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APPENDIX A

Current Trends Impacting the Teaching of Writing as Chronicled in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

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THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION*Students*

From the issue dated May 31, 2002

**SAT Is Set for an Overhaul,
but Questions Linger About the Test****Experts debate whether changes will be fair and how they will affect minority applicants**

By ERIC HOOVER

The customer is always right, as the adage goes. But only the biggest customers can dictate which products are put on the shelf.

The University of California, whose campuses together receive more SAT scores than any other institution in higher education, apparently has persuaded the College Board to make numerous changes to the content and format of the nation's most-used entrance exam. Although the College Board says it has considered revamping its signature product for some time, the pressure to overhaul the SAT has been growing since Richard C. Atkinson, the university's president, last year proposed eliminating the test as an admissions requirement. Since then, the College Board has been talking publicly about plans to add a writing sample, new reading questions, and more advanced math equations to the current test.

The SAT is evolving, says Wayne Camara, the College Board's vice president for research and development. The new test will more adequately reflect classroom learning and give us a better picture of a student's core skills that relate to success in college.

Whether that statement is more than a sales pitch is a matter of debate in academia. At one extreme are SAT supporters who say the test is unfairly blamed for inequities in educational opportunity; at the other are opponents who never met a standardized test they didn't hate. In the middle, many professors and admissions officials—including some leaders of the University of California—are cautiously optimistic about the new test, even though a number of them doubt that the SAT, in any form, can accurately predict college performance.

Among the critics, there is worry that the existing score gaps between white students and minorities will remain, and that the new test would be as easy for wealthy students to get coached on as the present one. Even as College Board officials tout the proposed essay component as a way of emphasizing writing skills in high schools, skeptics doubt that a short writing test can be evaluated objectively—or inexpensively.

Both sides will have some time to air their opinions. If the College Board's trustees approve the changes, the high-school class of 2006 would be the first to take the redesigned test.

By then, the face of the SAT could look much different. A perfect score would no longer be 1600 but 2400: Under the proposed changes, the new exam would have three sections, instead of two, each scored on a 200-800 scale. The revised test would have a critical reading section (now called the verbal section), a math section, and a writing section. The test-taking time would increase from three hours to approximately 3 1/2 hours.

According to the College Board, the goal of the changes is to relate the SAT more closely to high-school curricula. The math section, for example, now covers concepts taught through first-year algebra courses, but the new test would introduce items measuring skills from second-year algebra and trigonometry classes. There would also be more open-ended questions, where students would have to come up with their own answers to equations.

The current SAT verbal section has three types of questions. There are 19 word-analogy questions that measure knowledge of word meanings and the relationship between words; 19 sentence-completion questions that test understanding of how different parts of sentences fit together logically; and 40 critical reading questions based on short passages. The new test will replace word analogies with short paragraph-length reading-comprehension items, which Mr. Camara says will allow the SAT to better test students' analytical thinking without basing questions solely on vocabulary.

Of all the proposed changes, however, the writing section is generating the most buzz. Roughly two-thirds of a student's writing score would be based on multiple-choice questions on grammar and usage. A 20-minute essay question would account for the rest.

The purpose of the essay component would be to measure a student's writing ability in the raw. Some admissions officials have complained that application essays—which may be revised, polished, and edited by others—do not necessarily reveal a student's writing skills.

According to College Board officials, the essay question would closely resemble those on the SAT 2 writing exam, in which students are asked to write about something general, such as a person or an experience that has influenced them. Another possibility is a persuasive prompt, a question that would require students to build structured arguments based on their responses to a general question.

We're going to choose questions that will not put a student at a disadvantage based on where they live or their social status, says Mr. Camara. So there won't be a prompt about, say, baseball or African-American art, but something general. For instance, we could ask, Do you believe admissions tests have value in admissions decisions?

Although reactions to the essay component have been mostly positive, some observers are concerned about how the essay would be evaluated.

Emphasizing Writing

Evaluating someone's writing skills seems to be getting into a subjective area, says Sherry L. Lansing, a University of California regent and chief executive officer of Paramount Pictures' Motion Picture Group.

You can evaluate grammar, punctuation, and spelling, but not creativity. How would *Ulysses* be graded on the SAT? How would Faulkner have been graded?

According to College Board officials, the essays would be scored by two different readers, likely on a one to eight scale. Mr. Camara acknowledges that the writing score will be somewhat subjective, but says readers will have clear guidelines for making their evaluations, and that scores differing by more than one point would be judged by a third reader.

It is uncertain how the addition of the essay will affect the cost of taking the test. College Board officials say that the new section might add as much as \$10 to the cost the SAT, currently \$25. Some writing instructors are not sure that the change will be worth it. Donald R. Gallehr, an English professor at George Mason University and director of the Northern Virginia Writing Project, speculates that an SAT essay might prompt some teachers to emphasize writing drills instead of process skills, including brainstorming and revising.

Evaluation does drive instruction, so there's the hope that having writing on the SAT would improve the quality of writing instruction in schools, but I just don't know if that's realistic, Mr.

Gallehr says. It would all depend on how teachers handle this. If all you're doing is assigning 20-minute essays in classrooms to prepare for the SAT, there's going to be a problem.

But some others in academe are more optimistic about the changes. Lawrence Douglas, an associate professor of law, jurisprudence, and social thought at Amherst College, says the essay might prove valuable to admissions officials.

I'm sometimes shocked to see how many students have an inability to express themselves, Mr. Douglas says. There are students who score high on the verbal section who are not capable writers. I think you can learn a lot in seeing whether a student expresses himself clearly in a short amount of time.

The new writing section, along with a beefed-up math section, have led some observers to question whether the new SAT will be harder than the current test. The short answer, says Mr. Camara, is no: The test's designers will adjust the difficulty of questions to maintain consistency with current tests. Still, the biggest unknown for some admissions officials is how they would compare new SAT scores to those of previous classes.

A Higher Bar?

As academics debate the proposals, leaders of the test-preparation industry do not seem worried, even though many supporters of the revised SAT are predicting that the new test would be less coachable.

The fact is that test changes are great for our business because changes in the test tend to cause a lot of concern, so even more students may seek out test-preparation, says Seppy Basili, vice-president for learning and assessment at Kaplan. From a business standpoint, that's certainly good for us. There's no test that isn't coachable. But my concern is whether changes in the test would have a disproportionate effect on kids on the lower end of the scale.

Critics of standardized tests say students who perform poorly on the current test will not fare any better on the revised test.

