causes them to falter on exams by interfering with their concentration, which in turn often results in depressed test scores.

In the final analysis, traditional measures of academic "merit" may be more accurately understood as measures of racial and economic privilege in this country. Minority students who present lower GPAs and test scores than their majority counterparts have not necessarily devoted less effort towards their studies, they do not necessarily have less academic potential, nor are they necessarily less intelligent. More often than not, these underrepresented students are trapped in relatively disadvantaged contexts and are achieving as much as their environments will allow. To be sure, traditional indicators of academic "merit" like GPA and SAT scores only measure a narrow range of the attributes many colleges and universities claim to value. They do not capture critical thinking skills, creativity, leadership skills, and other attributes essential to student success in college and, more importantly, to efforts to make a mark on the world after graduation.

Although African American students generally lag behind their white and Asian counterparts on traditional measures of academic achievement, it should be noted that these students are extremely resilient – despite the tilted playing field. African American applicants and admits to the UC system present stellar GPAs and SAT scores as a group, despite the challenges that many students have had to overcome in their K-12 schooling contexts. For example, in the fall of 2007, the average high school GPA for entering African American freshmen was 4.08<sup>14</sup> (UCLA AIM, 2007). By comparison, entering Asian and white freshmen posted average GPAs of 4.33 and 4.31, respectively (UCLA AIM, 2007). In other words, the typical black freshman presented a GPA that was less than three-tenths of a grade point lower

than the one presented by the typical white or Asian freshman. This is an insignificant difference. It is a difference that has much to do with K-12 inequalities and the inflation stemming from a limited supply of freshman slots and the skyrocketing student demand for them. It has little to do with any meaningful difference in the actual ability of these students to achieve in college and beyond.

## **The UC Context**

The Master Plan for Higher Education of 1960 established a hierarchical system of public higher education for the State of California. It defined the distinct missions of two four-year systems of postsecondary education, as well as a single two-year community college system (Kerr, 1994)<sup>15</sup>. The UC – the focus of this report – was designated as the research university and was mandated to select only the top 12.5 percent of the state’s high school graduating class. The other four-year system, the California State University (CSU), was conceived as the teaching university and designated to accept the top 33.3 percent of the state’s graduating seniors. The California Community Colleges were established to provide vocational education for older adults and lower division courses for younger students who may eventually transfer to UC or CSU; these open campuses admit all students likely to benefit from instruction. Despite recent increases in student fees, the cost of attending these publicly subsidized institutions for in-state students traditionally has been low compared to the cost of attending other institutions of similar quality (the UC does not charge tuition for in-state students). For example, annual in-state fees to attend UCLA in 2007-2008 (*USNWR* rank 25) totaled \$7,711.23. By contrast, tuition and fees to attend the University of Southern California (*USNWR* rank 27) totaled \$35,810.

As a public research university, diversity is essential to the UC system’s core mission to serve the needs of the state through teaching, research, and service. Indeed, the UC Regents have repeatedly endorsed this position, most recently by adopting a Diversity Statement that directly links diversity to the university’s mission:

*Because the core mission of the University of California is to serve the interests of the State of California, it must seek to achieve diversity among its student bodies and among its employees. The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from all backgrounds perceive that access to the University is possible for talented students, staff, and faculty from all groups. (University of California, 2007c)*

Students become *eligible* for UC admission by meeting the minimum criteria for admissions. Prior to 2000, students could become eligible for admission through the statewide context plan, which requires students to meet certain minimum requirements for coursework, grade point average, and test scores. A second path is through examination alone. If students do not meet the coursework or GPA requirements, they may be considered if they score high enough on ACT or SAT reasoning tests and SAT subject tests. In 2000, the UC Regents established the Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) program as a way to expand eligibility for admission. By adding ELC, the UC Regents expanded access to students who

graduated in the top 4 percent of their class at participating high schools. ELC schools are typically schools that do not send many students to UC campuses. Some campuses consider ELC in their comprehensive review of applicants. While eligibility guarantees admission to the UC *system*, it does not guarantee admission to any of the eight campuses that use *selectivity* measures. Selectivity refers to an additional set of criteria that competitive campuses use to choose students for admission amongst all applicants who meet minimum UC eligibility requirements (*Bunche Research Report*, 2006a).

### ***Post-209 Admissions Reforms***

Despite positive affirmation of the need for admissions reform by administrators, faculty, and regents (e.g., the implementation of ELC, reconsideration of the usefulness of the SAT I exam, and the symbolic repeal of SP-1<sup>16</sup>), students were primarily behind the movement for change in the Post-Proposition 209 era. One example is the class-action suit filed against UC Berkeley in 1998 – *Jesus Rios v. The Regents of the University of California*.<sup>17</sup> Three Latina/o, African American, and Filipino students who were denied admission to UC Berkeley filed the suit. Lawrence (2001) argued that students like Jesus Rios, the lead plaintiff, had superior academic records but were denied admission because the “color-blind” process implemented post-Proposition 209 “resurrected the old preferences for the sons and daughters of the privileged.” According to the *Rios* suit, Berkeley’s admissions process created a preference for whites in two ways: gave bonus points to high school students taking AP classes; and “relied in a determinative and exclusionary way on insignificant differences in standardized test scores” (Lawrence, 2001). The “GPA bump” favored white students and others from wealthier backgrounds because they had greater access to Advanced Placement courses. The *Rios* suit also challenged the reliance on SAT scores because, as discussed earlier, they offer little value for predicting a student’s success in the freshman year at a UC campus (Geiser & Studley, 2001; Geiser & Santelices, 2007).

On the heels of the *Rios* suit, UC Berkeley adopted a new admissions policy, “holistic admissions,” which evaluated an applicant’s achievements in the context of his/her challenges and opportunities. McDonough’s (1997) study of four high schools, two private and one public, showed that the organizational culture of each school impacted which students went to college and to what type of school (e.g., two year or four year). Schools offer important resources such as college counselors, college-preparatory curriculum, and informal advice from school personnel such as teachers and coaches (McDonough, 1997). For this reason, UC Berkeley’s move to consider the school context represented an important step in the right direction for expanding access for African Americans and other underrepresented students.

In fall 2002, the University of California followed UC Berkeley’s lead and implemented a new admissions plan in which applicants would be evaluated by both academic and non-academic criteria. The new freshman selection process, named “comprehensive review,” was designed for system campuses that received far more qualified applicants than available spaces. Comprehensive review permits each of these more selective campuses to draw upon 14 criteria for the admissions review process.<sup>18</sup> These factors

include items such as high school grade point average (GPA), standardized test scores, personal achievements, and life challenges. Although there is considerable variation among the UC campuses regarding which specific items are included in the review process and how they are weighed, each campus aims to view its selections process, to some degree, within the context of applicants' opportunities and the challenges they have faced. In the end, however, comprehensive review requires each UC campus to prioritize academic performance over all other factors in the admissions review process.

Although comprehensive review may fail by being too focused on academic performance, further change may still be ahead for the UC admissions process. As noted earlier, the SAT I continues to be overused in UC admissions processes. However, colleges and universities are beginning to see the flaws of the exam and there is a growing movement to eradicate its use. One of the leaders of the movement, Lloyd Thacker, a former college counselor and director of Education Conservancy, has been rallying support across the nation from college presidents and directors of admissions to abandon the SAT I (and subsequently SAT II subject exams). He argues that the exam not only causes students to experience unnecessary anxiety, but also prompts colleges to focus more on numbers than on students (Thacker, 2005). In 2001, the usefulness of the SAT I exam as predictor of first-year grades was challenged by former UC President Robert Atkinson. Atkinson proposed eliminating the use of SAT I in UC admissions, but still favored using the SAT II subject tests. UC, however, continues to require both exams.

A recent proposal by UC's Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools<sup>19</sup> – the body that establishes admissions standards for the entire system – recommends eliminating the consideration of SAT II subject exam scores for the purposes of determining UC eligibility (Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), 2007). Students would not be required to take the subject exam but campus-based majors, such as engineering, would be allowed to recommend particular exams. Students would still have the option of taking the subject exams and submitting their scores. And, finally, campuses would still have the option of considering these scores when making admissions decisions. The BOARS proposal cites research showing that many otherwise UC-eligible students (including many minorities) do not take the SAT II subject tests, and it acknowledges that the tests add practically no additional information beyond the SAT I results in regards to how well students are likely to do in their freshman year.

In general, all admissions reforms following Proposition 209 are mandated to be race neutral *in process*, despite the fact that they may limit access for certain racial groups *in effect*. As public institutions receiving federal funding, UC campuses are also subject to federal adverse impact standards associated with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the arena of college admissions, policy adversely impacts individuals of a particular group when that group's admission rate is less than 80 percent of the admission rate for the most highly admitted group. At UCLA, the admission rate of African Americans has been less than 80 percent of the admission rate for Asian Pacific Islanders and whites every year since 2002 (*Bunche Research Report*, 2006b).

## Selectivity and Rankings

Despite the debate over the usefulness of standardized tests for admissions decisions, the SAT I is still used throughout the country as a popular measure of selectivity and in college rankings. Indeed, the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has devised a selectivity measure that stratifies institutions based on institutional type/control (e.g., public or private) and institutional selectivity, defined by average SAT score of new, full-time freshmen (Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santos & Korn, 2007). Based on the 1600 SAT scale, a public university with “low selectivity” has an average SAT below 1085 for incoming freshmen. A “medium selectivity” public university ranges from 1085-1139, while a “highly selective” public university has an average combined SAT score of 1140 and above for incoming freshmen. The small differences in these average scores raise pressing questions about the usefulness of using average SAT scores as meaningful measures of selectivity. The majority of UC campuses are highly selective public universities based on the HERI measure. For each campus, we compared HERI’s selectivity measure, the current mean combined SAT, mean high school GPA of freshmen admitted for fall 2007, and *US News & World Report (USNWR)* rankings for national universities in 2008<sup>20</sup> (see Table 1). Despite minor inconsistencies between the measures – for instance, UC Davis is ranked higher than UC Irvine and UC Santa Barbara by *USNWR*, but the average SAT and high school GPA for admitted freshmen at Davis is lower than at its other middle-tier counterparts – the table, overall, seems to point to a clear hierarchy among UC campuses based on selectivity and popular ranking. The analysis that follows groups these campuses into three tiers in order to examine the ways in which selectivity and ranking affect admissions policies and, ultimately, the access of African American students.

**Table 1. UC Selectivity**

| <b>Selectivity Tier</b> | <b>Campus</b>    | <b>HERI Selectivity<sup>21</sup></b> | <b>Mean SAT<sup>22</sup></b> | <b>Mean HS GPA</b> | <b>US News &amp; World Report</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tier I                  | UC Berkeley      | 1295                                 | 2029                         | 4.1                | 21                                |
|                         | UC Los Angeles   | 1265                                 | 2008                         | 4.14               | 25                                |
|                         | UC San Diego     | 1247                                 | 1945                         | 4.06               | 38                                |
| Tier II                 | UC Santa Barbara | 1188                                 | 1850                         | 3.91               | 44                                |
|                         | UC Irvine        | 1185                                 | 1834                         | 3.92               | 44                                |
|                         | UC Davis         | 1171                                 | 1845                         | 3.89               | 42                                |
| Tier III                | UC Santa Cruz    | 1137                                 | 1760                         | 3.66               | 79                                |
|                         | UC Riverside     | 1054                                 | 1673                         | 3.59               | 96                                |
|                         | UC Merced        | n/a                                  | 1632                         | 3.56               | n/a                               |

Sources: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, and *US News & World Report*

## Research Questions

- How is comprehensive review implemented at each UC campus?
- How does each campus’ comprehensive review process affect diversity and access for underrepresented minority students?

- To what degree does each campus' comprehensive review process address racial inequities in K-12 education?
- To what degree does selectivity tier pattern these admissions policies and practices?

## **Method**

In order to address these research questions, we conducted formal and informal interviews with various entities associated with the admissions process at each of the nine UC campuses. Such entities included admissions directors, admissions staff, readers, and faculty representatives. Our interview questions included (but were not limited to) the degree to which the campus in question considers academic achievement and supplemental factors within an applicant's schooling context, how formal weights or values are assigned to each factor in determining an applicant's read score or ranking, whether the selection process includes the full range of the eligibility pool, and what steps are taken to recruit admitted students. Collecting data from admissions directors and staff proved difficult as the majority of campuses have complicated and non-transparent admissions processes.

In addition to interview data, we also used data from the UC Office of the President on admissions at each campus, broken down by ethnicity/race. For each campus, we examined the number of applicants, admits, and enrollees in key years, as well as each group's admission and yield rates. Our analyses encompass the period from 1997 to 2007. Because Proposition 209 restrictions were first implemented in 1997 and affected the entering class of fall 1998, we include admissions figures for 1997 in order to include data for the last year in which affirmative action was still in effect. We examine data from each year since 1997, including the most recent data for fall 2007, in order to examine changes in admissions outcomes after affirmative action was eliminated from the admissions process at UC. The latest data reflect some of the recent changes in admissions policy at campuses like UCLA, which implemented holistic review for the fall 2007 admissions cycle, and UC Riverside, which recently became selective. Because UC Merced does not use comprehensive review, it is excluded from the analysis.

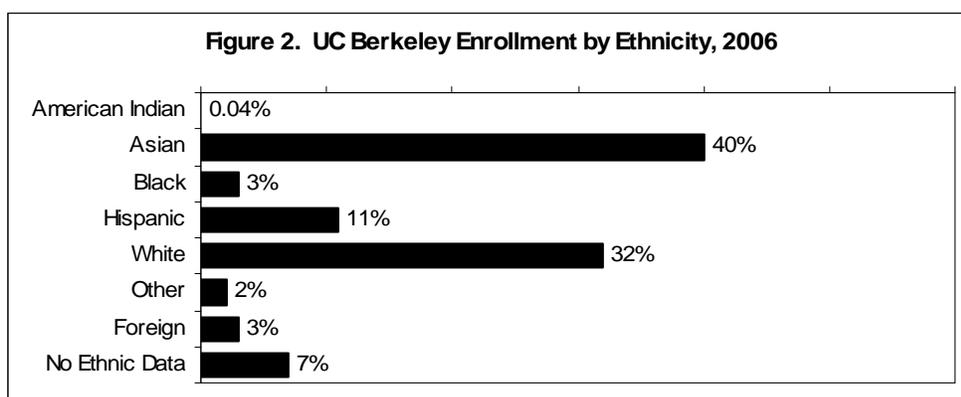
We grouped UC campuses into three selectivity tiers according to the HERI selectivity measure because it was largely consistent with other measures of institutional selectivity such as *USNWR* ranking, mean SAT, and the mean high school GPA of admitted students. In the UC system, the most selective institutions receive the greatest number of applications, admit the fewest students, and post the highest yield rates. UC Berkeley, UC Los Angeles, and UC San Diego were categorized as tier I because they are the most selective campuses in the system. Tier II campuses included UC Santa Barbara, UC Irvine, and UC Davis, while UC Santa Cruz, UC Riverside, and UC Merced<sup>23</sup> were categorized as tier III (see Table 1). These distinctions, it seems, are congruent with popular perceptions of UC campus quality and prestige.

## Findings

### TIER I

#### UC Berkeley (est. 1868)

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC Berkeley had an undergraduate student body of approximately 24,000 students. African Americans accounted for only about 3 percent of the student population. In fact, next to American Indians, they were the smallest ethnic group on campus. Hispanics, or Latina/os, were the largest underrepresented minority population on campus, constituting 11 percent of the student body. Typical of most UC campuses, Asians were the largest racial and ethnic group at UC Berkeley, making up 40 percent of the student body, followed by whites who made up 32 percent of the student body (see Figure 2).



