



SHUT OUT

Of the System

As competition increases for slots at UC-Berkeley, admission offers to minority students continue to decline

BY PAMELA BURDMAN

BERKELEY, CALIF.

As University of California officials announced admissions results for the fall, it appeared that increasing competition for seats at the university, rising tuition costs, and continued controversy over the role of race in admissions were conspiring to reduce the slots offered to African American students at UC-Berkeley.



At the same time, the state's budget crisis was posing additional barriers to low-income and disadvantaged students seeking an education at the top-ranked public university. Among the effects: fee increases of more than 50 percent over the last three years and elimination of all state funding for university outreach programs that help high school students prepare for college and, once they arrive, stay there. And for the first time in 44 years, UC and California State University both were renegeing on their guarantees to admit all students who meet the minimum eligibility requirements.

Even as the fiscal woes threatened to push low-income and minority students further down the educational ladder, the number of African American students from California high schools admitted to UC fell 15 percent from last year. At the Berkeley campus, the drop was even more pronounced: Of the 7,753 students who were admitted for this fall, only 194 were Black, 30 percent fewer than the 281 Black students who received admissions offers in 2003. In 1997, the last year that the UC system practiced race-conscious admissions, Berkeley admitted 515 Black students. Berkeley Chancellor Dr. Robert M. Berdahl called this year's results "flat-out unacceptable."

"I am profoundly saddened and disappointed that so many of these students, especially African American students, will not receive the exceptional education and experience that this public institution has to offer," the chancellor said in a statement. Berdahl, who steps down on July 1, vowed to devote the rest of his time at the university to search for strategies that would increase opportunities for underrepresented students at Berkeley.

Latino students were also admitted at Berkeley in lower numbers: 916 this year vs. 998 for last fall's class. Based on preliminary responses from students, Berkeley's incoming freshman class will be 2.6 percent African American, 9.8 percent Latino, 32.3 percent White and 45.5 percent Asian American. Those numbers are increasingly out of line with K-12 enrollment, where 8 percent of students are Black, 46 percent are Latino, 32 percent are White and 8 percent are Asian American.

Officially, the campus position is that officials are still studying this year's admissions results as well as accusations leveled by Board of Regents Chairman John J. Moores that the campus had been offering seats to minority students with low SAT scores (see *Black Issues*, Jan. 1). A report is due in July, said education professor Dr. David Stern, who chairs a faculty admissions committee. "It's going to be as detached and scientific as we can make it. It has to hold up to scrutiny that's more strict than academic

research."

Some insiders who were troubled by the figures blamed the "chilling effect" of a nasty public spat on UC's board of regents over whether the campus had been admitting underqualified minority students in violation of the state's race-blind policies. The climate may have dissuaded some minority students from applying and also driven admissions officers, even subconsciously, to be more cautious about accepting minority students with strong, but not stellar, records.

At the campus' Black Recruitment and Retention Center, student volunteers were questioning their hard work to attract talented African American students from local high schools to attend Berkeley.

"The situation is not conducive to Black students coming here," said Carl Williams, a junior majoring in electrical engineering. "It's difficult as students here to reach out to those students and tell them they'll be welcome with open arms. It's pretty obvious that they won't have as good a social experience."

Nile Taylor, a fourth-year student with a triple major in political science, legal studies and theatre, also felt discouraged. "It's hard to be one of the only Black students in a class of 700," she said. "It's an added weight to an already difficult situation. It's getting harder to look (high school students) in the eye and tell them that Cal's the best school to go to."

And, with the loss of outreach dollars, the campuses themselves will have fewer resources with which to develop programs in high schools that send few students to the university — typically schools with high proportions of minorities.

A NATIONWIDE TREND?

Last year's outreach cuts may help explain a 7 percent drop in Black applicants to UC this year. UC officials pointed to a possible nationwide trend, noting similar drops at the University of Michigan and Ohio State University. But that trend seems to be confined to schools where admissions was the focus of intense media scrutiny or that made major changes in their application procedures.

The University of Michigan was at the heart of the Supreme Court's decision on admissions last year that prohibited universities from using numerical formulas when they consider applicants' race or ethnicity.

At Michigan, applications from minority students fell by 23 percent, more than the 18 percent drop in overall applications. Spokesman Julie Peterson attributed much of the drop to a new application process that was more cumbersome for students.

A similar trend prevailed at Ohio State, which also revised its application to comply with the Supreme



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* BASED ON PRELIMINARY RESPONSES FROM STUDENTS

Court ruling. In addition to four mini-essay questions on the application, Vice Provost Dr. Mac Stewart blamed rising tuition and the "chilling effect from the Supreme Court decision and how it was interpreted by the African American community — that up we cannot go."

But elsewhere, public flagships saw no similar drop. In fact, at the University of Illinois' Urbana campus, African American applicants increased 12 percent from 1,677 to 1,889. The University of Virginia also reported a 12 percent increase from 912 to 1,018, though overall applications increased only slightly. At the University of Massachusetts' Amherst campus, applications from Black students remained steady, but officials were looking toward a crisis-ridden California as prime pickings.

"It's a very lucrative and strong area for us," said

Dr. Michael Gargano, vice chancellor for student affairs and campus life at U-Mass. "I think we can convince a substantial number of students to come back East and participate in one of the best academic environments."



Rising tuition is one of the reasons for a decrease in minority applicants at Ohio State, says Dr. Mac Stewart, vice provost.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES

In California, the fear is that the budget problems and enrollment pressure could create a worsening academic environment, especially for minority students. In addition, a May 19th commission report showed that UC was admitting students in the top 14.4 percent of high school students, higher than the 12.5 percent cut-off specified in the state's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education.