The new SAT is just new Coke, a repackaging ploy to hold and expand a market, says Robert A. Schaeffer, public-education director for the National Center for Fair & Open Testing. There's no indication and there's no data from the College Board that says this test will be a more accurate predictor of students' performance in college than the current SAT. Short of that, all we have is the reshuffling of deck chairs.

Some in academe share Mr. Schaeffer's concern that the College Board is more focused on pleasing its biggest customer than improving the test.

The College Board has gone from being a lumbering behemoth that doesn't seem to like change to acting very quickly, says Bruce J. Poch, vice president and dean of admissions at Pomona College. Mr. Poch says he supports some of the changes to the SAT, but worries about how quickly the proposals have come together. There is a concern that politics is going to outweigh careful planning.

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chronicle.com/review

The Chronicle Review

From the issue dated January 3, 2003

Why Johnny Can't Write, Even Though He Went to Princeton
Many top colleges fear that their students lack basic composition skills

By THOMAS BARTLETT

Ask Clare Gould about her freshman course in writing, and the bright, pleasant senior at Princeton University makes no attempt to hide her disgust. "It was rotten," she says. She describes a disorganized class taught by a graduate student who was killing time and his students' enthusiasm. "I have never heard of anyone who had a good or even passable experience in their writing course," she says.

Realizing the deep dissatisfaction among students like Ms. Gould about how writing was taught at the university, Princeton ditched the program last year and began afresh. It took writing courses away from inexperienced graduate students, hired a group of lecturers to take their places, and created a slew of new, required, topic-based courses. It was a radical step, but one that many believe was long overdue. More than a few top colleges have made similar moves in recent years, or are in the process of doing so. Some, like Princeton and Duke University, have started over from scratch. Others, like Columbia University, are proceeding with caution. And there are those that, like Brown University and Bowdoin College, know that what they're doing now doesn't work but are not sure how to proceed. While the situations and solutions differ, officials at each of these prestigious institutions have arrived at the same conclusion: Their college has not been doing a good job of teaching students how to write.

Report after report — from the one issued in 1998 by the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates to this year's National Survey of Student Engagement, an extensive look at student attitudes — has emphasized the importance of undergraduate writing. It's hard to find a college president or liberal-arts dean who can't give a solemn, impromptu lecture on the subject. In short, everyone seems to agree.

So why is it that, even at the nation's best colleges, the teaching of writing has long been treated less like a high priority and more like an afterthought? And if that neglectful attitude is beginning to change, as seems to be the case, what took so long?

One answer is that writing instructors don't get much respect in academe. "There's this image that it's janitorial cleanup or service work," says Nancy Sommers, director of expository writing at Harvard University. Another is that many students view writing requirements as just one more hoop to jump through before they can don the cap and gown. Those problems are not unrelated: Because writing programs are frequently ignored, their quality suffers. Students then end up stuck in classes that waste their time and try their patience.

As to what has prompted this recent round of reform, some say it's Ivy-see, Ivy-do. "When somebody does something, all the other institutions perk up their ears," says Eric Schneider, associate director of academic affairs at the University of Pennsylvania.

Administrators also point to an increase in the number of complaints from professors. "We've been hearing from faculty members that students are having trouble with their writing," says Paul B. Armstrong, dean of the college at Brown.

What kind of trouble? Professors cite a host of writing-related shortcomings among students, most often their inability to construct the sort of lengthy, sophisticated research papers required in upper-division courses. "Almost everyone comes in well-trained to gather research in the library," says Judith A. Swan, a lecturer in Princeton's writing program. "But almost none of them are capable of turning that into a real paper with a thesis and an argument."

The trend isn't limited to top-ranked colleges. "I haven't seen a newly revised curriculum plan that failed to emphasize writing," says Carol Geary Schneider, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, which advises colleges on curriculum reform. But the debate over these issues at elite colleges is instructive, writing experts say, because these institutions aren't finding easy solutions despite having top students and bountiful resources, which several of them are now using to promote reforms.

'A Bunch of Bad Classes'

At Princeton, students called them the “W” courses. Since the 1960s, the university had required undergraduates to take one course with a “W” after its course number, a designation that was reserved for writing-intensive offerings. Originally, those courses were taught only in the English department. That changed in the late 1980s, when courses outside the English department became eligible, greatly expanding the number of options to satisfy the requirement.

While intended to encourage the teaching of writing within a variety of disciplines — an approach that many experts favor — the effort failed. “Some students got superb instruction, and some got very little,” says Howard N. Dobin, associate dean of the college. “There was a general acknowledgment that we were not doing as well in this as we could.”

That’s putting it too kindly, according to Ms. Gould, the Princeton senior, who majors in biology. “It has a history of being limited to a bunch of bad classes,” she says. Her father, James Gould, a professor of biology at Princeton, was so upset by his daughter’s “absolutely terrible” experience that he volunteered to teach in the new program. “If we want students to write decent papers or honors theses — which are required here — then it’s essential that we teach them to write well,” he says.

As the chorus of complaints grew louder, Princeton responded by bringing in a group of outside reviewers. They came to the same conclusion that professors and students had already reached: the “W” program didn’t work.

To fix it, the university last year hired 20 lecturers, who had some experience teaching writing, on one-year renewable contracts of up to five years. Princeton also made taking a topic-based writing course separate from the other 30 requirements that students must meet; until last year, a writing course could also fulfill other graduation requirements. And Princeton created dozens of topic-based courses, like “Bandits in Myth and History” and “Dracula,” in which the subjects are intended to provide fodder for students’ essays. The emphasis in these courses, which are outside any department, is not on learning the reading material but on learning to write.

Duke students, too, had been saddled for years with a failed writing program. Since the mid-1980s, Duke had used a method, developed by a now-retired English professor, that was based on peer interaction. In 1999, the university revamped its requirement. “It was clear to the faculty that it was broken. It was clear to the students who took it. It was clear to the parents of those students and their grandparents,” says Robert J. Thompson, dean of the liberal-arts college at Duke.

So if even grandparents knew, why did it take so long to act? Mr. Thompson chalks up the long delay to “inertia.” In that, Duke is far from unique. Writing programs are notoriously difficult to remake, and few officials look forward to the battles that will no doubt ensue once any change is proposed. “Generally, people feel it’s a dean’s nightmare, because you have so many constituencies that are unhappy,” says Ms. Sommers of Harvard, who was one of Duke’s outside reviewers.

Both Duke and Princeton ended up with programs that resemble Harvard’s. Both chose to put the teaching of freshman writing in the hands of instructors hired on contract (Harvard calls them “preceptors”). That takes the courses away from graduate students, who usually view them as a chore anyway, and gives them to instructors who have already earned their doctorates and who have some experience teaching writing. It is an expensive solution — Mr. Thompson has dubbed it “the million-dollar difference” — and one that most institutions could not afford.