Source: UC Berkeley, Office of Student Research

*Admissions Policy.* UC Berkeley implements comprehensive review in a “holistic” fashion. The university publicly states that its

*...admissions process honors academic achievement and accords priority to students of exceptional academic accomplishment. At the same time, the decision-making process employs a broad and multifaceted definition of merit, including an assessment of contributions that a student will make to the intellectual, cultural, or other aspects of campus life. (UC Berkeley Academic Senate, 2007)*

According to admissions officials, the school attempts to consider student achievement within the educational and social context of each applicant. Thus, the school evaluates both academic and non-academic factors to determine admission. Academic factors include weighted<sup>24</sup> and unweighted<sup>25</sup> GPA in college preparatory courses, the ratio of honors courses taken to the courses offered at each applicant’s high school, honors and awards, qualification for UC Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC),<sup>26</sup> and course load for the twelfth-grade year. Non-academic factors include personal qualities

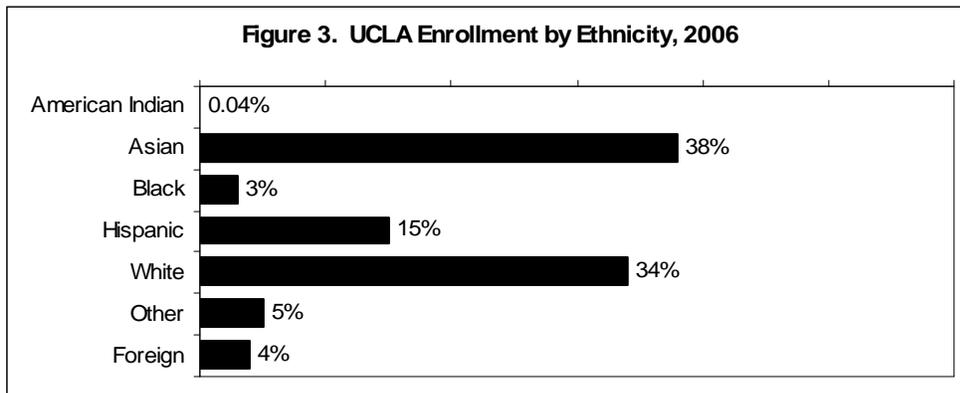
such as leadership, community involvement, employment, and motivation. While academic factors are given the most weight in determining whether or not a student will be admitted, UC Berkeley admissions officers claim that no single attribute or characteristic guarantees admission. They also state that applicants from underserved schools have as likely a chance as other applicants to be admitted.

Admissions officials also revealed that when evaluating an application, readers use what is called a “read-sheet” to provide contextual information about each applicant’s school such as API score, school population size, and the number of students that qualify for free lunch. Additionally, the read-sheet provides information on how each applicant’s GPA and test scores compare to that of other UC Berkeley and UC applicants. Based on percentile rankings, each applicant is compared to other UC Berkeley applicants applying from his or her own high school, all UC Berkeley applicants, and all UC applicants. Since UC Berkeley admissions officials were reluctant to fully disclose their admissions process in the interviews conducted for this study, it is unclear how the rankings are used to determine admission to UC Berkeley’s freshman class. It is also unclear what combination of academic and non-academic achievements warrants admission. When directly asked, admissions officials consistently referred to the fact that there are no specific weights given to academic and non-academic factors. They did, however, acknowledge that academic achievement is the primary factor considered during admission decisions.

During the review process, readers may evaluate UC Berkeley applications once or twice depending on the academic strength of each applicant. For students in the top and bottom percentiles, their applications may only be read once. But for students who are between the top and bottom percentiles, their applications are read twice. UC Berkeley uses a supplemental admissions review process called “augmented review” to consider admission for applicants who fall in the margins. Applicants undergo augmented review based on the recommendation of readers. Recommended applicants are then contacted and asked to provide additional details about themselves, particularly about any life challenges and/or hardships. Students can also submit grades from their 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years, along with letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors. Once the additional information is gathered, it is reviewed by two readers, who assign two scores that are averaged. However, if the two scores are more than one point apart, then the application is sent to a third reader, who breaks the tie. In 2006, UC Berkeley had 3,000 augmented reviews, and 600 applicants were admitted through the process.

### ***UC Los Angeles (est. 1919)***

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC Los Angeles (UCLA) had the largest student body in the UC system, with a population of approximately 25,000 undergraduate students. African Americans made up only 3 percent of the student body. Asians were the largest group at 38 percent, followed closely by whites at 34 percent. American Indians were the smallest group on campus, at less than 1 percent of the student body. Hispanics, or Latina/os, were the largest underrepresented student group, making up 15 percent of the student body.



Source: UCLA Office of Analysis and Information Management

*Admissions Policy.* Like UC Berkeley, UCLA conducts comprehensive review in a manner that can be described as holistic. UCLA publicly states that their admissions process intends to

*...single out from a large and growing pool of academically strong applicants those unique individuals who have demonstrated the intellectual curiosity, tenacity, and commitment to community service expected of the UCLA graduate. These select applicants are the ones who would contribute the most to UCLA's dynamic learning environment; they are also applicants who would make the most of being immersed in it. (UCLA Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools, 2007)*

According to UCLA admissions officials, UCLA adopted holistic review in 2007 and modeled its procedures after UC Berkeley's. From 2002 until 2006, UCLA's comprehensive review process consisted of evaluating academic achievement separately from personal achievements and life challenges. Under the old admission system, UCLA used two readers per application, one to evaluate academic achievements, and another to evaluate personal achievements and life challenges. Each reader assigned applicants three separate scores – an academic rank, a personal achievement rank, and a life challenges rank. These three scores assigned applicants to a specific cell in a three-dimensional matrix. Admissions officials balanced both achievement and class-size criteria in order to determine which matrix cells to admit (*Bunche Research Report, 2006*).

This original implementation of comprehensive review had a profoundly negative impact on African American student access to UCLA. In fact, in 2006, there were only 95 African American freshmen in the incoming class, the lowest number of African Americans to enroll at UCLA since at least 1973 (*Bunche Research Report, 2006; UCOP, 2007b*). UCLA admission officials acknowledged that public pressure about the rapidly declining numbers of African Americans on campus was the reason UCLA decided to overhaul its comprehensive review process. The freshman class of 2007 was the first to be admitted under the new, holistic model.

According to UCLA admissions officials, holistic review requires that applicants be concurrently evaluated on academic achievement, life challenges, and personal achievement. Academic achievement is evaluated based on traditional measures of merit such as test scores, GPA, and college preparatory courses. Personal achievement is measured by student participation in extracurricular activities, honors and awards, volunteer work, and community service. Life challenges include the evaluation of environmental, family, and personal situations that may require extraordinary student effort to overcome. In UCLA's holistic review process, academic achievement receives the most weight in admissions decisions. However, consistent to the core tenet of holistic review, academic achievement is to be evaluated in the context of students' personal achievements and life challenges. Accordingly, UCLA admissions officials claim that they are looking for students who are living up to their full academic potential in light of life challenges and restricted school contexts.

UCLA uses both its admissions staff and non-UCLA staff hired on contract to serve as the readers who evaluate applications. UCLA admissions officials state that they try to retain the same readers from cycle to cycle to the extent that this is possible. Readers who served the previous year are invited to come back and participate during the following admission cycle if they were deemed competent and if they are available. If the campus finds that it needs to recruit more readers, it advertises these positions on the admissions website, as well as at various conferences (e.g. conferences for high school counselors, etc). UCLA officials claim that the campus' pool of readers is racially and ethnically diverse. In fact, between the 2006 and 2007 cycles, UCLA increased its African American readers threefold, to 24 percent of all readers (38 out of 156 readers).

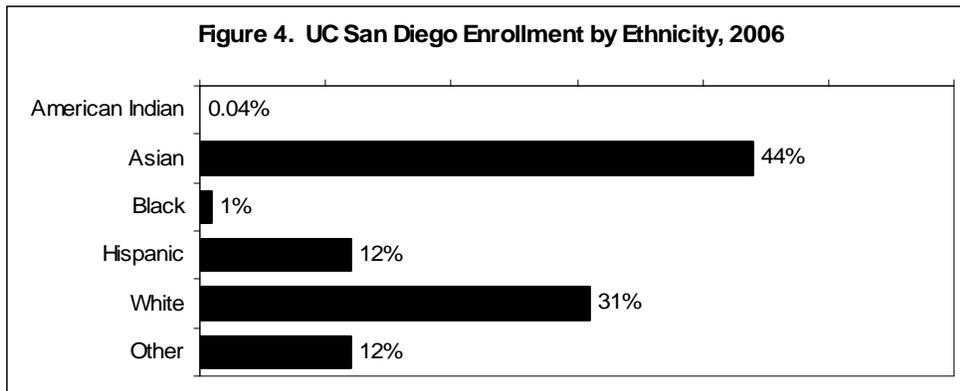
Each application received by UCLA is evaluated regardless of whether an applicant is UC-eligible or not. Each application is assigned two readers who separately read the entire application.<sup>27</sup> Admissions readers then award each application a rank of 1 - "emphatically recommend for admission" - to 5 - "recommend deny." Readers are trained to identify which characteristics warrant a rank of 1 to 5. They are monitored to make sure that their recommendations fall within these guidelines. Additionally, the UCLA admissions office projects the distribution of ranks within its pool of admitted applicants and each readers is encouraged to select a pool of applicants that reflects this overall distribution. In other words, a limited number of 1's can be awarded. If two readers assigned to an applicant do not provide the applicant a similar rank, then UCLA assigns the case to a senior reader who makes the final decision. UCLA officials also note that the campus employs a supplemental review process that they say is identical to UC Berkeley's "augmented review" process. Like their UC Berkeley counterparts, UCLA readers recommend applicants for augmented review and ask them to send in additional information. Two readers evaluate the additional information and provide a score. If their scores are more than a point apart, a senior reader makes the final decision. According to UCLA admission officials, 3.2 percent of applications underwent augmented review for fall 2007.

When evaluating an application, readers use a read-sheet to provide contextual information about each applicant's school. The sheet provides information such as API score, school population size, and the number of students that qualify for a free lunch. Additionally, the read-sheet provides information on

how each applicant's GPA and test scores compare to that of other UCLA and UC applicants. Based on percentile rankings, applicants are compared to UCLA applicants applying from their own high school, all UCLA applicants, and all UC applicants. Under holistic review, UCLA evaluates both the uncapped<sup>28</sup> and unweighted GPAs of applicants.

***UC San Diego (est. 1960)***

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC San Diego (UCSD) had an undergraduate student body of approximately 21,000 students. It is the smallest of the tier I schools. African Americans at UC San Diego made up only 1 percent of the student population. Like the other tier I schools, American Indians were the smallest group on campus, making up less than 1 percent of the student body, while Hispanics or Latina/os constituted 12 percent. Asians were the largest student group on campus, making up 44 percent of the student population, followed by whites, who constituted 31 percent.



Source: UC San Diego Office of Student Research and Information/Student Affairs

*Admissions Policy.* Admissions officials at UC San Diego said the campus employs a comprehensive review process that they feel is transparent and not difficult to defend. The process defines merit with a combination of 12 academic and non-academic factors. That said, about 80 to 90 percent of students are admitted primarily on the basis of academic achievement factors such as uncapped high school GPA—including a maximum of eight UC-approved honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or UC-transferable college courses—and SAT I and II scores. UCSD also admits students through the Eligibility in the Local Context programs; 90 percent of the students who meet ELC requirements are admitted to UCSD.

In the first four steps of UC San Diego's comprehensive review process, readers assign points to each of the 12 admissions factors listed in Table 2. In step five, the reader calculates a comprehensive review score for the applicant and then the applicant is ranked against other students. Those interviewed did not provide information about how many points a student would need to be admitted to the campus. Applications are read twice by two different readers. If the scores differ greatly, the application is read a

third time by an internal reader (a member of the admissions staff). About 10 percent of applications are read a third time due to scoring discrepancies.

**Table 2. UC San Diego Formulaic Point System**

|  | <b>Points Awarded</b>  |
|--|--|
| <b>Step I. Academic review</b>   |  |
| Uncapped GPA multiplied by 1000  | Up to 4,500 points   |
| Scores for all required exams <sup>29</sup>                            | Up to 3,200 points   |
| Number of “a-g” courses completed                                      | 33-39 semesters, 250 points<br>40 or more semesters, 500 points  |
| <b>Step II. Additional academic factors</b>                            |  |
| Eligibility in the Local Context                                       | 300 points   |
| Educational environment <sup>30</sup>                                  | 300 points   |
| <b>Step III. Socioeconomic factors</b>                                 |  |
| Low family income  | Up to 300 points   |
| First generation college attendance (parents’ education)               | Community college, 150 points<br>High school or less, 300 points |
| <b>Step IV. Personal characteristics and achievement factors</b>       |  |
| Demonstrated leadership  | Up to 300 points   |
| Special talents, achievements or awards                                | Up to 300 points   |
| Community and volunteer service  | Up to 300 points   |
| Participation in educational/academic development preparation programs | Up to 300 points   |
| Special circumstances/personal challenges                              | Up to 500 points   |

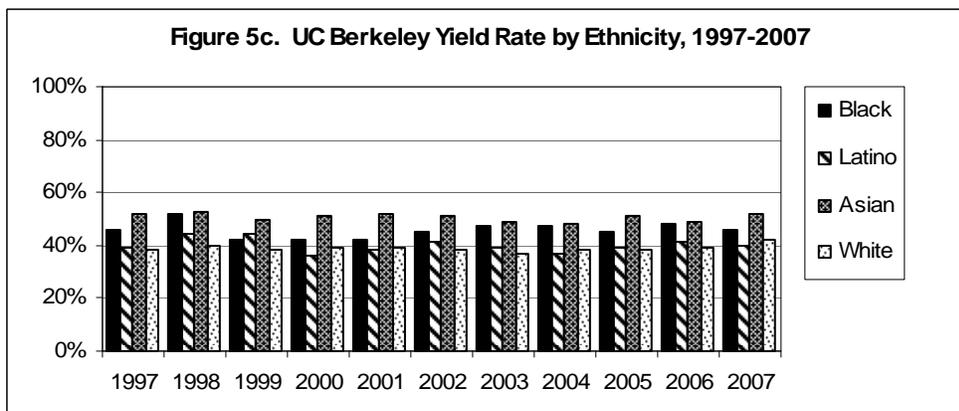
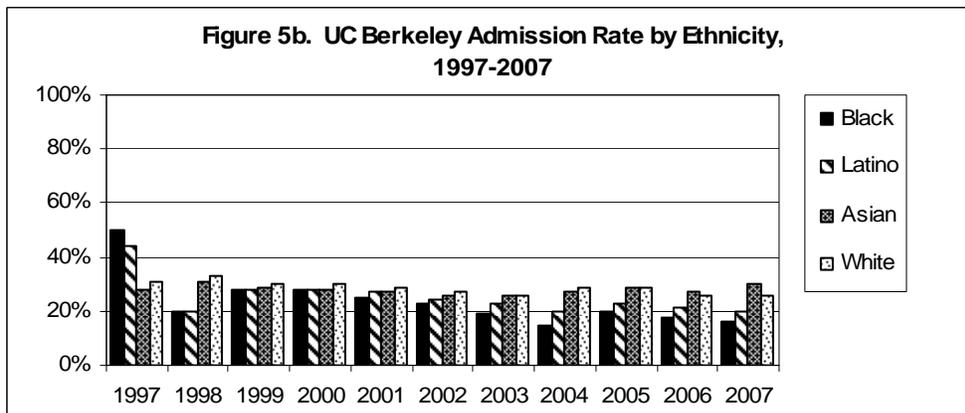
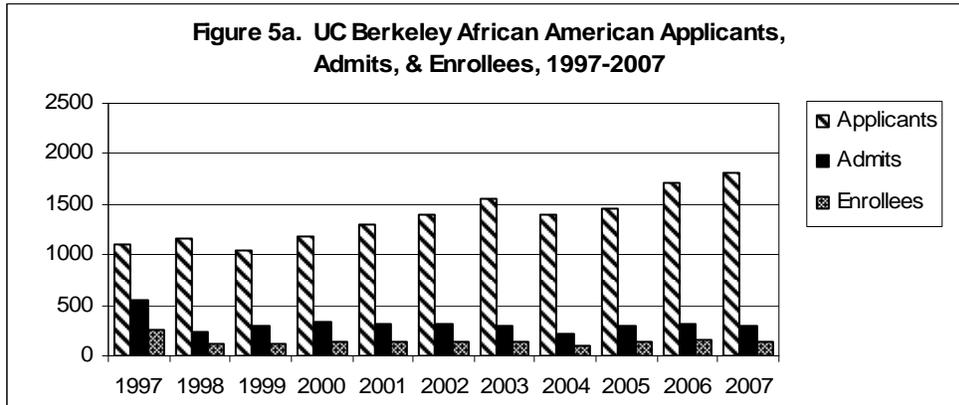
The reader pool is made up of internal admissions staff and approximately 80 external readers. The external readers are actively recruited to ensure a diverse pool and come from private and public high schools, including low API high schools. All readers participate in training sessions to learn how to score the applications. Internal readers can change the scores given by external reader to fit the rubric. Although some factors such as test scores and grades may be simple to score, defining the characteristics for leadership and community service are more difficult. For these factors, the admissions office works during training to norm how readers evaluate applications.