Because a UC education costs the state top dollar, policy-makers were predicting pressure on the university to return to the 12.5 percent. But doing so, some in the university fear, could only further stack

UC-Berkeley New Freshman California Resident Admits by Ethnicity Fall 1997 through Fall 2004

Ethnicity	Final Fall 1997	Final Fall 1998	Final Fall 1999	Final Fall 2000	Preliminary* Fall 2001	Preliminary** Fall 2002	Preliminary*** Fall 2003	Preliminary**** Fall 2004	Numerical Change from F2003- F2004	Percentage Change from F2003-F2004
American Indian	62	27	37	41	48	37	45	39	-6	-13.3%
African American	547	235	292	335	299	293	278	194	-84	-30.2%
Chicano /Latino	1,241	616	735	888	981	976	1,002	916	-86	-8.6%
Asian American	2,542	2,750	2,866	2,920	2,991	2,982	2,989	3,136	+147	+4.9%
White	2,349	2,372	2,540	2,511	2,492	2,450	2,469	2,665	+196	+7.9%
Other	161	94	133	123	130	87	104	102	-2	-1.9%
Not Given	440	1,142	649	714	721	617	726	658	-68	-9.4%
Subtotal- Citizens and Immigrants	7,342	7,236	7,252	7,532	7,662	7,442	7,613	7,710	+97	+1.3%
Subtotal- American Indian, African American, Chicano, Latino	1,850	878	1,064	1,264	1,328	1,306	1,325	1,149	-176	-13.3%

*FALL 2001 ADMISSIONS DATA AS OF 3/28/01. **FALL 2002 ADMISSIONS DATA AS OF 3/27/02. *** FALL 2003 ADMISSIONS DATA AS OF 3/26/03, ****FALL 2004 ADMISSIONS DATA AS OF 3/29/04

SOURCES: OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION, OFFICE OF AVC ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

NOTES: 1.)PRELIMINARY COUNTS NOT AVAILABLE IN YEARS PRIOR TO 2001-02, 2.)COUNTS MAY NOT EXACTLY MATCH THOSE REPORTED BY OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT DUE TO DIFFERENCES IN TIMING OF THE REPORT AND INFORMATION REGARDING "RESIDENCY STATUS"

the deck against disadvantaged students, many of whom are minorities.

"I think that the combination of changes in the eligibility requirements, and the enrollment cutbacks along with the financial aid cutbacks could together have a considerable negative impact," said Dr. Francisco Hernandez, vice chancellor for student affairs at UC Santa Cruz. "If we're not careful, if we don't plan, if we don't put into affect ameliorating programs or look closely at this, there is a danger that we're going to disproportionately impact that group."

This year, 7,600 students who met all of the eligibility requirements received rain checks from UC promising them a seat at one of the nine undergraduate campuses in Fall 2006 if they successfully complete freshman and sophomore requirements at a community college.

Most of California State University's 23 campuses also turned away qualified students, many of them for the first time ever, but offered only 3,800 of the two-year community college diversion slots.

Besides attending community colleges, students who get shut out of one or both of the systems have the option of attending a private school or going out of state, and it was unclear how many students would choose which option. But clearly if the decisions on which students *not* to admit were made strictly on numerical grounds, that could explain part of the decline in admissions of minority students.

Hernandez and others at the university are concerned that if UC has to return to the 12.5 percent cut-off, minority students and those who are in the first generation to go to college in their family would be placed at a significant disadvantage.

They are hoping that any revisions to the school's eligibility requirements will make room for more students to qualify on a per-high school basis. While students currently qualify if their grades and test scores are in the top 12.5 percent statewide, they can also be admitted if they are in the top 4 percent at their high school.

"I support increasing that number in any way that we can," Hernandez said. "It takes into account a student's learning opportunities, their learning context."

Pressure is expected from the legislature's ethnic caucuses to do just that — increase the proportion of students who qualify within their high school, and decrease the percentage

on a statewide basis. State Senator Kevin Murray, D-Los Angeles, chair of the Black Caucus, has proposed amending the state constitution to require UC to accept the top 10 percent of students.

"To the extent that we have to cut, we have to think of new ways of apportioning that cut," Murray said. "If people from these elite

private schools get accepted at a much higher rate, and we're in charge of the public schools, it is we who have done a disservice to the students at public schools. We have to make sure that the UC system is a public university and remains to serve the public and not to provide a subsidized education just for the elite." ■

Broad Institute

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The Broad Institute, formerly known as the Whitehead Institute/MIT Center for Genome Research, represents a unique research collaboration among MIT, Harvard and its affiliated hospitals, and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research. Under the direction of Eric Lander, Broad Institute's purpose will be to fulfill the promise of the Human Genome Project (HGP) for medicine. Its mission will have two parts: (1) to create comprehensive tools for genomic medicine and make them broadly available to scientists around the world and (2) to pioneer applications of these tools to the study of disease, in order to propel the understanding, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of disease.

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The Broad Institute is offering postdoctoral research opportunities to scientists from a diverse range of disciplines with an opportunity to receive specialized practical training in Genomics Research. The program will match postdoctoral researchers with mentors according to their research interests. The postdoctoral researchers will collaborate with their mentor to design a 3-year research project or a series of shorter projects. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit a Curriculum Vita, recommendation letters, and a letter of intent describing your research interest in the field of genomics.

Topics and Specialties for this program may include:

- ◆ Bioinformatics
- ◆ Computational Biology
- ◆ Medical & Population Studies
- ◆ Cancer Genomics
- ◆ DNA Microarray Data
- ◆ Molecular Classification
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- ◆ Profiling of Tumors

Each selected postdoctoral researcher is provided with:

- ◆ Stipend
- ◆ Retirement and health benefits
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The program is open to U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

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