Duke also requires students to take two writing-intensive courses in their majors. (Such courses are defined simply as including a “significant writing component.”) The university took its cue from Cornell’s writing program, which emphasizes writing in the disciplines, meaning that the teaching burden is shouldered by all departments, not just English. Cornell has also managed to persuade faculty members to participate by tying the amount of graduate-student funds a department receives to the number of freshman writing seminars its professors teach. It’s a strategy that is widely admired, if not widely imitated, by other colleges.

The verdict is still out on whether the new programs at Duke and Princeton will transform their students into more lucid, thoughtful writers. Student reaction at Princeton is mixed. “It wasn’t the greatest class I’ve taken, but it wasn’t a waste of time either,” says Marcus Catsouphe, who took the course “Vietnam in Fact, Film and Fiction.”

Active and Passive

Some competitors are still in the early stages of reform. At Columbia, back in the early 1990s, a committee of outside reviewers was convened to evaluate the writing program. The panel found it sorely lacking and said as much in a report. The university’s response? Do nothing. Then, two years ago, an internal review committee

was formed. It found that almost everyone strongly disliked the freshman writing requirement, and that it contained a number of “absurdities,” including a ban on assigned readings. The policy was intended to place the emphasis on writing, but it backfired: Students didn’t have anything to write about. The committee recommended lifting the reading ban, hiring a new director, and involving faculty members rather than leaving the teaching to graduate students. “We were fully prepared for our report to get filed in the backroom and gather dust,” says Michael Scammell, a professor of nonfiction creative writing, who led the committee.

But in fact, Columbia has acted on some of the recommendations. Joseph Bizup, formerly co-director of the writing program at Yale University, was hired this summer. While most students are still in the old freshman writing program, about 20 percent are taking topic-based courses, in which some reading is assigned. So far, the response has been favorable. “There was a sense that writing was dislocated from the rest of the curriculum. We want to integrate it into the core curriculum,” says Mr. Bizup, referring to Columbia’s famously rigorous set of general requirements.

Brown officials, too, are struggling with how to make sure their students can write well. But Brown is at the other end of the spectrum in terms of educational philosophy. While Columbia is known for its general requirements, Brown is known for allowing students to choose their own curriculums. While that freedom is part of the university’s identity, it makes a writing requirement impossible.

Until recently, Brown identified incoming freshmen whose writing needed extra attention by looking at their admissions essays. But because many students receive help writing those essays, that turned out to be a poor indicator. So this year Brown abandoned the practice. The university still gives professors the option of marking students as “writing deficient” as part of their grades. Those students are encouraged, although not required, to sign up for an expository-writing course. “It seems OK on the books,” says Rhoda L. Flaxman, director of the writing program at Brown.

In practice, however, the strategy is a bust. “Faculty haven’t been using it,” says Mr. Armstrong, dean of the college. Apparently, many professors believe that marking a student deficient carries an unfair stigma. Josh Gang, a senior majoring in American literature, thinks that Brown officials might be more worried that marking a large number of students deficient would reflect poorly on the university. “It wouldn’t surprise me if they were afraid to deem students as unqualified,” he says. Whatever the reason, the result is that only a handful of students receive help with their writing, even though Mr. Armstrong says faculty members complain to him about it all the time.

While officials look at alternatives, the dean has sent out letters encouraging professors to use the “writing deficient” option when it is called for. “It’s not a crisis, but it is a growing concern,” he says. Concern is also growing at Penn, which has sought a director for its undergraduate writing program for more than a year. The trouble is that the university hasn’t been able to decide what kind of program it wants, which makes picking a director tricky.

For now, students can satisfy the university’s writing requirement in one of two ways — either by taking a writing course taught by a graduate student, or by taking two courses designated as writing-intensive within a department. Most students choose to take one course instead of two. “I don’t think it’s been presented to our students as an intellectually stimulating and important enterprise. I think they see it as another requirement they have to fill,” says Rebecca Bushnell, associate dean of Penn’s college of arts and letters and acting director of the writing program. Neither option has been particularly effective in improving student writing, according to Penn officials, which has frustrated professors.

Once a permanent director is hired, which officials say will happen soon, Penn plans to announce an overhaul of its writing program.

Likewise, officials at Bowdoin say major changes to its undergraduate writing program will be announced soon. The college already offers freshman writing seminars, but they are not required.

As at other institutions, Bowdoin’s decision is prompted by concern among professors that some students lack the skills to write lengthy, sophisticated research papers. “There is a sense that we can do better,” says Craig A. McEwen, dean for academic affairs. He adds that the college plans to emphasize writing in the disciplines, rather than a more general approach.

Reform-minded college officials share the hope that the changes they are making will finally give writing the attention and respect it deserves. “Writing is the edifice on which the rest of education rests,” says Penn’s Mr. Schneider. “If we don’t do that well, you have to wonder what we do do well.”

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COLLOQUY

Should colleges encourage the trend in which more English majors focus on writing their own fiction and poetry? The most recent responses appear first

"Is there a parallel between this question and the division between studio art and art history and criticism?..."— Ben Schachter, Adjunct Professor, art and art history...

"I developed a life-long love of reading great literature in college. This was because of the quality teaching that kept me constantly enrolling..."— Amy E. Bennett, Freelance Writer, Fox News

"I teach Creative Writing in a Community College setting. If my students were required to take the traditional literature classes before they enrolled in my Creative Writing classes, many would drop out..."— Cathryn Essinger, Edison CC

"There is little evidence to support that most undergraduates have any idea how to write..."— Tim Glasscock, Director of Vocal Studies at Youth Performing Arts School in Louisville, KY

"I posted on Wednesday and post again today to qualify my somewhat-vituperative comments..."— Laura Carter, graduate student

"The move toward creative writing is a positive one for English departments..."— Tim Mayers, Assistant Professor of English (Composition & Rhetoric), Millersville University

"I write as someone whose undergraduate interest was equally divided between creative writing and literature and whose graduate degrees..."— Stuart Peterfreund, Professor of English and Chair, Graduate Studies Committee, Northeastern U.

"I personally feel the pull between literary studies and creative writing..."— Laura Carter, graduate student

"Writing fiction and the fiction writer is a different task (and a wonderful buddy) from reading period literature (period)..."— Gina Betcher, MFA candidate

"If Anne Rice's son can write a novel, anyone can..."— David M. Hallowell, Drexel University

"In some respects I believe that you are correct in your generalization that most undergraduate students do not spend a considerable amount of time studying literature..."— Vicki Albertson, Junior Undergraduate student at Millersville U.