### ***Discussion***

The comprehensive review process at the tier I schools has done very little to increase the number of African American freshmen admitted to each of the respective campuses. Although there have been small gains (e.g., UCLA doubled black freshman enrollment when it switched to a holistic review model in 2007), the overall picture is bleak.

In the case of UC Berkeley, the number of African American applicants has increased by 65 percent since 1997 (see Figure 5a), whereas, the group’s admit rate has decreased by 34 percentage points (see Figures 5a and 5b). UC Berkeley’s yield rate<sup>31</sup> for African Americans has dipped slightly below 50 percent since 1997 as well (see Figure 5c). With the loss of affirmative action in 1998, the number of African Americans admitted to UC Berkeley fell dramatically, from 545 admits in 1997 to just 236 in 1998 – a decrease of over 50 percent in just one year. The number of Latina/os admitted also fell by 24

percentage points over the period; whereas, the number of whites and Asians has remained fairly steady (see Figure 5b). African Americans have had the lowest admit rate among all groups since the effects of Proposition 209 were first felt in 1998. Figure 5b shows that Berkeley's implementation of holistic review in 2002 has failed to halt the decline in the African American admit rate. Indeed, between 2002 and 2007, the admit rate of African Americans at the campus fell by 7 percentage points.



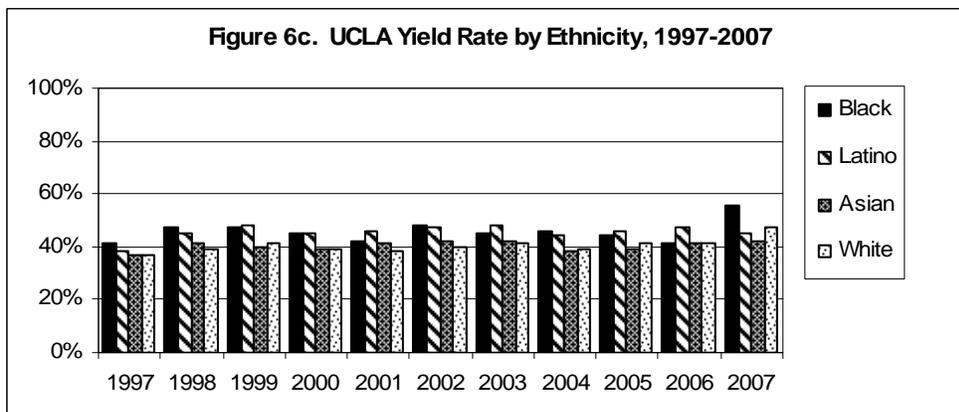
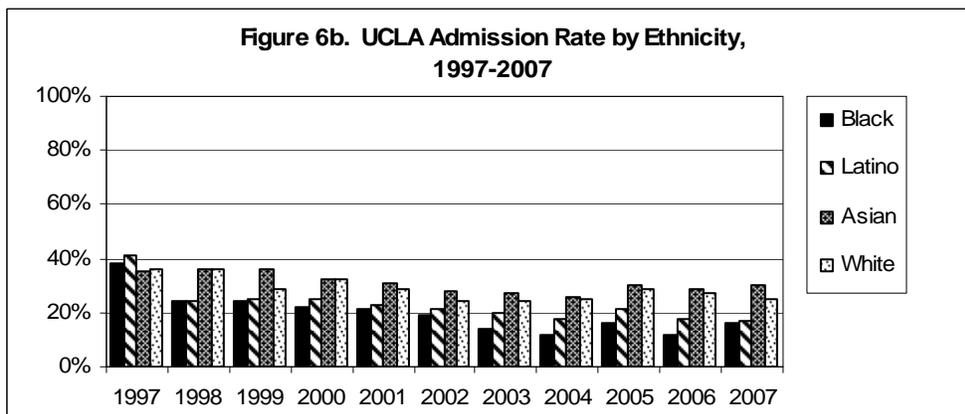
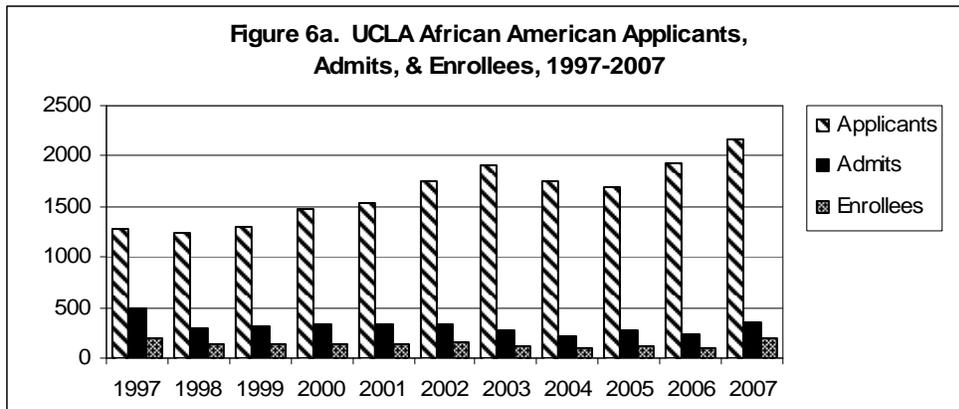
It is commendable that UC Berkeley's holistic review aims to evaluate applicants within the context of their education and social environments. Campus officials seem to understand that not all applicants have access to comparable educational opportunities. The campus' consideration of school API, as well as the ratio of honors courses taken to the courses offered at each applicant's school, is an important attempt to offset some of the rampant K-12 inequities that exist in California's high schools. Despite these corrective practices, however, the number of African American admits to UC Berkeley has not come close to pre-Proposition 209 levels. This could be attributable to Berkeley's ongoing practice of ranking applicants based on SAT scores and GPA. UC Berkeley officials are reluctant to reveal exactly how these rankings affect admissions decisions, so our analysis of the impact of this practice is necessarily somewhat speculative. This said, it appears as if the campus uses SAT and GPA scores to rank a given applicant relative to *all other applicants* – as opposed to only comparing a given applicant to other applicants within his/her own or similar contexts. As discussed above, California's K-12 system is not a level playing field and students should not be comparatively evaluated as if everyone receives the same opportunities to inflate their GPAs or SAT scores. It appears that UC Berkeley's failure to distinguish between opportunity contexts when ranking students by GPA and SAT scores remains a major impediment to admitting a freshman class more reflective of the state's diverse population.

Like UC Berkeley, UCLA has not come close to posting the African American admit rates it posted prior to the implementation of Proposition 209. However, the campus' new holistic review process appears to at least be a step in the right direction.

In 1997, the year before the elimination of affirmative action in UC admission practices, UCLA received 1,272 applications from African American students (see Figure 6a). Of these 1,272 students, 38 percent (488) were admitted (see Figure 6b). Since 1997, the admit rate of African Americans at UCLA has dropped by 22 percentage points, while the number of African American applicants has increased by 71 percent (see Figures 6a. and 6b). Meanwhile, the yield rate for African Americans at UCLA has increased somewhat since 1997 – particularly in 2007, when community-based efforts raised \$1.75 million<sup>32</sup> to fund scholarships aimed at African American admitted students (see Figure 6c). By comparison, the admit rate of Latina/os since has fallen by 24 percentage points since 1997, while the white admit rate has fallen by 11 percentage points and the Asian American admit rate by only 5 percentage points (see Figure 6b).

In 2007, African Americans at UCLA, like their counterparts at UC Berkeley, had the lowest admit rate of all groups. In 2002, when UCLA implemented its comprehensive review process, only 19 percent (337) of African American applicants were admitted that year (see Figure 6b). As previously mentioned, the number of African Americans at UCLA reached an all-time low in 2006, when UCLA admitted only 229 African Americans and only 95 enrolled (1,924 applied that year, 12 percent admitted) (see Figure 6a and 6b). In 2007, when UCLA implemented a holistic version of comprehensive review, the university received 2,171 applications from African Americans, and 16 percent (358) were admitted (see Figure 6b). Although a 16 percent admit rate is still a huge drop from the 38 percent admit rate posted in 1997, holistic review seems to have had some positive impact – the increase in admit rate from 12 percent in

2006 to 16 percent in 2007 (see Figure 6b). It may be too early to tell if this trend will be sustained over time.



One possible explanation for holistic review's apparent role in increasing African American admits to UCLA concerns the manner in which UCLA evaluates GPA. Unlike UC Berkeley, UCLA makes use of *uncapped* and *unweighted* GPA in the holistic review process.<sup>33</sup> This practice helps level the playing field by minimizing the advantage that accrues to privileged students who have access to many

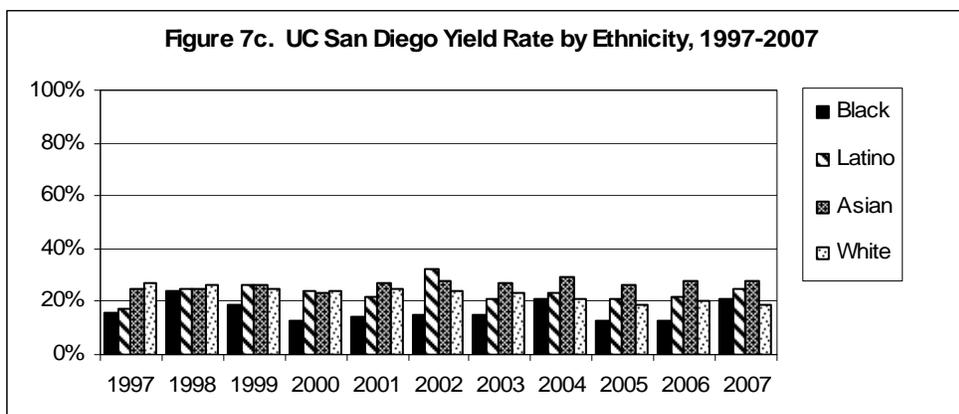
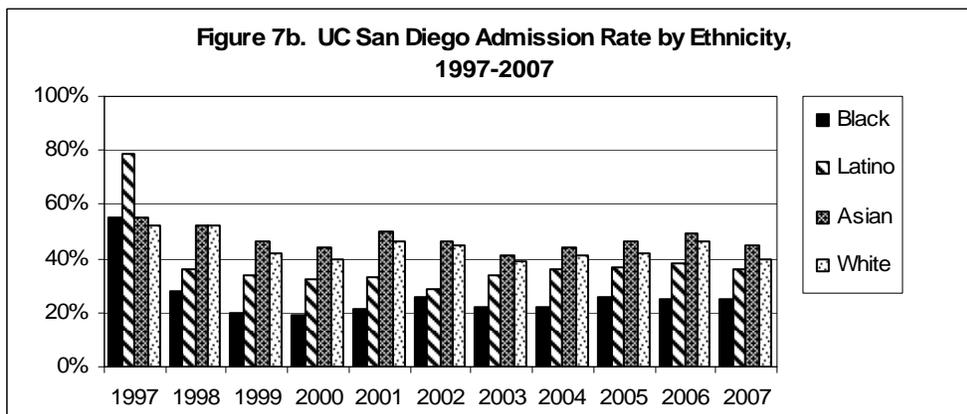
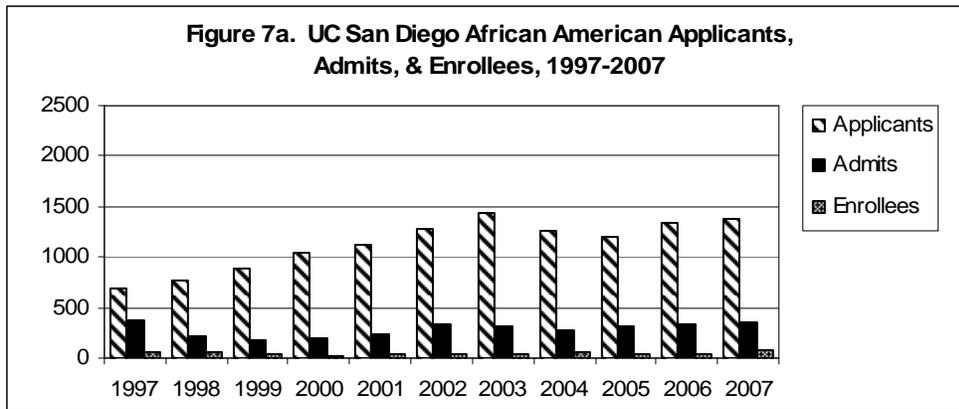
more honors courses than their less-privileged counterparts. In other words, African American and Latina/o applicants, who on average have less access to honors courses (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004; Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, 2006), are less likely to be penalized relative to their white and Asian American counterparts because of this practice. When UCLA officials rank each applicant based on GPA, they are, in effect, primarily looking at raw classroom performance, which minimizes the impact of many of the K-12 inequities discussed above on the admissions decision.

Unfortunately, UCLA does not use a comparable practice that levels the playing field in terms of SAT scores. UCLA still ranks each applicant relative to all others based on SAT scores (and GPAs). As discussed in detail above, this places African American and Latina/o applicants at a severe disadvantage relative to their white and Asian American counterparts. And this is particularly unfair when we consider that SAT scores have been shown to be a poor predictor of how students actually perform in their freshman year. To be sure, research suggests that SAT scores are most useful as measures of socio-economic privilege. While UCLA officials decline to specify exactly what weight is given to SAT scores in the holistic review process, the ranking process currently in place suggests that the use of these measures continues to play a key role in depressing the number of deserving African American applicants admitted to the university.

Like UC Berkeley and UCLA, UCSD also has struggled to increase the admit rate of African American applicants through comprehensive review. The admit rate for African American students at UCSD dropped sharply after the dismantling of affirmative action. What is most disturbing at UCSD is that the enrollment numbers for African Americans are exceedingly low for the campus, and they have been so since before affirmative action was eliminated. The raw enrollment numbers for African Americans has remained under 90 students at UCSD each year since 1997 (see Figure 7a). A substantial portion of this low enrollment can be attributed to UCSD's unusually low yield rate for African Americans – a figure that has remained in the teens and low twenties since at least 1997 (see Figure 7b). Anecdotal evidence suggests that many African American applicants perceive the racial climate at UCSD as a hostile one, opting not to attend the campus after being offered admission. Similarly, the low enrollment numbers for black admits could reflect their fear of experiencing racial isolation at the university because of its exceedingly small African American population.