"Well, it is nice to encourage students to write their own fiction..."— amy parlette, student, oakland community college

"Creative writing gives students a wonderful way to appreciate literature better..."— Daphne Huntley, Northeast Ala. C.C.

"Students (especially undergraduate students) who have a desire and/or a need to write should absolutely be encouraged..."— Trisha Taylor, Valdosta State University

"As a believer in the National Writing Project's motto, 'Read to Write,' I totally support creative writing as a valid critical and intellectual response to studying great literature..."— anne sheffield, english teacher, miss porter's school

"A Working Writer's Thoughts on Teaching Writing: For me, Aristotle and seanachaidh (because I am a Gael) say it best: No story? No sale! ..."— Donald K. Beman, New Appointment Pending

"I teach creative writing to undergraduates in a writing program at the University of Central Arkansas which features creative writing as a strand within a writing degree that also includes rhetoric and linguistics. ..."— Stephanie Vanderslice, Assistant Professor

"I would like to address 'growing student interest in creative writing' from a K-12 perspective. I don't think it is unique to higher education. In English or Language arts classes, K-12 teachers have young scholars read and examine literature..."— Ted Nellen, Cybrarian, Alternative HS, NYC, <http://www.tnellen.com/ted/>

"A solid and well rounded undergraduate education is necessary for all students regardless of discipline. Now as for students writing their own literature and poetry instead of studying, I believe that both is necessary to produce a well rounded college grad..."— Morgan Lim, Program Manager

"I think this is a very interesting issue and I think the bottom line might be that undergraduates do not do as much reading in general. What scares me is the fact that, for several reasons, undergraduates are not held to the same standards of research or background understanding..."— Sandi Reinardy, Graduate student of journalism / Freelance writer / Boston U.

APPENDIX B

- The BOARS Report
An Unanswerable Indictment of the SATI

THE USE OF ADMISSIONS TESTS BY THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A Discussion Paper Prepared by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools:

Dorothy Perry, Chair, BOARS 1999-2002, UCSF
 Barbara Sawrey, Vice Chair 2002, UCSD
 Michael Brown, UCSB Kenneth Burke, graduate student, UCSD
 Philip Curtis, UCLA Christopher Diaz, undergraduate, UCLA
 Patrick Farrell, UCD Dennis Focht, UCR
 Linda Georgianna, UCI Karen McNally, UCSC
 Calvin Moore, UCB Jane Stevens, UCSD

I. Introduction

As part of its general responsibility to set undergraduate admissions policy, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools of the University of California's Academic Senate (BOARS) is charged with determining how examinations will be used in the establishment of eligibility and admission to the University.¹ In keeping with this responsibility, BOARS recommended the addition of admissions test scores to the University's eligibility requirements more than forty years ago. Since then, the use of admissions tests has been reconsidered on several occasions and the specific role that test scores play in determining eligibility has been adjusted. However, in the view of the current members of BOARS, the broad policy questions surrounding the appropriate use of admissions tests at the University have not been fully studied in many years; indeed it can be argued that they have never been studied fully enough.

This paper is the result of intensive review of the University's current use of admissions tests that BOARS began in February 2001. The immediate impetus for this work was the February 15, 2001 request by UC President Richard Atkinson that the faculty reconsider UC's current testing policy.² However, in many ways this paper has its roots in discussions begun in the mid-1990s that led to BOARS' 1999 recommendation effective with the freshman class entering in fall 2001 that the University of California revise its Eligibility Index to place twice as much weight on the SAT II as on the SAT I. BOARS made this recommendation following analysis of a validity study conducted in 1998³ that concluded that the SAT II tests, taken together, were better predictors of first-year UC GPA than the combined SAT I math and verbal tests (see section III for more information on this study). The question of the appropriateness of admissions tests has also come up frequently in public discussion of the University's admission processes and was the subject of substantial discussion at a Universitywide full-day meeting on admissions on December 7, 2000

¹ Standing Order of The Regents 105.2 delegates to the Academic Senate authority for determin[ing] the conditions of admission. Academic Senate Bylaw 145.B.3 includes among the duties of BOARS determin[ing] the basis of the examinations used to satisfy admissions requirements.

² Richard C. Atkinson to Michael Cowan, February 15, 2001.

³ Kowarsky, J., Clatfelter, D. and Widaman, K. (1998). *Predicting University Grade-Point Average in a Class of University of California Freshmen: An Assessment of the Validity of A-F GPA and Test Scores as Indicators of Future Academic Performance*. Oakland, California: UC Office of the President.

. Goals of BOARS Reassessment of UC s Use of Admissions Tests

In reconsidering the use of admissions tests by UC, BOARS sought to:

1. Understand the historical and philosophical background of UC s use of admissions tests, including the principles that led to the original decision to include test scores in the determination of eligibility and selection and that should guide their future use;
2. Examine carefully the statistical justifications for the use of admissions tests, including their usefulness in predicting undergraduate performance at UC;
3. Consider carefully the policy implications of the University s admissions test requirement in particular its relationship to the college preparatory work students undertake in high school and identify desirable policy goals for UC s use of particular tests to fulfill that requirement;
4. Evaluate the degree to which existing test options meet the needs of the University s faculty and students; and
5. Draw conclusions and make recommendations regarding the future use of admissions tests for the purposes of both eligibility and selection at specific UC campuses and lay the groundwork for a broader faculty dialog on these issues.

In the coming decade, the University faces a substantial increase in student demand for places at all of its campuses. As we enter this period of increased demand, it seems particularly important that we reassure ourselves that the means by which we determine which of California s students will be offered the opportunity of a UC education are as educationally sound as possible.

Current Use of Tests at UC

The University of California currently requires applicants to present scores on the following admissions tests:

1. A general test of language arts and mathematics that can be met in one of two ways:
 - a) SAT I. The SAT I is a three-hour test of critical reading and problem solving⁴ ability that is developed by the Educational Testing Service (Princeton, New Jersey) and administered by the College Board (New York City). Students taking the SAT I receive two scores, one in verbal reasoning and one in math reasoning.
 - b) ACT. The ACT Assessment is a three-and-a-half hour test described by its creator, ACT, Inc. (Iowa City, Iowa) as a curriculum-based achievement test designed to assess students critical reasoning and higher order thinking skills in four core content areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning.⁵

⁴ The College Board, *What Does the SAT Measure and Why Does It Matter?*, (2001) p.4.

Students taking the ACT receive sub-scores in the four disciplines covered as well as a combined total.