In 1997, 55 percent of African American students were admitted to UCSD. A year later, after the elimination of affirmative action, the African American admit rate had fallen to 28 percent (see Figure 7c). The African American admit rate actually increased slightly with the introduction of comprehensive review, but then dipped again in 2003 and 2004. It has remained steady in the mid-twenties in recent years (e.g., at about 26 percent in 2002 and 25 percent in 2006) (see Figure 7c). Latina/o students' admit rates also fell dramatically from 79 percent in 1997 to 36 percent in 1998, but the introduction of comprehensive review has helped to increase the admissions percentages for this group, from 29 percent in 2002 to 38 percent in 2006. By contrast, Asian American and white students' admit rates declined only slightly after the implementation of Proposition 209 and have not changed much since the introduction of comprehensive review (see Figure 7c). Asian American and white applicants to UCSD

have much higher admit rates than underrepresented minority students. African Americans applicants continue to be admitted at a rate that is lowest among all groups (see Figure 7c).



UCSD's form of comprehensive review utilizes a formulaic process that assigns up to a maximum number of points for different aspects of students' academic and personal achievement. Approximately 77 percent of the points students can earn are assigned to academic factors, the greatest being for traditional measures of academic merit, high school GPA and SAT scores. Very few of the total 11,100 points

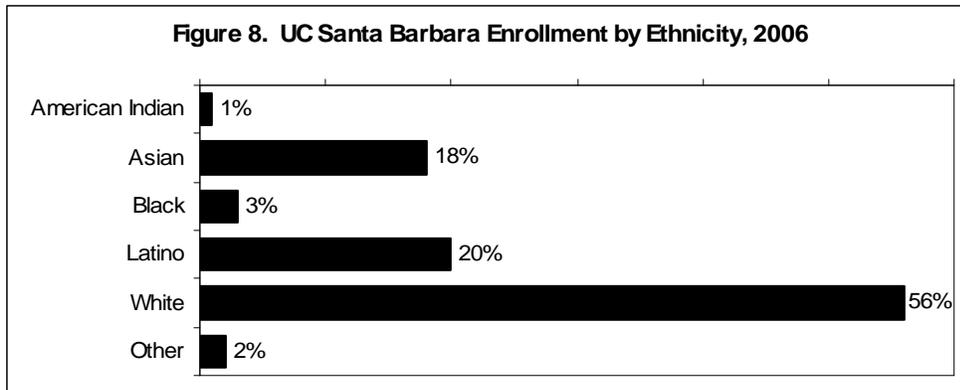
students can amass take into account school context. Only 300 points can be awarded for attending a high school from a fourth or fifth quintile API school. If a student meets Eligibility in the Local Context requirements, however, he/she is likely to be admitted. UCSD admits 90 percent of ELC students. Finally, if a student participated in educational or academic preparation programs, he or she can earn up to 300 points. Overall, UCSD's formulaic comprehensive review process places the greatest weight on *uncapped* and *weighted* high school GPA and SAT I and II scores. Few points are assigned for student background or factors that account for the context in which students achieve.

UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UCSD are the most competitive campuses in the UC system. These institutions are known for selecting from their applicant pools the students with the highest GPAs and standardized test scores. In a post-affirmative action era, these competitive campuses must consider ways to balance traditional measures of merit with other indicators of merit that take into account the inequities that permeate the K-12 system and function as an admissions barrier for minority applicants. If officials at UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego are serious about increasing diversity on their campuses, they must reduce the amount of weight given to traditional measures of academic achievement – or, at least, more fairly consider these measures in light of the K-12 inequities that exist in our educational system.

## ***TIER II***

### ***UC Santa Barbara (est. 1944)***

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC Santa Barbara (UCSB) had an undergraduate student body of approximately 18,200 students. In that year, African Americans made up only 3 percent of the total population. Only American Indians constituted a smaller student population among the major ethnic groups, accounting for just 1 percent of the student body (see Figure 8). Latina/o enrollment at UCSB was relatively high compared to other UC campuses – 20 percent of the student body in 2006. Unlike the other institutions in the same selectivity range, Asian Americans were not as overrepresented at UCSB in 2006, making up only 18 percent of the student body. Among all UC campuses, UCSB had the highest proportion of white students, 56 percent in 2006.



Source: UC Santa Barbara Office of Budget and Planning

*Admissions Policy.* UCSB evaluates applications through two distinct reviews, one focused on “academic preparation” and the other on “academic promise.” According to admissions officials, a score of 1-18 is assigned for academic preparation, which is based on high school GPA (capped at 4.4), SAT I and SAT II scores. The factors are weighted based on their predictive validity for first year performance. For example, GPA accounts for 60 percent of the total index score computed for academic preparation because research shows that GPA is generally a better measure of first-year college performance than standardized test scores (Geiser & Santelices, 2007). Although the score only includes grades and test scores, other aspects of a student’s academic preparation, such as number of Advanced Placement courses, number of academic courses relative to others, are considered elsewhere in UCSB’s comprehensive review process.

The second review is for academic promise, which seeks to identify an applicant’s extracurricular experiences, skills, knowledge, abilities, as well as other important contextual information about the applicant’s background. UCSB considers the following factors in the academic promise review:

- a) challenges, special circumstances, hardships, persistence;
- b) leadership, initiative, service and motivation;
- c) diversity of intellectual and social experience;
- d) honors, awards, special projects, talents, creativity, and intellectual vitality.

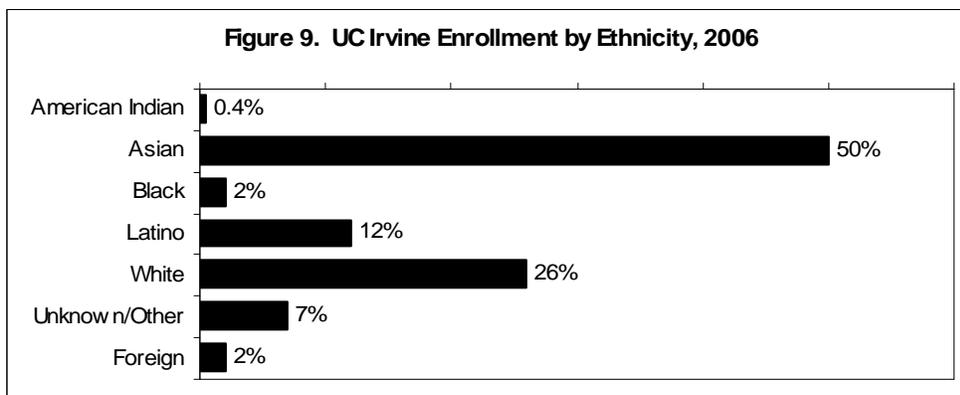
A score of 1-9 is assigned for academic promise. Admissions officials note that when the academic promise score is coupled with the academic preparation score, a reader should be able to get a comprehensive sense of a student’s potential to succeed at UCSB. As a practical matter, the scores for academic preparation and academic promise are added together for each applicant, and admissions decisions are based on the total composite score. It should be noted that UCSB also admits all applicants who meet Eligibility in the Local Context requirements.

All UCSB applications for admission are reviewed by readers who are trained for several days, which include exercises designed to norm the scoring process. The professional judgment of readers — a majority of whom are retired admissions counselors, teachers and student affairs officers— plays an

important role in UCSB’s admissions review because of the holistic nature of the process. Indeed, a campus admissions official described the consideration of academic preparation and academic promise factors at her institution as a “creative process.” Most UCSB application readers are white; few are from underserved or underrepresented communities.

***UC Irvine (est. 1965)***

*Ethnic Composition.* For fall 2006, UC Irvine (UCI) had a total undergraduate enrollment of just over 20,800. Asian American students, by far the largest ethnic group, constituted about 50 percent of these students (see Figure 9). African American and American Indian representation at UCI was low, just 2 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively. Hispanics or Latina/os fared a little better than these minority groups, making up 12 percent of the student body in 2006. Although white students made up just 26 percent of campus undergraduates in 2006, it is interesting to note that the group posted the highest admission rate of all major ethnic groups in 2007, 61 percent.



Source: UC Irvine Office of Institutional Research

*Admissions Policy.* UCI’s admissions policy considers both traditional measures of merit to assess achievement (i.e., GPA and standardized test scores), but also acknowledges that merit can be measured by other criteria. UCI describes the type of students it wishes to enroll as,

*...students who have a demonstrated record of academic excellence. All applicants are assessed for evidence of academic achievement and potential. Although the number and type of courses completed, and grades and test scores earned remain important elements in the selection process, UCI recognizes that merit is demonstrated in many forms and can be measured in different ways. (UC Irvine Office of Admissions & Relations with Schools, 2007)*

According to a UC Irvine admissions official, UCI’s selection process determines an applicant’s merit primarily by considering GPA, test scores, and courses completed – traditional indicators of academic achievement. Each application (or profile) is reviewed twice, and readers consider the 14 criteria for

selection set by the UC Office of the President in the system's "comprehensive review" policy. In the Profile Review A, academic achievement (weighted GPA, test scores, and courses completed) is ranked 1-6. UCI uses the weighted GPA in this assessment, which adds an extra point for honors and AP courses. However, the campus caps the number of honors and AP classes considered at eight so that students who take more than 8 honors or AP classes do not receive an additional GPA "bump" beyond the one given for the initial eight courses. Officials describe the Profile Review A as "holistic," in that it considers each student within his or her local context.

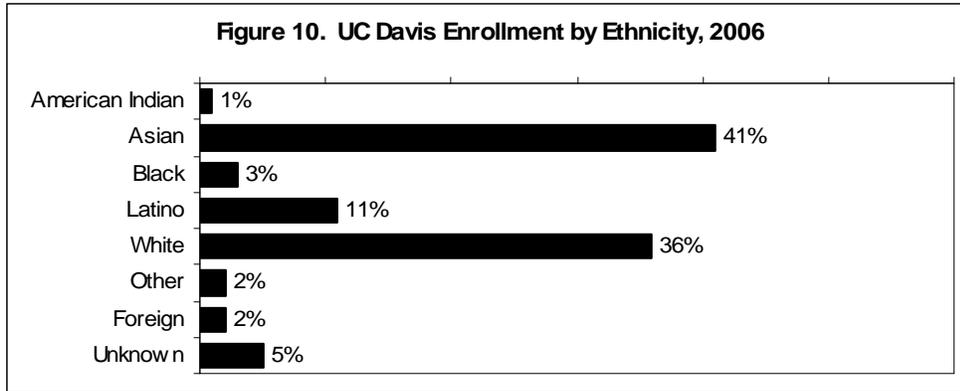
Profile Review B considers applicants' potential to benefit and contribute to the UCI campus. Applicants receive a ranking of 1-6 on demonstrated leadership ability, significant community service, talent and achievement in sports or visual and performing arts, and other experiences that demonstrate an applicant's promise to contribute positively to the "intellectual vitality" of UCI (UC Irvine Office of Admissions & Relations with Schools, 2007). This second review considers these accomplishments and experiences within the context of an applicant's life challenges in order to assign a ranking.

A two-dimensional matrix, in which applicants are placed in cells based on the two reviews, is used to determine a given applicant's overall ranking relative to all other applicants and to facilitate admissions decisions. Unfortunately, admissions officials at UC Irvine did not provide us with detailed information about how the 14 criteria are weighted and balanced in practice or about which particular factors are considered in order to assess a given applicant's achievement *within his or her local context*.

Admissions officials noted that applications are read by both internal staff and external readers. Readers attend a 4-6 hour training session designed to norm their rankings of applications. External readers are recruited from local counselor conferences each year and typically do not come from low API schools. Only three of 20 readers were drawn from low API schools in 2005.

### ***UC Davis (est. 1959)***

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC Davis was the largest of the middle-tier institutions, featuring an undergraduate population of approximately 23,400 students. African Americans made up only 3 percent of the student body, while American Indians constituted 1 percent (see Figure 10). Latina/os were 11 percent of undergraduates on campus in 2006, the largest representation among underrepresented minority groups. As is the case at most UC campuses, Asian Americans were the largest undergraduate ethnic group (41 percent), while whites followed closely behind (36 percent).



Source: UC Davis Office of Resource Management and Planning

*Admissions Policy.* UC Davis officials described their comprehensive review process as one based on a formulaic and additive scale that is used to determine admission into the university (see Table 3). Admissions officers noted that UC Davis prefers this type of process to others because it is less subjective. Additionally, they say, the process is more cost-efficient and requires the university to use fewer resources. UC Davis readers are trained for 6 hours or less, and those from outside the admissions office typically come from other campus departments.

**Table 3. UC Davis Formulaic Point System**

|   | <b>Point Range</b> | <b>Multiplier</b> | <b>Possible Score</b> |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| High School GPA, Grades 10-11 (capped at 4.5)   | 3.0-4.5            | 1000              | 4500                  |
| Admissions Exams <sup>34</sup>  | 200-800            | 1                 | 4000                  |
| Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC)  | 0 or 1             | 1000              | 1000                  |
| Number of “a-g” courses beyond 35 semester units  | 0-20               | 50                | 1000                  |
| Individual Initiative   | 0 or 1             | 500               | 500                   |
| Qualification for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)                               | 0 or 1             | 500               | 500                   |
| Completion of Academic Preparation Programs   | 0 or 1 or 2        | 250 or 500        | 500                   |
| First Generation in Family to Attend University   | 0 or 1             | 250               | 250                   |
| Non-traditional University Applicant  | 0 or 1 or 2        | 125 or 250        | 250                   |
| Veteran/active U.S. military service, Reserves, National Guard or campus ROTC sponsorship | 0 or 1             | 250               | 250                   |
| Demonstrated Leadership   | 0 or 1 or 2        | 250 or 500        | 500                   |
| Demonstrated Special Talent   | 0 or 1 or 2        | 125 or 250        | 250                   |
| Perseverance or persistence in unusually challenging circumstances                        | 0 or 1 or 2        | 125 or 250        | 250                   |
| Marked improvement in 9th-11th grade  | 0 or 1             | 250               | 250                   |
| Successful management of a significant disability   | 0 or 1             | 250               | 250                   |
| <b>Total Review</b>   |                    |                   | <b>14,250</b>         |

UC Davis evaluates applicants based on 15 types of criteria (see Table 3). For each applicant, the 15 criteria are scored, adding up to a possible total of 14,250 points. Traditional measures of academic achievement (GPA, standardized exams, and number of courses taken) receive the most weight in UC Davis' review process, making up 67 percent of the possible total points. By contrast, personal achievement (individual initiative, completion of academic programs, leadership, talent, and 9-11<sup>th</sup> grade improvement) makes up only 14 percent of the possible total points, while consideration of educational inequality and disadvantage constitute a minimal 7 percent of the possible total points. These latter considerations include whether a student qualifies for the Educational Opportunity Program<sup>35</sup>, whether he or she is the first in the family to attend college, and whether he or she has had to deal with unusually challenging circumstances.

### ***Discussion***

Among the tier II UC campuses, UC Irvine and UC Santa Barbara implement comprehensive review most similarly. Both institutions read applications twice and give two scores. Students are first scored for academic achievement, which consists of traditional measure of academic achievement (e.g., high school GPA, test scores, and the number of honors/AP courses taken). At UCSB, a score of 1-18 is given for academic preparation; UCI's score for the first profile review ranges from 1-6. UCSB adds greater weight to factors that are stronger predictors of freshman year success (e.g., high school GPA). In the second review, UCSB considers academic promise and assigns a score of 1-9, while UCI assigns a score of 1-6 for factors indicating a student's potential to benefit from and contribute to the institution. Factors considered in these second-order reviews include a student's background, extracurricular activities, leadership, and school context. UCSB adds the scores in order to determine which applicants to admit. UCI places the scores in a two-dimensional matrix.