At present, approximately 73% of UC applicants take the SAT I. Roughly 25% take both the SAT and the ACT and about 2% take the ACT alone. Composite scores on the SAT I and ACT are highly correlated with one another and concordance tables enable the University and others to convert scores on one test to equivalent scores on the other, allowing either test to be used in the UC Eligibility Index, described below.

2. SAT II subject examinations in writing, math (level 1 or level 2), and a third area of the student's choice. The SAT II s, formerly known as the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) Achievement Tests, are designed by the Educational Testing Service and administered by the College Board. Each SAT II is a one-hour multiple-choice⁶ achievement-type test designed to assess mastery of high-school level work in one of 21 different fields, including the natural and social sciences, languages and literature, writing, and two different levels of mathematics.

UC uses scores from these tests in several ways. First, all students are required to present a combination of high school GPA and test scores that meets the minimum requirements of the Eligibility Index, a weighted scale that pairs test scores with grades so that high test scores can balance out lower grades and vice versa. The Eligibility Index is composed of the total of each student's three SAT II scores, times two, plus the total SAT I combined Math and Verbal score or ACT equivalent. At present, UC eligibility is sufficient for admission to two campuses, while the other six employ additional selection guidelines and criteria. Each campus has designed a selection system that evaluates academic achievement consistent with faculty-approved Universitywide guidelines⁷ and with the unique academic environment of the campus. Finally, SAT II scores in particular fields are used for placement purposes Universitywide as well as in various campus departments. For example, a student receiving a score of 680 or above on the SAT II writing examination is considered to have fulfilled the Universitywide writing and composition (Subject A) requirement, which students on all campuses must meet before they graduate. This paper focuses on the first two purposes, eligibility and selection.

⁵ ACT Inc., *College Admissions Assessment: Debunking Myths and Misrepresentations*, Iowa City, Iowa (no date).

⁶ In addition, the SAT II Writing exam includes a written sample and several of the language tests have optional listening sections.

⁷ *Guidelines for Implementation of Universitywide Policy on Undergraduate Admissions*, University of California Office of the President, 2001.

II. Historical Background for the Use of Admissions Tests at UC

A Brief History of Standardized Admissions Tests

The admissions tests used today by the University of California (and most selective colleges and universities in the United States) trace their heritage from two distinct lines: (1) written examinations required historically for entrance into private colleges; and (2) aptitude tests that grew out of changing social needs and notions of intelligence in the late 1800 s and were designed to provide a means of sorting large numbers of people into appropriate occupational or intellectual categories and, therefore, contributing to the efficient organization of democratic society.

Through the nineteenth century, college entrance examinations had traditionally been oral tests administered by traveling examiners and restricted generally to the eastern seaboard. After the turn of the century, these tests underwent a transformation to written examinations administered on a regional basis and capable of reaching a much broader audience. The College Board, then the College Entrance Examination Board, was formed in 1900, as one of these regional agencies, serving the private colleges of the Northeast and their feeder college preparatory secondary schools, also generally private. Throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, the college boards were week-long essay examinations of the curriculum provided in elite boarding schools.⁸

This model began to shift in the 1930 s, as a result of the introduction of the SAT (at that time an abbreviation for Scholastic Aptitude Test; the SAT was later renamed Scholastic Assessment Test and then later became simply the SAT I), which was first administered by the College Board in 1926. The SAT was created from intelligence tests developed in the late 1800 s and early 1900 s and first administered on a large scale to army recruits during World War I. In the early 1930 s, it attracted the attention of then-President of Harvard James Bryant Conant, who was searching for a means to identify highly talented young men from obscure backgrounds who nonetheless would succeed at Harvard. By this time the original creator of the SAT, Carl Campbell Brigham, had begun to express deep reservations about the notion of testing innate abilities and had come to advocate achievement tests over aptitude tests.⁹ Conant believed, however, that tests of achievement would always favor those who had the financial resources to attend the best preparatory schools and saw in the SAT a tool for restructuring society by counterbalancing the benefits of inherited privilege in favor of innate talent.

Beginning in 1934, Harvard used the SAT to award scholarships, though the traditional entrance examinations were still administered as admissions tests. During the same period, the College Board developed a series of hour-long multiple choice achievement tests (the antecedents of today s SAT II) to replace the essay examinations. By the late 1930 s the combination of the SAT I and the achievement tests was administered at hundreds of test sites around the country, although the written essay examinations were also still in wide use.

⁸ Lemann, Nicholas (1999), *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. p. 28.

⁹ Lemann, p.33

It was not until World War II that the traditional written examinations were abandoned. In 1948, with strong support from Conant, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) was formed as a central testing agency for the entire nation, and the College Board turned its test development activities over to ETS. Throughout the 1950s, the SAT I maintained its close link to intelligence tests and the number of SAT takers grew rapidly.

Although a belief in the value of aptitude tests in general and the SAT in particular pervaded most of higher education in the 1950s, some educators were concerned both about the monopolistic dominance of the Educational Testing Service and the possible shortcomings of aptitude-type tests. In 1959, University of Iowa Professor E.F. Lindquist, a noted psychologist and developer of the Iowa State achievement tests, formed a rival testing company, American College Testing (ACT Inc.). Lindquist was a believer in expanding the numbers of Americans attending college and created the ACT as an achievement-type admissions test designed to provide diagnostic information that would enable students to prepare themselves for college and aid colleges in placement as well as admissions.¹⁰ The ACT quickly gained popularity among public universities and in the midwest and the south, while the SAT continued to be seen as the test of choice in the northeast and for more elite private institutions. Today, the ACT is widely accepted by both public and private institutions as an alternative to the SAT I.

The Adoption of Admissions Tests by the University of California¹¹

In the mid-1950s, BOARS first began serious consideration of the use of standardized tests in establishing eligibility for the University of California. Up until the 1920s, UC could accommodate most students who applied, and they were admitted based upon graduation from UC-accredited high schools, performance on a set of examinations, or recommendation from their high school principal. By the 1930s, students were required to complete a specific set of high school courses and grades in these courses were considered in determining eligibility. During this period the Academic Senate considered and rejected the use of standardized admissions tests.¹²

By the 1950s, the University was confronting serious problems associated with growth. The GI Bill had increased enrollments significantly and the baby boom generation had already entered the school system. A 1955 statewide planning study suggested the consideration of the use of aptitude and achievement tests. In 1957, BOARS agreed to run a series of experiments with the SAT I, designed to assess whether (1) the test improved prediction of freshman grades; (2) it could be used to assess grade inflation; and (3) it could be used to help manage enrollment growth. With the support of ETS, the SAT I was administered to all freshmen entering UC in the fall of 1960. BOARS concluded that the study did not indicate

¹⁰ Lindquist, E.F. (1958), *The Nature of the Problem of Improving Scholarship and College Entrance Examinations*, presented at the ETS Invitational Conference on Testing Problems, November 1, 1958.