The primary difference between UC Davis' implementation of comprehensive review and the approach taken by UC Irvine and UC Santa Barbara is that UC Davis relies upon a formulaic point system. The three campuses, it should be noted, are alike in an important way – all three place the greatest weight on traditional measures of academic success for admissions decisions.

Despite the different ways UCSB, UCI, and UC Davis implement comprehensive review, the campuses have similar admissions outcomes. Although African American admit rates at UC Davis and UCI have shown modest gains since the introduction of comprehensive review, and while black yield rates have increased there in recent years, African American students are still woefully underrepresented on these campuses. UCSB posted a sharp decline in the admit rate for African American students following the implementation of Proposition 209 in 1998, from 70 percent to 54 percent (see Figure 11a). As admission to UCSB has become more selective, the percentage of African American students admitted has declined each year. Since 1998, African American students have had the lowest admit rate of the major ethnic groups on campus, falling to 41 percent by 2007. The percentage of African American admits continues to decline even as applications from this group have increased.<sup>36</sup> As a result, UCSB's freshman

class of African American students hovers at a very low 100 to 120 students each year. Other underrepresented minorities have not endured this troubling trend at UCSB. While the admit rate of Latina/o students declined from 78 percent in 1998 to 52 percent in 2007, the actual number of Latina/o students enrolling at the campus has steadily increased with the surge in applications from the group. Meanwhile, the admit rate for Asian Americans declined by only 4 percentage points after the introduction of comprehensive review in 2003 (from 52 percent to 48 percent) and remained steady at around 55 percent for white students. In 2007, white students had the highest admit rate of all major ethnic groups.

A major flaw in UCSB’s selection process is that readers do not factor in the local context of applicants’ schools when evaluating academic preparation. For example, UCSB’s use of weighted GPA provides applicants from highly resourced schools with a one-point increase when calculating GPA; whereas, applicants who attended high schools that offered few Advanced Placement or honors courses receive no such “bump.” Although UCSB administrators believe that this flaw is offset by automatic admission for students meeting ELC requirements, this “remedy” does not reach African American students because they are underrepresented in most California high schools.

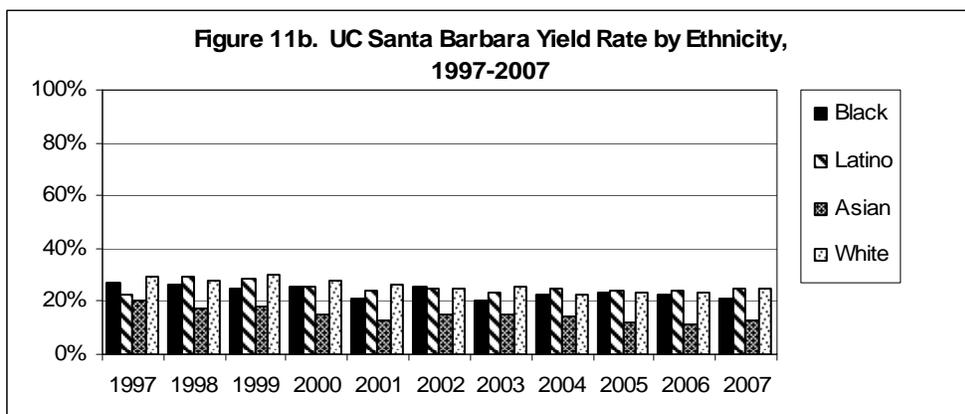
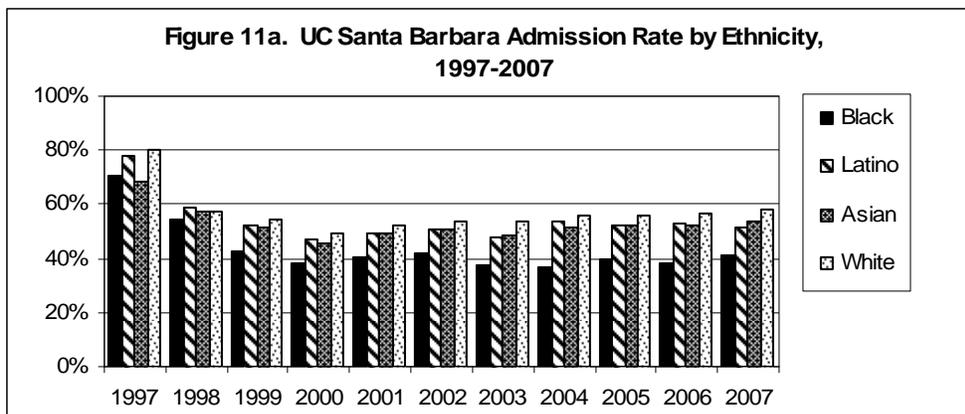
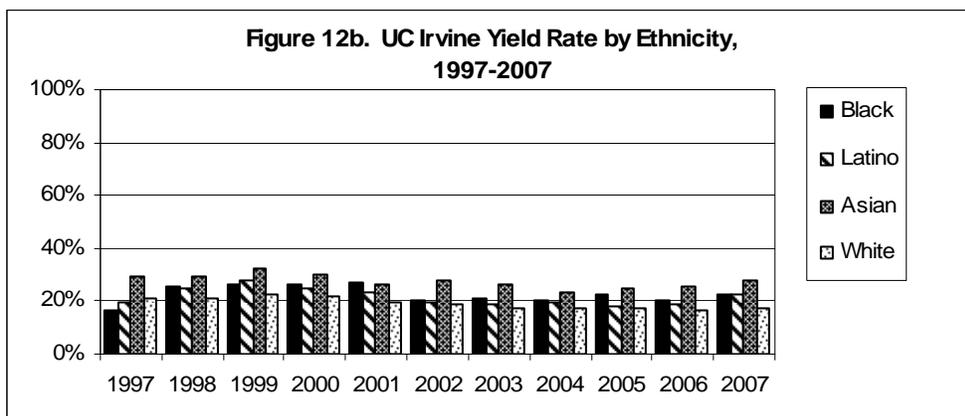
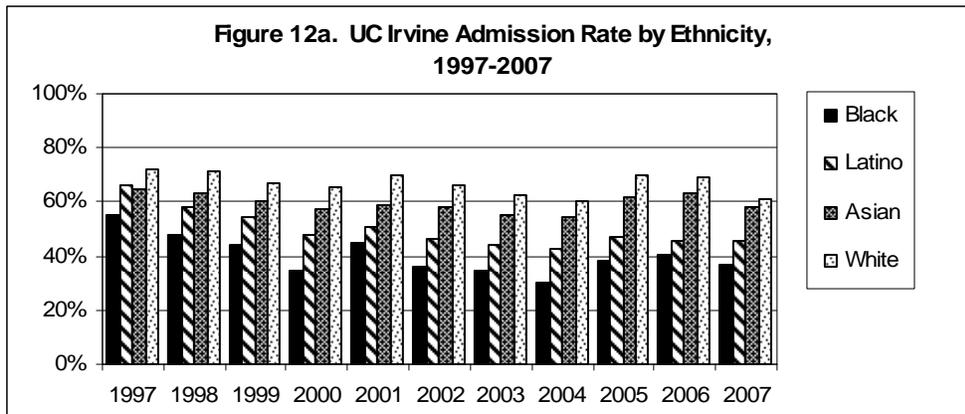
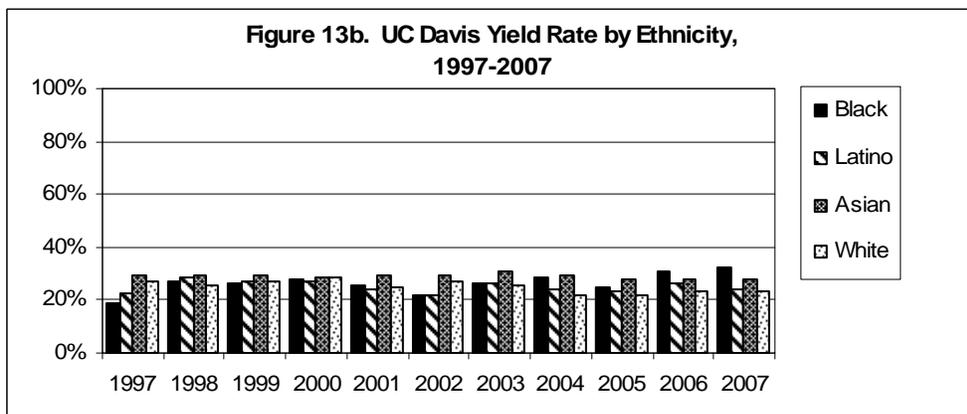
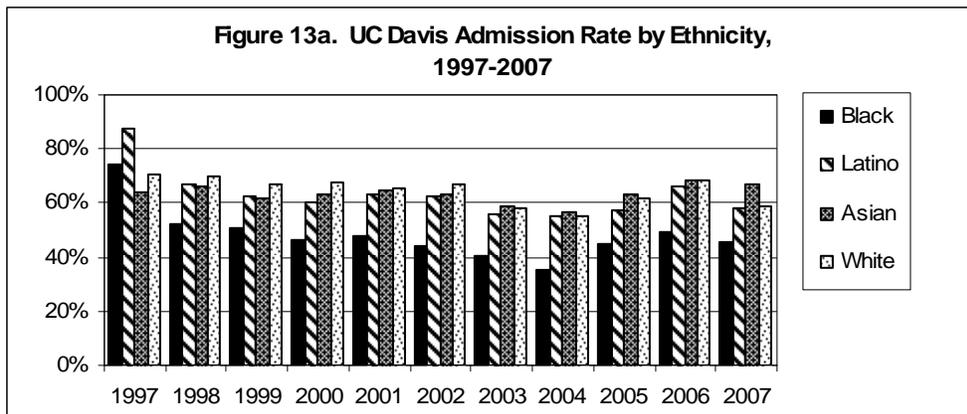


Figure 12a shows the decline in the admission rate for African American students at UC Irvine since the implementation of Proposition 209 in 1997. The percentage of African American students who applied and were admitted declined from 55 percent in 1997 to 37 percent in 2007, a drop of 12 percentage points. The admit rate for African American students in 2002, the first year impacted by the implementation of comprehensive review, was still lower than it was immediately following the end of affirmative action in 1998 (36 percent compared to 48 percent), and African Americans continue to be the ethnic group with the lowest admit rate at UCI. Latina/o applicants experienced a decline in admit rate after Proposition 209 and the implementation of comprehensive review but are admitted at higher rates than their African American counterparts (e.g., 46 percent compared to 36 percent in 2002). Asian American students' admit rates followed a similar trend, but they are still much higher than those of Latina/o and African American students. Finally, white students' admission rates remained more or less constant after the ban on race in admissions was implemented (i.e., around 72 percent), declining slightly to 69 percent with the introduction of comprehensive review in 2002.



In 1997, UC Davis received 666 applications from African American students and admitted 74 percent of these applicants (493<sup>37</sup>). The following year, Proposition 209 was implemented. The number of African American applicants remained constant (668), but as Figure 13a shows, the admit rate for the

group fell by 22 percentage points to only 52 percent. While the number of African Americans admitted at UC Davis has increased by 15 percent since 1997, the proportional representation of African Americans admitted each year has declined as the freshman class has grown. At UC Davis, as at other middle-tier UC campuses, African American students have the lowest admit rate among the major ethnic groups. UC Davis still has considerable room for improvement when it comes to fostering a more racially and ethnically diverse student body. The current formulaic process assigns the majority of points to traditional measures of academic achievement that put African American students at a significant disadvantage.



UC Davis, UC Irvine, and UC Santa Barbara are clearly less selective than their tier I counterparts. That said, each campus turns away large numbers of UC-eligible students and implements comprehensive review differently in doing so. While UC Davis uses a formulaic point system, UCI and UC Santa Barbara use less transparent processes that give two different scores for an applicant’s academic achievement and non-academic achievements and/or life experiences. It is not clear exactly how much weight non-academic achievements or life challenges are given at UCI and UC Santa Barbara. At UC Davis, however, it is clear that only 7 percent of the total possible points is set aside for the consideration of educational inequality and other non-race-based disadvantage factors. Another 14 percent of the total points is

assigned to a consideration of personal achievements, which raises non-academic considerations to about 21 percent of the total.

Although these tier II institutions are less selective than their tier I counterparts, all three campuses prioritize traditional measures of academic achievement such as high school GPA and standardized test scores. At UC Santa Barbara, high school GPA makes up 60 percent of the academic preparation score. UC Davis assigns up to 4,500 points for GPA or about 32 percent of the total points. UC Irvine was not clear about the weight of the particular criteria used to evaluate students. All three institutions use weighted GPA, which disadvantages African American applicants because they are concentrated in high schools that offer relatively few honors and AP courses (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004).

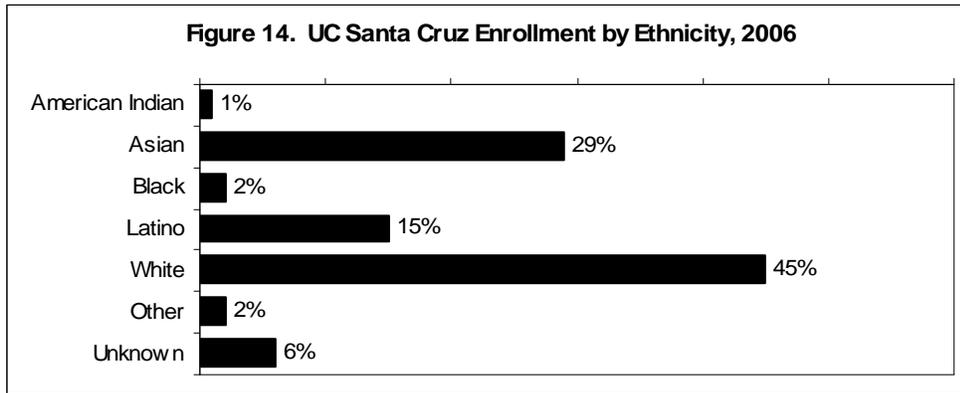
In the final analysis, UC Davis and UC Santa Barbara seem to be making the best effort among the tier II campuses to ensure diversity on their campuses. UC Davis assigns up to 1,000 points for ELC and 2,000 points for other life challenge factors that take into account an applicant's achievement within his school and community context. Meanwhile, UC Santa Barbara automatically admits all students who qualify under ELC criteria. By considering ELC, both UC Davis and UC Santa Barbara acknowledge the inequalities that exist throughout California's high schools. ELC schools typically send few students to the UC system, but through the program, ELC schools may at least be aided in their efforts to build and nurture a college-going culture.

Despite the consideration of ELC and other indicators of achievement in the context of disadvantage, each of the three tier II institutions has experienced a decline since 1998 in the percentage of African American students admitted and enrolled. UC Davis, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Irvine need to take more strident steps toward improving diversity within the framework of comprehensive review. For instance, UC Santa Barbara and UC Davis do not consider school context, such as whether or not the student attended a high school with a low Academic Performance Index. Due to the vagueness of UC Irvine's admissions process, it is unclear if or how high school context is considered. Although each campus has increased its admission of underrepresented minority students since the initial post-Proposition 209 drop, each campus still has a long way to go in enhancing the fairness of its admissions process, particularly as it affects African American applicants.

### ***TIER III***

#### ***UC Santa Cruz (est. 1965)***

*Ethnic Composition.* In 2006, UC Santa Cruz (UCSC) was the second smallest UC campus with approximately 14,000 undergraduate students. Despite its smaller size and lower degree of selectivity, African Americans only made up 2 percent of the student body. American Indian enrollment was also low, as it was at the other UC campuses, at 1 percent, while Latina/o students constituted 15 percent of undergraduates. Consistent with the other UC campuses, whites and Asian Americans were the two largest groups at 45 percent and 29 percent of undergraduates, respectively.