¹¹ BOARS is indebted to John Douglass, senior research fellow at the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley, for the comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the historical record provided in *Setting the Conditions of Undergraduate Admissions: the Role of University Faculty in Policy Making* (University of California Academic Senate, 1977). We have drawn extensively from Douglass's work for this section of our paper, which he graciously agreed to review for accuracy.

¹² Douglass, personal communication, January 23, 2002.

any additional predictive power associated with the SAT I. A subsequent study of achievement tests showed a better correlation with freshman GPA, but not enough to convince the Academic Assembly of the value of adopting an admissions test requirement.¹³

By the mid-1960s, however, this situation had changed. Eligibility studies conducted in 1965 and 1966 estimated that the University was significantly out of compliance with the eligibility cap of 12.5% imposed by the California Master Plan for Education (adopted in 1960). Adopting an admissions test requirement was seen as a relatively easy means of reducing the size of the pool. In supporting the use of admissions tests to reduce the size of the eligibility pool, John Grant, chair of BOARS at the time, wrote,

All of our studies indicate that the best single predictor of academic success in college is a satisfactory grade-point record but that the addition of test scores will yield a statistically significant improvement in predictability. In addition, their use would tend to reduce the inequities resulting from differences among school marking systems, and thus would be in the interest of the applicant.

In 1968, the Academic Assembly accepted BOARS recommendation that the University require the SAT I and three achievement (SAT II) tests and the requirement took effect for the class entering in fall 1968. For students with GPAs above 3.1, the actual scores were irrelevant; those with GPAs between 3.0 and 3.1 were required to present a total score of 2,500 on the five tests.

Over the past 35 years, BOARS has adjusted the testing requirement several times. In 1977, the first Eligibility Index was created, specifying a sliding scale of required test scores that applied to students with GPAs between 2.78 and 3.29. At the same time, the option of taking the ACT in lieu of the SAT I was added to the testing policy.¹⁴ Although all students continued to be required to take five tests, the 1977 Eligibility Index considered only SAT I/ACT scores. In 1992, the requirements were tightened to address concerns that the UC eligibility pool had grown beyond 12.5% of high school graduates. In 1996, the Index was revised to incorporate re-scaling of the SAT I and SAT II by the Educational Testing Service. Finally, as noted previously, the Eligibility Index was revised in 1999 to reincorporate SAT II scores, weighting them twice as heavily as SAT I/ACT scores, and to extend the test score requirement across the full breadth of the GPA range.

III. Statistical Justifications for the Use of Admissions Tests

BOARS review of the history of admissions testing at UC, its discussions with testing experts (including, but not limited to, colleagues within the UC community and representatives of the major testing agencies), and general observation of the public

¹³ Douglass, personal communication, January 23, 2002.

¹⁴ In accepting BOARS recommendation, The Regents noted their approval of offer[ing] applicants an additional option. The choice of whether to submit SAT or ACT scores will be up to the applicant.

conversation over admissions tests reveal a number of different, but related, assumptions regarding the value of tests in making admissions decisions:

1. Admissions tests are a valid measure of student preparation and/or promise that have been proven statistically to add to an institution's ability to predict student success beyond the predictive information that high school grades alone provide.
2. Admissions tests provide a standardized measure of preparation that is independent of the variability among grading patterns inevitably present when reviewing the records of students from thousands of high schools across the country.
3. Admissions tests can identify as-yet undeveloped talent in students who for a variety of reasons may not have worked to their full potential in high school, but who will nonetheless excel in college.

As described in the historical background section, each of these theories about the value of admissions tests has contributed to some degree to their adoption by UC and by other institutions of higher learning across the country. For many both inside and outside the academy, some of these assumptions are deeply ingrained and have the status of unassailable fact. Prior to developing a set of principles and recommendations regarding the use of tests, however, BOARS felt it should undertake additional study to determine which of these theories about the value of tests particularly the relative value of aptitude tests versus achievement tests are actually borne out in the available data about student performance at UC. Ideally, this analysis would serve to answer the following questions.

1. To what degree do admissions test scores contribute to UC's ability to identify which students will succeed at the University? How does their ability to predict success add to that of high school GPA? How do various types of tests differ in their predictive ability?
2. Can admissions tests be used to identify reliably students with as-yet undeveloped talent who are likely to be high achievers at UC despite relatively lackluster high school records?
3. Does analysis of admissions test scores for UC students reveal any evidence that the scores are inappropriately correlated with other factors, such as socioeconomic status?

As noted in Section II, in 1997 BOARS commissioned a study, conducted by OP staff, designed to assess the appropriate relative weighting of SAT I and SAT II scores in the UC Eligibility Index. This study, which examined the first-year grades of a sample of the class entering UC in the fall of 1996, concluded that a composite of the SAT II math and writing scores was more predictive of freshman performance than the SAT I composite, which since 1977 had been the only test score utilized in computing the Eligibility Index. The study suggested that the superior performance of SAT II's in predicting freshman grades might be due to the somewhat different nature of the SAT II exams, which are curriculum driven in contrast to the SAT I which [is a] general reasoning test.¹⁵ This study also found that the third SAT II exam yielded a small but statistically significant additional predictive value above those

of the other four exams.¹⁶ On the basis of this study, UC's Eligibility Index was changed to add in SAT II scores and weight them twice as heavily as the SAT I.

Early in 2001, BOARS developed a research agenda designed to explore further the value of admissions test scores in predicting success at UC. The conclusions presented here were gleaned from regression analyses of the records of a pool of 77,893 students who applied and were admitted to UC as freshmen from Fall 1996 through Fall 1999.^{17 18} Students' high school grades (as expressed in the UC-calculated weighted GPA¹⁹) and SAT I and SAT II scores were compared to freshman GPA to determine the relative value of admissions test scores in predicting first-year performance.²⁰ In addition, correlations between the various test scores and socio-economic and demographic information were examined. The full study from which the conclusions here are excerpted is attached as an appendix.

Predictive Validity

The primary conclusions of BOARS' research on the usefulness of admissions test scores in identifying successful students include the following.

¹⁵ Kowarsky, et.al, 1998, p.6.