Source: UC Santa Cruz Office of Planning and Budget

*Admissions Policy.* Prior to 2004, UC Santa Cruz did not have a selective admissions process. Throughout most of UC Santa Cruz’s history, all students who were UC eligible were accepted to the campus. UC Santa Cruz decided to implement a selective admissions process in 2002, according to an admissions official. When considering comprehensive review options, UCSC officials had to be mindful of funding limitations and decided to choose a cost-effective means for selecting applicants. The resulting admissions model was based on the formulaic point system described in Table 4. With this method, fewer

**Table 4. UC Santa Cruz, Formulaic Point System**

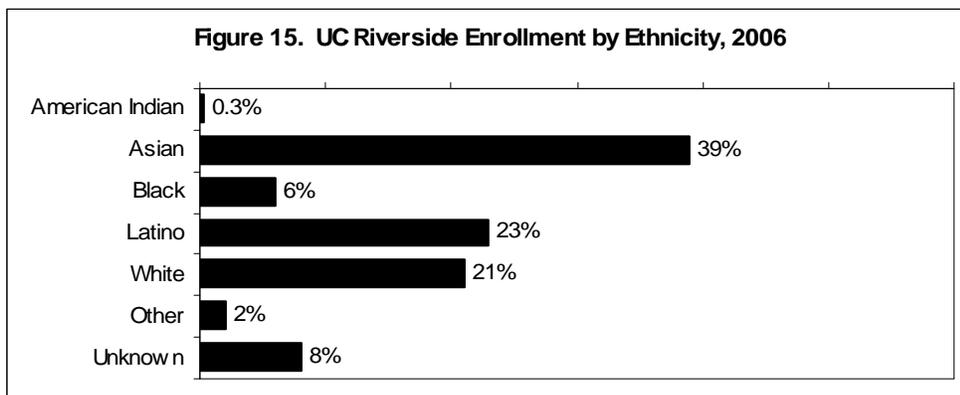
|  | <b>Points Awarded</b>   |
|--|---|
| 1. High School GPA, Grades 10-11 (capped at 4.4) Multiplied by 1000  | Up to 4400 pts  |
| 2. Admissions Exams <sup>38</sup>  | Up to 2400 pts  |
| 3. Number of “a-g” courses completed <sup>39</sup>   | 48 and 53 semesters, 100 pts<br>54 or more semesters, 200 pts           |
| 4. Number of UC-approved honors courses  | Up to 200 pts   |
| 5. Eligibility in the Local Context  | 400 pts   |
| 6. Total number of courses planned for the senior year   | Up to 200 pts   |
| 7. Students attending California high schools in the lower two quintiles of the Academic Performance Index (API)   | 200 pts   |
| 8. Students who have excelled in one or more specific subject areas (only a minimum of four semesters are evaluated and only ‘A’ grades are considered)  | Up to 250 pts   |
| 9. If an applicant has been recognized because of an academic special project (must be recognized at levels beyond the high school; higher points are awarded when the recognition is national or international) | 125 to 250 pts  |
| 10. One full grade increase between the sophomore and junior year  | Up to 100 pts   |
| 11. Applicants that have earned recognition for special talents and achievement beyond the high school (higher points are awarded when the recognition is national or international)                             | 250 to 500 pts  |
| 12. Participation in educational preparation programs  | Up to 200 pts   |
| 13. Students who have demonstrated academic achievement while dealing with significant life issues (e.g. disability, low-income, need to work, etc).   | Up to 700 pts   |
| 14. If an applicant is from designated counties in California (as determined by the academic senate)   | Up to 100 pts (400 pts maximum between this criterion and criterion #7) |

resources are required, the official explained, and most applications are evaluated by a computerized system rather than readers. The admissions official we interviewed noted that UCSC pulled the admissions criteria for its comprehensive review process directly from UC Office of the President guidelines, which offer campuses 14 different factors that can be considered in admissions decisions (see Appendix A). Each criterion is awarded a certain number of points and carries specific weights. High school GPA, which is capped at 4.4, is multiplied by 1,000 points and carries the most weight in the admissions review, representing up to 44 percent of the total possible points. Admissions exams (i.e., standardized exams) also make up a large portion of the total possible points at 24 percent. Applicants can earn a maximum of 10,000 points for their academic and personal achievements.

Traditional measures of merit – such as high school GPA, standardized test scores, and number of honors courses taken (criteria #1, #2, and #4) – account for up to 70 percent of the possible 10,000 points applicants can earn. Consideration of educational inequalities or disadvantages, by contrast, shows that these factors make up a small percentage of possible points earned. High school API score and the demonstration of academic achievement “while dealing with significant life issues” together account for only 9 percent of the possible points applicants can earn. Personal achievements, such as participation in educational preparation programs, and special talents combine for 13 percent of the total possible points. While the lion’s share of points is assigned to high school GPA, exams, and courses taken in high school, only 22 percent of the possible points address educational inequalities and personal achievements .

***UC Riverside (est. 1954)***

*Ethnic Composition.* UC Riverside (UCR) was the most racially and ethnically diverse UC campus in 2006, with approximately 16,800 undergraduate students. The campus had the highest percentage of African American and Latina/o students among UC campuses, at 6 percent and 23 percent, respectively. The percentage of American Indian students, however, was as low at UC Riverside as at other campuses, at 0.3 percent. White students constituted 21 percent of the undergraduate student body, while Asian Americans, as on other UC campuses, made up a plurality of students at 39 percent.



Source: UC Riverside Academic Planning & Budget

*Admissions Policy.* UC Riverside is the least selective of the UC campuses that employ comprehensive review (i.e. UC Merced is not selective). The campus publicly describes its admissions process as one that will allow it “to enroll freshman students who are well-prepared to succeed in a rigorous and challenging academic setting” (UC Riverside Undergraduate Admissions, 2007). According to admissions officials, UCR began using comprehensive review in 2005, after former Chancellor France Cordova realized that the freshman class was becoming too large. UCR faculty members then took 18 months to review admissions data and determine selectivity standards, opting to prioritize the maintenance of a very diverse and academically prepared class. Admissions officials revealed that the faculty chose six of the fourteen possible factors for comprehensive review identified by the UC Office of the President. In choosing these factors, faculty also had to ensure that comprehensive review at UCR would be less selective than at other UC campuses. The chosen factors are listed in Table 5, along with the relative weight for each factor. UCR admissions officials labeled this process “conservatively selective” because it gives the most weight to academic factors such as high school GPA, SAT I and SAT II exams and number of “a-g” courses completed. Ironically, UC Riverside’s admissions process –because the campus tends to attract less competitive students than its tier I and tier II counterparts – does not consider life challenges or the number of honors courses taken, factors that are considered by the more selective campuses.

**Table 5. UC Riverside Weights for fall 2006**

|  | <b>Weight Assigned</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| High school GPA                        | .4578                  |
| SAT Reasoning                          | .1962                  |
| SAT Subject Test                       | .0654                  |
| SAT Subject Test                       | .0654                  |
| Number of “a-g” courses beyond minimum | .0409                  |
| Eligibility in the Local Context       | .1308                  |
| First-generation university attendance | .0218                  |
| Low family income                      | .0218                  |

UC Riverside’s admissions process is highly automated. Points are assigned to each of the factors listed above and calculated online, rather than by a specific reader. If an applicant is determined to be ineligible because he/she does not receive enough points, the applicant receives a second review. Admissions officials note, however, that very few applications receive a second read. Each year, admissions officials run simulations to determine how to adjust the cut-off number for the next year’s class. Campus officials hope that the campus will become more selective in the future.

UCR admissions officials also noted that a substantial portion of each year’s freshman class is admitted through UC’s referral process. Each year, about 5,000 to 6,000 UC-eligible students who are not admitted to any of the specific UC campuses to which they applied are eligible to go into a referral pool. Currently, there are three referral campuses: UC Santa Cruz, UC Riverside, and UC Merced. At UC Santa Cruz, officials evaluate referral students to see if they meet campus selectivity requirements and, thus, few are admitted. At UC Riverside, many more referral students are admitted than at UC Santa Cruz

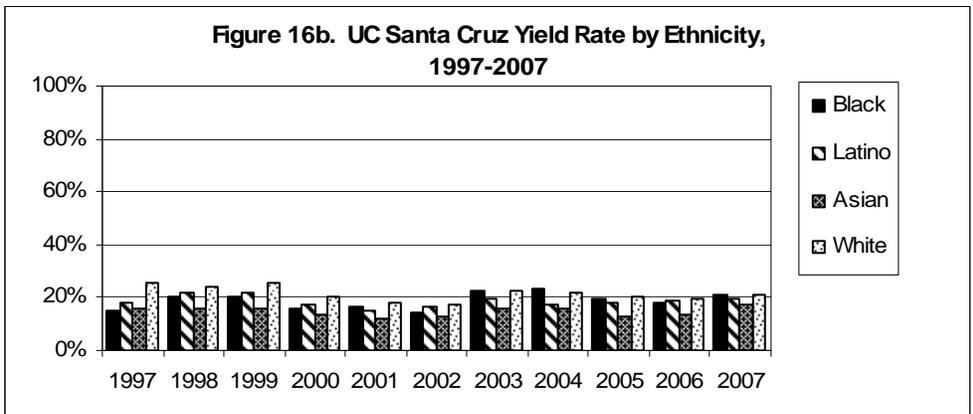
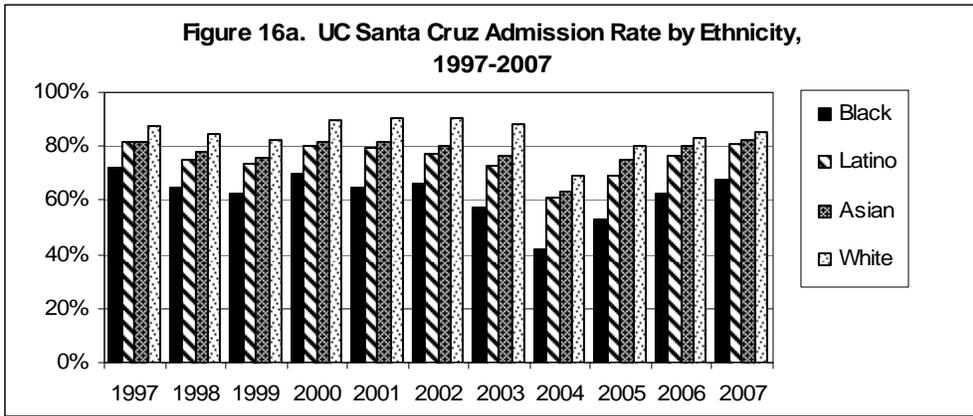
because UC Riverside only recently became selective. While referral students are admitted only after direct applicants, these students' profiles are more similar to UC Riverside's regular applicant pool than they are to the regular applicant pools at the other, more selective campuses. (UC Merced, which is not selective, accepts all referral pool students not selected by UC Santa Cruz or UC Riverside.) In April, admitted referral pool students receive a letter explaining that although they were not admitted to the UC campus or campuses to which they applied, they have been admitted to UC Riverside. According to admissions officials, the letters and materials they send to admitted students in the referral pool were modified recently to make them more personal. Students have 4-6 weeks to confirm the admission offer. The yield rate for the referral pool is rather low, ranging between 6 and 10 percent. In 2006, the rate was 7 percent.

### ***Discussion***

UC Riverside and UC Santa Cruz – the least selective campuses in the study – only recently implemented selective, comprehensive review processes. While these campuses are much less selective than the top- and middle-tier campuses, their admissions processes resemble those from the other tiers. Both campuses use formulas to assign points to students, according to key criteria. Most applications are scored online; human readers only review a select few. UC Santa Cruz scores students according to 14 different criteria, for a total of 10,000 points. UC Riverside admissions officials did not release information on the points assigned for the 6 criteria used in their campus' comprehensive review process. Both campuses, however, clearly place the greatest weight on high school GPA and test scores.

In addition to their respective comprehensive review processes, both campuses also admit students through the UC referral process. Students who meet minimum UC eligibility, but are not admitted to any of the campuses to which they apply, are added to a referral pool. UC Riverside and UC Santa Cruz direct their outreach efforts towards those students in the pool who meet their selectivity requirements. For UC Santa Cruz, this amounts to just a few students each year; UC Riverside admits a larger number of students by referral.

Since 1997, the number of African American applicants to UC Santa Cruz has increased by over 100 percent, while the admit rate of African American applicants has fluctuated between 72 percent and 42 percent (Figures 16a and 16b). The admit rate of African Americans decreased in 1998 after the implementation of Proposition 209, despite the fact that UC Santa Cruz accepted all students who were UC eligible.<sup>40</sup> It is not readily apparent why this occurred. In 2004, when Santa Cruz implemented its version of comprehensive review, the admit rate of African Americans was 42 percent, a 15 percentage point drop from the previous year. In 2007, Santa Cruz admitted 68 percent of African American applicants; a 26-percentage point increase from 2004, and only a 4-percentage point drop from 1997, the year before affirmative action was dismantled in UC admissions. Despite steady improvements in the African American admit rate the last few years, the yield rate of African Americans has consistently remained under 25 percent since 1997.

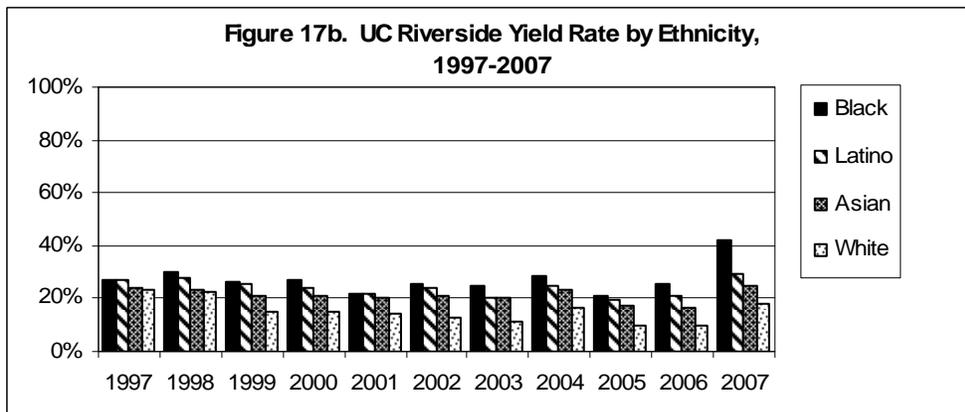
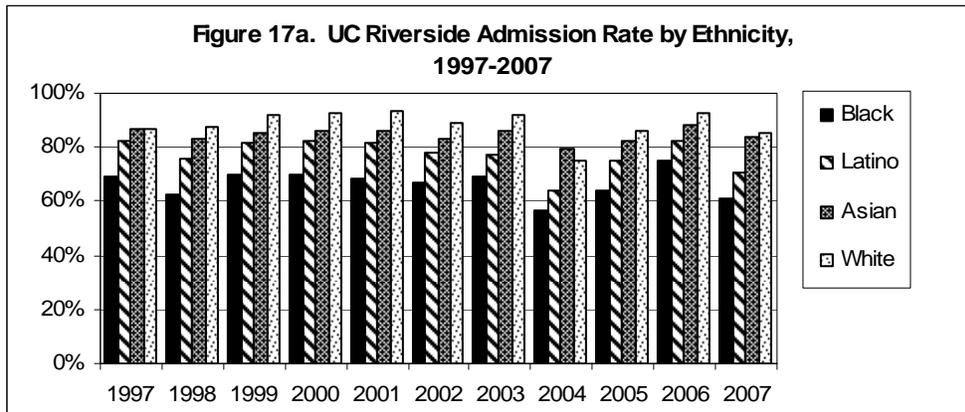


UC Riverside is the most ethnically diverse campus in the UC system and enrolls the greatest number of underrepresented minorities. The campus has become increasingly diverse since the implementation of Proposition 209, while the number of students admitted to and enrolling at the more competitive UC campuses has declined. In 1997, prior to the implementation of Proposition 209, 516 and 1,685 African American and Latina/o students, respectively, applied for admission to UC Riverside. Sixty-nine percent of the African American applicants and 82 percent of the Latina/o applicants were admitted that year (Figure 17a). But the yield rates for both groups were equal at only 27 percent, resulting in the enrollment of just 97 African American students and 381 Latina/o students in fall 1997 (Figure 17b). In 1998, UC Riverside posted a slight drop in the African American admit rate – 6 percentage points to 63 percent. However, this slight decrease in admit rate was offset by a 17 percent increase in the number of African American applicants and a 3-percentage point increase in the group’s yield rate.

Since 1997, the number of African American and Latina/o students enrolling at UC Riverside has steadily increased. Following implementation of the campus’ comprehensive review process in 2005, there was a rise and then a steep drop in the number of applicants and in the admit rates for both groups. In 2007, for example, only 1,163 African American students applied – 340 fewer than in 2006. Moreover, between 2006 and 2007, the admit rate for the group declined 14 percentage points. Likewise, the admit

rate for Latina/os declined 12 percentage points in 2007. The change from 2006 and 2007 may be due to UC Riverside becoming more selective but it is unclear at this point.

The steady increases posted in the number of African American and Latina/o freshmen enrolling at UC Riverside in recent years, it seems, is due, at least in part, to the referral of underrepresented minority students who increasingly were being turned away from higher tier UC campuses.



UC Riverside reportedly devised its current comprehensive review process by prioritizing diversity. Nonetheless, the most highly weighted factors in the campus' admissions process are high school GPA, SAT I, and SAT II scores. The number of "a-g" courses taken beyond the minimum also is considered, but the weight is low compared to the other academic factors. This latter choice could possibly help underrepresented minority and low-income students attending high schools that offer less college preparatory courses beyond the minimum "a-g," as compared to students who come from affluent backgrounds and more competitive high schools. Another aspect of UC Riverside's process that addresses racial inequalities is the weight given to Eligibility in the Local Context (0.1308). This weight is equal to the weight given for the two SAT II subject test scores. The substantial weight UC Riverside gives to ELC represents a positive step toward addressing the documented resource inequalities that exist across

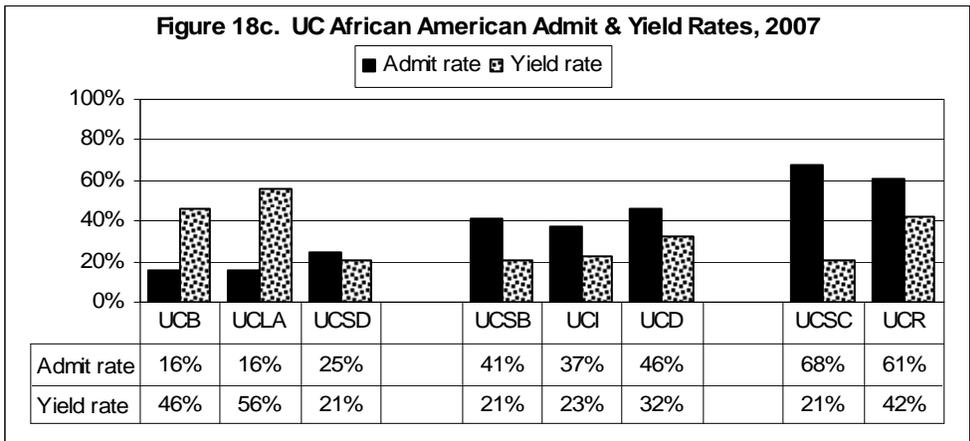
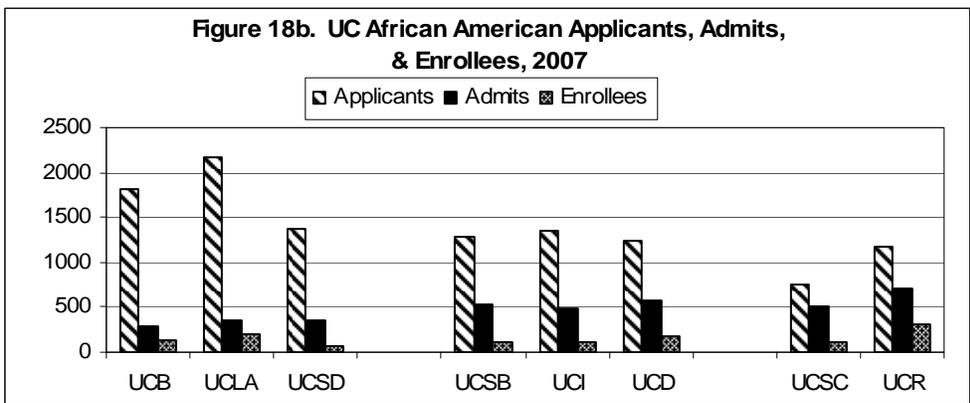
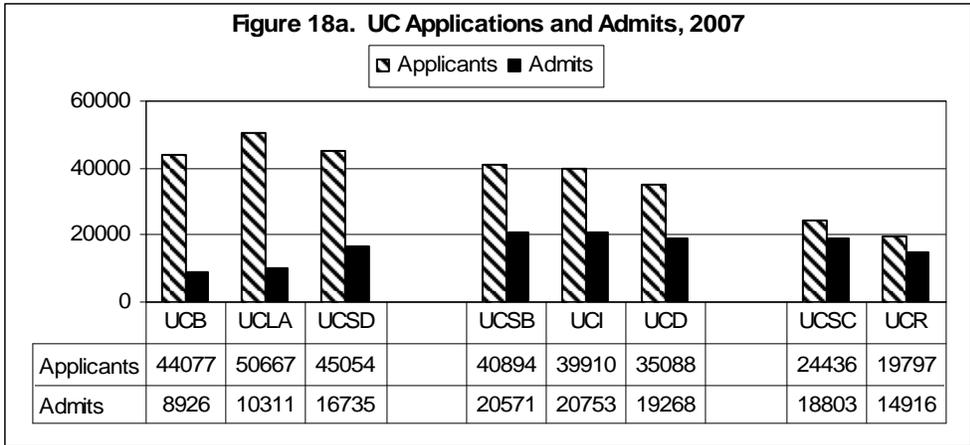
California's high schools. It also helps to offset the weight of the SAT II subject tests, which have mediocre predictive power and tend to handicap underrepresented minority applicants (Thomas, 2004).

The least selective institutions in the UC system recently changed policy from accepting all UC-eligible applicants to including some selectivity measures in their admissions processes. Although the processes at UC Santa Cruz and UC Riverside are much less selective than those used at the campuses in the top and middle tier, they employ similar criteria to rank and admit students. Both processes prioritize traditional measures of merit – albeit with relatively lower admissions standards and less competitive applicant pools – without adequately balancing them against racial and economic inequalities. If the formulaic methods employed at both campuses assigned more weight to factors that consider life challenges and non-traditional measures of merit (i.e., beyond GPA and standardized test scores), then the two schools would more meaningfully level the playing field for their applicants. Indeed, African Americans made up only 2 percent of UC Santa Cruz's undergraduate population in 2006, a figure that could grow significantly with a fairer admissions process. While African Americans already make up 6 percent of UC Riverside's undergraduate student body – by far the highest share for the group among all UC campuses – its comprehensive review process also has room for improvement.

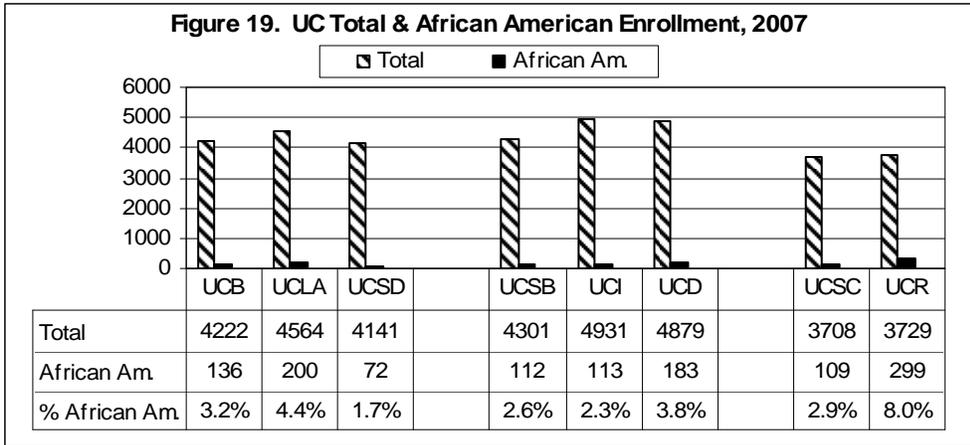
### **Systemwide Patterns**

As one might expect, the popularity of UC campuses declines with tier (see Figure 18a). That is, tier I institutions attracted the most applicants in 2007, while tier III institutions attracted the fewest. Figure 18b shows that this general pattern holds for African American applicants. With the exception of UC Riverside – which attracted a “tier II level of interest” from African American applicants in 2007, despite its tier III status – black applicants preferred the most selective campuses. The one break in this pattern is likely due to the critical mass of African Americans among UC Riverside's undergraduate population and the campus' concomitant reputation for offering a diverse and welcoming environment.

Based on our analysis of the UC campuses by tier, it becomes apparent that there is a common over-reliance on traditional measures of academic achievement in UC admissions processes. There is insufficient consideration given to the challenges faced by African Americans, in particular, and other underrepresented racial minorities more generally. Although each UC campus prioritizes traditional measures of academic achievement, they do so in a variety of ways, which results in a patterning of the rate at which African American applicants are admitted throughout the UC system. As is the case for all applicants, the admit rate of African American students generally increases as the tier decreases (see Figure 18c). But African American applicants – the lowliest admitted of all groups – appear to be particularly susceptible to the common UC practice of prioritizing traditional measures of academic achievement and discounting non-traditional ones.

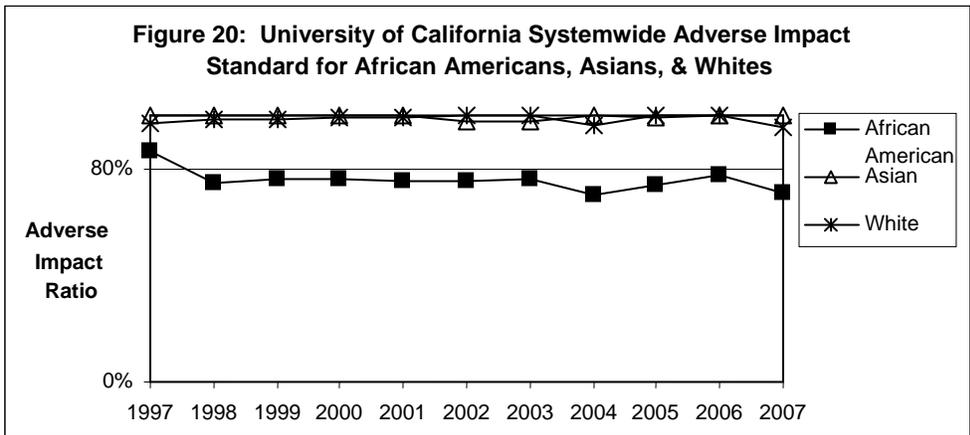


With the exception of UC Riverside, African Americans made up less than 5 percent of the fall 2007 freshman class at each UC campus (see Figure 19). Only UC Riverside enrolled more than 200 African American freshmen in 2007. Its 299 black students comprised 8 percent of the freshman class – a figure on par with the African American proportion of the state’s population (7 percent).



*Inflation and Adverse Impact.* Although each UC campus employs an admissions process that prioritizes traditional measures of academic achievement, the specific manner in which each campus determines the levels of GPA and SAT scores that warrant admission can exacerbate the adverse impact these measures have on underrepresented groups like African Americans. Tier I schools receive more applications than other UC campuses, numbers that far outstrip the available freshman slots. Indeed, in recent years, the demand for admission at these popular campuses has exceeded the supply of slots to the point where the price of admission – as measured by the GPAs and SAT scores of admitted students – has literally gone through the roof. This inflation has had a particularly adverse impact on underrepresented minority applicants, bright students who often attend under-resourced schools and are thus unable to amass the types of numbers that typically lead to admission at tier I campuses. Consequently, the admit rate for these groups, particularly African Americans, has languished at these campuses.

Overall, the University of California has not complied with the federal adverse impact standard since Proposition 209 took effect. As noted earlier, each group must have an admit rate at least 80 percent of the admit rate of the most highly admitted group to be in compliance. The UC systemwide admit rate of African Americans has been below the threshold since 1998, particularly in 2004 (70 percent) and 2007 (71 percent) (see Figure 20).



## Conclusions

Comprehensive review was introduced by University of California in the aftermath of Proposition 209 in order to evaluate potential students in their totality – beyond traditional indicators of academic achievement. Accordingly, each of the eight selective UC campuses has established a distinctive process for using information about applicants’ personal achievements and life challenges to make admissions decisions. But as we have argued throughout this report, each of the campuses still relies too heavily on traditional indicators of academic achievement in the admissions process, which – when combined with the stratospheric demand for freshman slots (particularly at the most prestigious campuses) – leads to an inflated admissions “price” that underrepresented minorities are often unable to pay. In the end, the campuses’ over-reliance on inflated numbers dilutes the impact that a consideration of other important indicators of merit (e.g., tenacity, creativity, commitment to community service, or academic achievement *within the context* of challenges) could and should have in the admissions process.

To be sure, UC campuses do very little to control for the biases and discrimination experienced by underrepresented groups that are routinely confounded with GPA. With the exception of UCLA – which attempts to even the playing field by evaluating only unweighted and uncapped GPA – no school attempts to mediate the advantage and disadvantage experienced by those with more or less access to AP courses. All of the other schools either rank students by weighted GPA, like UC Berkeley, or simply provide more points and weight to higher GPAs. These practices provide applicants with access to more AP classes with a significant advantage in the UC admissions game. At the same time, of course, these practices severely handicap underrepresented minority applicants.

Similarly, no school makes any meaningful effort to minimize the SAT bias that adversely impacts underrepresented and economically disadvantaged applicants. Due to stereotype-threat, poor schooling conditions, and low SES, African American students often receive lower scores on standardized exams than their white and Asian American counterparts. Moreover, these exams are generally mediocre predictors of college performance at best and actually do a poorer job of predicting the college performance of African American students. No UC campus takes this reality seriously by adjusting how standardized exams are interpreted in the ranking process.

The failure of comprehensive review at each UC campus to adequately adjust for K-12 inequalities and other biases that obscure the opportunities of underrepresented minority students is disheartening. However, UC administrative officials have recently proposed a set of policies that, if implemented, could address some of the current shortcomings. As mentioned earlier, the UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) has presented a proposal to the UC Academic Senate to reform the way that the UC system determines eligibility and evaluates applicants for admissions (BOARS, 2007). BOARS recognizes that the UC system currently relies too heavily on GPA and test scores that do not adequately reflect academic qualities and potentials. Specifically, BOARS proposes that California

applicants shall have their applications reviewed by the UC campus(es) of their choice if they meet the following requirements:

- complete 11 of the 15 required “a-g” courses
- earn an unweighted 2.8 GPA or higher in all “a-g” courses taken in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades
- take the SAT I exam or, the ACT with Writing exam.