¹⁶ Prior to recommending this change in 1999, BOARS commissioned simulation studies designed to ensure that the composition of the eligibility pool would not be fundamentally changed with the imposition of the new Eligibility Index that is that changing the relative weights of the different scores would not significantly affect who was made eligible. However, it should be noted that in the three years since this study was completed and particularly in the past six months additional questions have been raised about the statistical validity of the SAT II third test and, particularly, the statistical and educational justifications for allowing students to be examined in foreign language if they are native speakers of the language in which they are tested. BOARS is currently studying this question. Strong educational reasons exist for allowing California students to present test scores in a foreign language, regardless of whether some of their knowledge of that language was gained outside the classroom. However data indicate that many of the individual third test exams, including, but not limited to, some of the language exams, add little predictive validity. Additional study of this question will be completed before BOARS issues specific recommendations on the use of language examinations in any future test battery.

¹⁷ Geiser, Saul with Roger Studley *UC and the SAT: Predictive Validity and Differential Impact of the SAT I and SAT II at the University of California*. University of California Office of the President, 2001.

¹⁸ As with the Kowarsky et.al. 1998 study, students who enrolled at UC Santa Cruz were excluded from some analyses because the campus did not assign letter grades and therefore could not compute a numeric GPA. In addition, only two years of UC Riverside data were included in the original analysis, due to anomalies in the data. Riverside data for the missing years have since been obtained and are discussed in this paper when relevant.

¹⁹ UC calculates the high school GPA using only courses that meet the A-G requirements and adding one grade point for each UC-approved honors, Advanced Placement, or college-level course; thus an A in an approved honors course counts for five points rather than four and many students submit GPAs above 4.0.

²⁰ It should be noted here that historically the measure of student success most commonly used in validity studies of admissions tests and the one on which the College Board and Educational Testing Service base statistical studies of SAT I and SAT II scores has been the freshman-year GPA. This is because intervening variables (including differing academic programs pursued by individual students and the intellectual and personal development students experience during their college years) serve to weaken substantially the predictive relationship between pre-college factors like high school GPA and test scores and eventual college GPA. Predictive validity studies justify use of freshman-year GPA by citing its correlation with GPA at graduation. Nonetheless, faculty and admissions officers involved in determining eligibility and selection criteria and processes point out that maximizing freshman year GPA is at best a relatively minor goal of the admissions evaluation process. While highly cognizant of the weaknesses involved in using freshman GPA, BOARS could not identify an alternative and therefore followed the generally accepted practice of using freshman-year GPA as the outcome variable indicating success in college.

1. Overall, high school GPA is the best predictor of freshman grades at the University of California. Virtually all of the extant literature on the relative value of grades and admissions test scores in predicting first-year performance cites high school GPA as the best predictor. This has been known for many years and was a factor in the hesitancy of the Academic Assembly to adopt BOARS' original 1958 recommendation regarding adoption of admissions tests. In a standard regression formula where the outcome variable freshman-year GPA was regressed against a combination of high school GPA, SAT I, and SAT II, the standardized regression coefficient (beta weight) for high school GPA was .27 for the four-year sample, as opposed to .07 for the SAT I and .23 for the SAT II.²¹

2. Test scores do contribute a statistically significant increment of prediction when added to a regression analysis combining grades and test scores. When the effects of different combinations of predictor variables were studied in the full four-year sample, adding scores from the SAT I and SAT II to high school GPA in the prediction equation increased the amount of variance in freshman-year GPA explained from 15.4% for GPA alone to 22.3%. However, this combination employing both the SAT I and SAT II was only marginally more predictive than a combination of just the high school GPA and the SAT II composite, which explained 22.2% of the variance. In addition, when the sample was disaggregated by year, the additional predictive ability contributed by SAT I was not statistically significant for two of the four years studied.²²

3. The SAT II appears overall to be a better predictor of freshman grades at UC than the SAT I. In fact, in a series of regressions that examined various individual predictors, a composite of the three SAT II scores performed slightly better than either the SAT I or high school GPA in two of the years studied and for the full four-year pool. For the four-year pool, the three-test SAT II composite explained 16% of the variance in freshman grades, compared to 15.4% for high school GPA and 13.3% for the SAT I combined math and verbal scores.²³

These analyses were conducted on various sub-populations of the pool to determine whether the findings were consistent across campuses, academic disciplines, etc. With very few anomalies, the findings held. For example, at every campus but one (UC Riverside, where the SAT I is a slightly better predictor²⁴), the SAT II was a better predictor than the SAT I when considered in an equation that included high school GPA, SAT I, and SAT II.

²¹ Geiser, et. al (2001), p.5.

²² Geiser, et.al. (2001), p.3.

²³ Geiser, et.al. (2001), p.3.

²⁴ Geiser, Saul and Studley, Roger, *Research Addendum: Additional Findings on UC and the SAT*, University of California Office of the President, 2002. Note that in the original study completed in October 2001, the SAT I appeared to be a better predictor at UC Riverside than the SAT II. This finding was based on incomplete data that was subsequently reanalyzed with the missing data included. The new data show that the two are roughly equivalent. In a series of standard linear regression equations where freshman GPA is predicted by various combination of high school GPA, SAT I, and SAT II, SAT II and SAT I scores were equivalent in equations that included only one set of test scores. In an equation that included high school GPA and both test scores, the beta weights for the two scores were virtually identical, but the SAT II contributed only 0.6% additional predictive validity when added to the equation already containing high school GPA and SAT I scores.

Similarly, when the sample was disaggregated by intended major, high school GPA was the strongest predictor (with beta weights ranging from .27 to .31 across the disciplines) in most cases, followed closely by SAT II (with beta weights ranging from .20 to .30). In all cases, SAT I was a slightly weaker predictor. For example, the beta weight for the SAT I ranged from -.05 (for students intending to major in physical science, math, or engineering) to .12 (for students intending to major in biological sciences).²⁵

Identifying Students with High Potential

One strength that admissions tests are commonly presumed to have over high school grades and that aptitude-type tests are commonly presumed to have over achievement-type tests is an ability to identify students with high potential who have not yet demonstrated that potential. This theory has at least two main variants. The first is that students with high ability who attend schools with fewer resources or less rigorous curricula will score relatively low on achievement tests, as opposed to aptitude tests, because they are held back by the poor education they have received to date. The second is that, regardless of the type of school attended, some very talented students simply do not perform in high school (perhaps because they have not been sufficiently challenged or engaged), nor on achievement-type tests, but will score well on aptitude tests and then blossom when placed in the rich and challenging intellectual environment of university life.