BOARS proposes eliminating the requirement that students take the SAT II, subject tests that underrepresented minorities are less likely than their majority counterparts to take. Although BOARS does not propose eliminating the SAT I as a requirement, it does recommend that the exam be used only to enhance the understanding of an applicant’s academic preparation, as measured in conjunction with a collection of other indicators. The intention is that the SAT I no longer be used as a determining factor in admissions, particularly as a major criterion for ranking applicants. Additionally, BOARS seems to understand that due to K-12 inequalities, better admission policies must be developed so that the academic achievements of applicants are only compared and evaluated against other applicants with similar profiles of opportunity and advantage. The BOARS proposal is encouraging, and we hope that it represents the University of California’s first step toward making a firmer commitment to creating college access for all talented and deserving students.

## **Recommendations**

Increasing diversity does not mean that the University of California should admit unqualified students. It means that each campus should create reasonable opportunities in the admissions game for those who are qualified yet stifled by racial disparities in our education system. There is much more work to be done on the part of the UC system in order to ensure that access to higher education at each of the campuses is available to the vast majority of California citizens, and not just to the socio-economically privileged. It is the responsibility of the UC system as a whole and of each individual campus to continue to work toward equality of access. Furthermore, there are roles the community can play to hold the UC system and each campus accountable. It must be remembered that the UC is a public system that is mandated to serve the people of California as a whole. The community must remind the UC of its mission<sup>41</sup> and participate in working with the system to increase access. The following are our recommendations for what the UC system, each UC campus, and the community can do to increase and preserve diversity across the UC system.

### ***UC System***

- Construct a comprehensive review plan for the UC system that does not require each UC campus to assign the most weight in its admissions process to traditional measures of academic achievement.

- Each UC campus can increase diversity by deemphasizing traditional indicators of academic achievement, measures of merit that do not adequately reflect the academic potential of all applicants. Currently, UC comprehensive review policy requires that each campus develop a comprehensive review scheme that assigns the most weight to traditional measures of academic achievement such as GPA and standardized test scores. Under this policy, no individual UC campus has the flexibility to develop an admissions scheme that equally considers other measures of academic potential.
- Eliminate the use of the SAT I and/or SAT II subject tests.
- Each UC applicant is currently required to take the SAT I and SAT II subject tests. Under the UC comprehensive review policy, each UC campus is required to give the most consideration in admissions to these test scores (along with GPA). As previously discussed, SAT I scores of underrepresented minority applicants are typically influenced by racial and economic disadvantage. Additionally, research shows that the SAT I and SAT II offer very little predictive power in determining freshman-grade performance. It thus makes little sense to base admissions decisions on these tests, particularly when they are given so much weight in most campus admissions schemes.
  - Fortunately, BOARS has proposed that the UC system eliminate the SAT II subject test requirement. This is an important step in the right direction. BOARS also proposes that SAT I scores be used only to enhance other assessments of applicants – not as an independent, heavily weighted indicator of academic promise. We believe that the temptation to misuse standardized exams should be eliminated by removing them from the admissions process altogether.
- Increase funding for outreach efforts.
- The UC system can increase diversity by increasing funding for outreach efforts. The yield rate for African American students at most UC campuses is extremely low. Most had yield rates below 35 percent in 2007. Only UCLA, UC Berkeley, and UC Riverside posted yield rates for African Americans that exceeded this figure (56 percent, 46 percent, and 44 percent, respectively). Outreach funding has been cut drastically in recent years and should be restored immediately.

### ***Individual UC Campuses***

- Use only unweighted and uncapped GPA
- When UC campuses make use of weighted and capped GPA in their evaluations of applicants, they give an unfair advantage to applicants with more access to AP courses. By considering

only unweighted and uncapped GPA, each campus can significantly level the playing field for applicants.

- Consider students within their own educational contexts. If rankings are used as a part of the admissions process, do not rank educationally privileged applicants with less privileged ones, unless a meaningful equity adjustment is made prior to ranking.
  - UC campuses such as UC Berkeley and UCLA rank applicants by GPA and SAT scores. Although admission officers were not forthcoming about the specific role these rankings play in admissions decisions, this practice appears to place underrepresented minority students at a significant disadvantage in the college admissions game. While UCLA at least attempts to control for unequal access to AP courses by using unweighted and uncapped GPA, the campus makes no adjustments for SAT scores. In a society rife with class- and race-based inequalities, ranking is an inherently unfair practice that favors the economically and racially privileged.

### ***Community***

- Stay informed about the admissions numbers for each year. Serve as a watchdog to make sure UC campuses are doing their part to enhance and protect diversity.
  - The community can be a very powerful force in holding the UC system and each UC campus accountable. By staying on top of admissions numbers and policies, the community can stay informed and determine if the UC system and the local UC campus are doing their part to create and maintain access for all deserving students.
- Voice concerns.
  - If dissatisfied with admissions practices or admissions numbers, community members should write letters to the Director of Admissions or the Chancellor of their respective UC campus. Additionally, meetings with these individuals should be demanded and arranged. Community members must remember that as California residents, they pay taxes to support the UC and, therefore, UC officials must be accountable to them.
- Apply to be readers
  - The reading process can significantly impact admissions decisions, particularly when the admissions scheme is less formulaic and more holistic in nature. A reader pool that reflects the economic and racial diversity of California can only work to ensure that the review process is as fair and equitable as possible.

If these recommendations are implemented, we believe, California can make great strides toward increasing diversity at each UC campus. Although Prop. 209 has dismantled affirmative action, the UC

system, each UC campus, and the community together, can revive and enhance the educational opportunities of African Americans and other underrepresented minority students who have been systematically excluded from the nation's top public institution of higher education.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### Comprehensive Review Factors for UC Freshman Applicants

1. Academic grade point average in all completed “a-g” courses, including additional points for completed University-certified honors courses.
2. Scores on the ACT Assessment plus Writing or SAT Reasoning Test, and two SAT Subject Tests.
3. Number of, content of and performance in academic courses beyond the minimum “a-g” requirements.
4. Number of and performance in University-approved honors courses and Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and transferable college courses.
5. Identification by UC as being ranked in the top 4 percent of the student's high school class at the end of his or her junior year (“eligible in the local context” or ELC).
6. Quality of the student’s senior-year program, as measured by the type and number of academic courses in progress or planned.
7. Quality of the student’s academic performance relative to the educational opportunities available in his or her high school.
8. Outstanding performance in one or more academic subject areas.
9. Outstanding work in one or more special projects in any academic field of study.
10. Recent, marked improvement in academic performance, as demonstrated by academic GPA and the quality of coursework completed or in progress.
11. Special talents, achievements and awards in a particular field, such as visual and performing arts, communication or athletic endeavors; special skills, such as demonstrated written and oral proficiency in other languages; special interests, such as intensive study and exploration of other cultures; experiences that demonstrate unusual promise for leadership, such as significant community service or significant participation in student government; or other significant experiences or achievements that demonstrate the student's promise for contributing to the intellectual vitality of a campus.
12. Completion of special projects undertaken in the context of the student’s high school curriculum or in conjunction with special school events, projects or programs.
13. Academic accomplishments in light of the student’s life experiences and special circumstances.
14. Location of the student’s secondary school and residence.

Source: Comprehensive Review Factors for Freshman Applicants, University of California (2006)

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> The admission rate in this report is calculated as the number of African Americans admitted out of the number of African Americans that applied.
- <sup>2</sup> This data excludes UC Merced which does not have a competitive admissions process.
- <sup>3</sup> "Facts about the University of California: Comprehensive Review Progress Report." (2003, October). Retrieved December 19, 2007 from the University of California website:  
[http://www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/2002/compr\\_review.pdf](http://www.ucop.edu/news/factsheets/2002/compr_review.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup> Comprehensive review will be evaluated at all UC campuses with the exception of UC Merced. This is because UC Merced does not have a competitive admissions process and admits all UC-eligible applicants.
- <sup>5</sup> See Schmidt, 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> Since Johnson's presidency, affirmative action has been expanded or curtailed by presidential executive orders, state laws, and court rulings.
- <sup>7</sup> For the fall class of 2007, the mean GPA at UC Berkeley was a 4.1 and the mean GPA for UCLA was a 4.14 (University of California, 2007a).
- <sup>8</sup> The total public school enrollment for whites is 39%, for Asians it is 13%, and Latina/os make up 38% while African Americans make up 8% (Solórzano & Ornelas, 2004).
- <sup>9</sup> There are two types of SAT exams: the SAT Reasoning test (formerly SAT I), and the SAT Subject Tests (formerly SAT II: Subject Tests). In this report, the SAT Reasoning Test will be referred to as SAT I consisting of the critical reading, math, and writing sections and the SAT Subject Tests will be referred to as SAT II subject exams/tests. The SAT I is required by most universities, and is the exam most commonly referred to and analyzed in education research regarding the SAT. The UC system requires students to take both the SAT I and SAT II subject exams.
- <sup>10</sup> API stands for "Academic Performance Index" and is a standardized measure of school performance based on standardized test scores. API rankings range from 1 (low) to 10 (high), and show how California schools measure up against one another based on test performance. Schools with low API scores often have non-white and non-Asian majority student populations and are underresourced.
- <sup>11</sup> The SAT was originally known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test. In 1990, the name was changed to Scholastic Assessment Test because of increased scrutiny in its ability to act as an intelligence test. In 1994, the name was changed to SAT without the letters acting as an acronym. Since being significantly modified in 2005, particularly with the addition of a writing section, it is commonly referred to as the SAT Reasoning Test. Each of its three revised sections has a scoring range of 200-800 points (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT> for further details).
- <sup>12</sup> The SAT II is not a good predictor of UC freshman GPA as well. It explains only 16% of the variance of UC freshman GPA (UCOP, 2001). At the time of the UCOP study, the UC system required applicants to take SAT II subject tests in Writing and Mathematics, along with a third subject test of the students' choice. In 2006, the UC system changed this requirement and applicants must now only take two subjects tests of their choice, in the following subjects: History/Social Science, English Literature, Mathematics, Laboratory Science, or a language other than English (UCOP, 2003). UC research conducted prior to 2006 refers to the former SAT II.
- <sup>13</sup> For UC African American freshmen, the former SAT II only explains 12% of the variation in their GPAs (UCOP, 2001).
- <sup>14</sup> The fall 2007 GPAs for African Americans, Asians, and whites, are projected GPAs that are calculated by the UCLA Office of Analysis and Information Management.
- <sup>15</sup> The University of California's primary mission was to provide undergraduate and graduate education through the doctorate degree as well as professional degrees in fields such as a law and medicine. The California State University system was designated as the teaching system and would educate undergraduate and graduate students, but would only confer master's degrees. In addition, the UC would admit the top 12.5% of high school graduates while the CSU would admit the top 33%.
- <sup>16</sup> SP-1 is also known as Standing Policy 1. Before Prop. 209 passed statewide in 1996, the UC Regents approved SP-1 in 1995. SP-1 banned the use of race and ethnicity in admissions but did not take effect until 1998 coinciding with the implementation of Prop. 209. The Regents repealed SP-1 with a resolution in May 2001, but it was just a symbolic decision since the UC was still hampered by Prop 209.
- <sup>17</sup> Case C. 99-0525 (1999).
- <sup>18</sup> See Appendix A for a full list of the 14 criteria.
- <sup>19</sup> BOARS is a committee of the UC Academic Senate, a governing body of the UC system that is comprised of UC Faculty. BOARS oversees all matters related to undergraduate admissions and regulates policies used in the admissions process. The committee also makes recommendations to improve the admissions process.
- <sup>20</sup> The *USNWR* rankings are based on seven broad areas measuring college quality. These areas include peer assessment, faculty resources, graduation and retention rates, and selectivity. The 2008 methodology for selectivity (15 percent of total) of national universities and liberal arts college included SAT/ACT scores (50 percent), acceptance rate (10 percent) and high school class rank (40 percent). The *USNWR* rankings have been criticized for their impact on institutions, the tendency to alter the methodology each year, and the dubious measure of college quality (Ehrenberg, 2002; Pike, 2004).

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<sup>21</sup> HERI Selectivity measure is based on 2004 self-reported data through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) and College Opportunities Online (COOL) database through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

<sup>22</sup> Mean SAT I (based on the revised 2400-point scale) and mean HS GPA are for students admitted for fall 2007.

<sup>23</sup> UC Merced administrators were interviewed for this study. However, because their campus does not employ comprehensive review, their interview was not included in the analysis for this report.

<sup>24</sup> Weighted GPAs include extra grade points awarded to students taking Advanced Placement and Honors courses.

<sup>25</sup> Unweighted GPAs do not include the extra grade points given to students taking Advanced Placement and Honors courses.

<sup>26</sup> Under the Eligibility in the Local Context Program (ELC), the top 4% of California high school students in each graduating class are designated as UC-eligible. Additionally, these students must also complete UC-required high school course work, and take the SAT I and SAT II subject exams.

<sup>27</sup> There are two readers per each applicant for the College of Letters and Sciences. For the other schools (i.e. nursing, engineering, etc.) applications are read once and receive a score. The schools then do a separate read to determine if applicants meet their specific admissions criteria.

<sup>28</sup> Uncapped GPA refers to no limits being placed on the amount of semester grades the admissions staff will evaluate. All grades received in all of the courses a student has taken will count towards their cumulative GPA.

<sup>29</sup> UC San Diego awards points for the best score from the ACT plus Writing or the SAT I, and two SAT II subject tests.

<sup>30</sup> Graduating from a California high school in the lower two quintiles of the Academic Performance Index (API).

<sup>31</sup> The yield rate in this report is calculated as the number of African Americans that enroll at the university out of the number that were offered admission.

<sup>32</sup> "Bringing in the new Bruins." (2007, April 6). Retrieved December 19, 2007 from the *UCLA Today Online* website: [http://www.today.ucla.edu/news/070406\\_admissions\\_minority-increase/](http://www.today.ucla.edu/news/070406_admissions_minority-increase/).

<sup>33</sup> As noted earlier, uncapped GPA refers to no limits being placed on the amount of semester grades the admission staff will evaluate. All grades received in all of the courses a student has taken will count towards their cumulative GPA. And, unweighted GPAs do not include the extra grade points given to students taking Advanced Placement and Honors courses.

<sup>34</sup> The critical reading, math, and writing components of the SAT I, all have a scoring range of 200-800 points. Scores from the SAT II (any subject) range from 200-800. The combination of SAT I scores, plus the scores on any two SAT II subject tests, make the highest combined score a student can earn, 4000. ACT scores are converted to mirror the same scale as the SAT I and SAT II exams.

<sup>35</sup> The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) provides academic support to historically disadvantaged students on UC campuses statewide. Prospective UC students apply to EOP through the UC application process for undergraduate admissions. Eligible EOP students must be from educationally disadvantaged and low-income backgrounds (University of California, 2007b). UC Davis' inclusion of EOP eligibility into its admissions considerations, serves as a proxy for assessing any economic or educational disadvantages students may face.

<sup>36</sup> For a complete listing of UC admissions data including applicants, admits, and enrollees by ethnicity for each UC campus from 1997 to 2007, please see the *Bunche Research Report* supplementary on the Bunche Center website, [www.bunchecenter.ucla.edu](http://www.bunchecenter.ucla.edu).

<sup>37</sup> See endnote 36.

<sup>38</sup> UC Santa Cruz awards points for the best score from the ACT plus Writing or the SAT I, and two SAT II subject tests. The highest total from any of these combined scores is 2,400. The ACT is converted to SAT scores.

<sup>39</sup> UC Santa Cruz will also consider "a-g" coursework completed during the seventh and, or, eighth grade.

<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that the number of UC eligible African American high school graduates has increased since the implementation of Prop. 209 (California Post-Secondary Education Commission, 2004; *Bunche Research Report*, 2006a, 2006b).

<sup>41</sup> See University of California (2007c).