An analysis of freshman performance data disaggregated by the type of high school (from low to high performing, as measured by the state's Academic Performance Index, which considers a number of factors related to student achievement and school resources) indicated that, for all types of schools, the SAT II remained a slightly stronger predictor. The predictive ability of the SAT I improves for schools at the low performing end of the spectrum, but it remains less predictive than the SAT II. Thus, in a regression equation including high school GPA, SAT I composite, and SAT II composite, for schools in the top quintile, the beta weight of the SAT I was not statistically significant, while the weight for the SAT II was .20 (as compared to .33 for the high school GPA). For schools in the lowest quintile those where students would be most disadvantaged by a weak curriculum the beta weight for the SAT II was .18 as compared to .25 for the high school GPA and .12 for the SAT I.²⁶

Similar patterns emerge when we look at data disaggregating students according to their high school GPA. That is, when considered in a regression equation that includes both SAT I and SAT II, the SAT II is a stronger predictor of freshman grades than the SAT I across all quintiles of high school GPA, although the predictive power of the SAT I increases toward the bottom end of the pool. For example, for students whose high school GPAs place them

²⁵ The finding that the SAT I is negatively correlated with freshman GPA for students in physical science, math, and engineering is interesting because it has been suggested that admissions test scores are actually better predictors of college performance than aggregated data would indicate, due to differences in grading patterns across disciplines. For example, it has been suggested that student with high SAT I scores tend to cluster in disciplines with particularly rigorous grading patterns e.g., physical sciences, math, and engineering where the (relatively) lower grades they receive mask the true predictive power of their SAT I scores. If this were true, disaggregated data like these presented here should reveal the true relationship. Instead the SAT I scores appear to have no predictive value for these students.

²⁶ Geiser, et. al. (2001), p.6.

in the highest twenty percent of UC enrolled freshmen, the beta weight for the SAT II is .31 versus .04 for the SAT I. For students in the bottom twenty percent, the relative weights are .08 for the SAT I and .16 for the SAT II.²⁷

To further illuminate this question of whether a particular test can identify potential not indicated in the GPA or the other test scores, BOARS also reviewed data regarding discrepant scores cases where test scores differed substantially on different kinds of tests. Here, perhaps the most important finding is that such cases are quite rare. Out of a sample of nearly 78,000 students reporting both SAT I and SAT II scores, a total of 3,607 students (4.63% of the total) were found to have scores that differed from one another by more than one standard deviation (about 200 points on the SAT I because the scales of the two different test composites are not the same, test scores were standardized relative to the mean). Of these, 1,859 reported significantly higher scores on the SAT I and 1,748 reported significantly higher scores on the SAT II. When the threshold for considering scores discrepant was increased to 1.5 standard deviations, the number of students dropped to 343 (0.44% of the total). That is, in 99 out of 100 cases, the information provided by the two different types of tests was very similar. Analysis of the characteristics of those who score differently on the two types of tests revealed that, on average, the group of UC students who scored relatively higher on the SAT I than on the SAT II came from families with higher incomes, performed less well in high school, performed less well after arriving at UC, and were more likely to be white.²⁸

Relationship to Socio-economic and Demographic Characteristics

It is well known that admissions tests of all types along with high school grades and other indicators of academic achievement are strongly correlated with family income. This does not reflect bias in the tests, but rather the inescapable fact that schools in California like those throughout the country vary widely in available resources and students from poor families are more likely to attend schools with fewer resources. The members of BOARS are well aware that they cannot eliminate this level of disparate impact admissions tests have on students from socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances. As noted above, predictive validity analyses that disaggregated UC students according to the type of school they attended found the SAT I and SAT II tests to be roughly equivalent predictors of performance for students from the lowest- as well as the highest-quintile schools.

BOARS also reviewed data disaggregated by student socio-economic factors. In this analysis, two measures of socioeconomic status, family income and parental education, were included to assess their conditioning effects on the predictive validity of the SAT I and SAT II. Including these variables along with SAT II scores and high school GPA in the analysis increased the predicted variance in freshman GPA to 22.8%. When SAT I scores were then added, the predicted variance remained at 22.8%. This indicates that once socio-economic variables are included, SAT I scores do not add to the prediction of freshman grades.

²⁷ Geiser presentation to BOARS, December 18, 2001.

²⁸ Studley presentation to BOARS, December 18, 2001.

BOARS also reviewed data considering differences in performance on the aptitude and achievement tests for students of different races and ethnicities. As is the case with family income, certain patterns emerge in scores on all tests: white and Asian American students tend to have higher scores, on average, than African American, American Indian, and Chicano/Latino students. However, the analysis did not reveal significant differences within groups for performance on the SAT I versus the SAT II math and writing tests. For example, African American students scored .71 standard deviations below the mean on the SAT I and .67 standard deviations below the mean on the SAT II (composite of math and writing). White students scored .18 standard deviations above the mean on the SAT I and .16 standard deviations above the mean on the SAT II. The largest difference in average scores between the two tests was for American Indians who scored .10 standard deviations below the mean on the SAT I and .17 standard deviations below the mean for the SAT II.²⁹ BOARS concluded that none of these differences was substantial enough to indicate that choosing one kind of test over the other would significantly advantage or disadvantage students from particular backgrounds.

Score variations among students of different ethnicities do emerge when looking at scores on the third SAT II test, which can be in a subject of the student's choice. Chicano and Latino students are more likely to take the third test in a foreign language Spanish and, in some cases, to score higher on this test than they do on other admissions tests. This can also be true in the case of other language examinations, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The question of the foreign language examinations is quite complex both educationally and statistically. BOARS is studying this question separately and will release a discussion paper on this matter prior to making any recommendations about specific subject examinations to be included in a new admissions test policy.

Conclusions Regarding Statistical Justifications

BOARS has concluded the following with regard to the statistical validity of SAT I and SAT II scores.

1. Admissions tests have value in predicting freshman-year GPA and add statistically significant information to that provided by the high school GPA alone.
2. Based on research regarding freshman student performance at UC, the SAT II appears to be at least as effective a predictor of freshman performance at UC as the SAT I.
3. BOARS sees no evidence to corroborate the theory that the SAT I has special value because it can identify students who have not performed well to date but in fact have innate ability that will show itself in college.
4. BOARS sees no evidence that one test performs significantly better than another in predicting performance for students from more challenged socio-economic circumstances or different demographic groups.

²⁹ Geiser, et.al. (2001), p. 15.

5. The question of variations in scoring patterns and prediction for the language examinations requires further study.

In BOARS view, the statistical analyses support the use of achievement tests as predictors of student success at least equivalent to aptitude tests. But the evidence is not so compelling that we believe it should drive a decision to prefer one type of test over another. Rather, the University should carefully consider the policy implications and justifications of its use of tests and base its conclusions and future actions of educational policy grounds.

IV. Policy Issues Associated with UC s Admissions Test Requirement

Admission to the University of California is a highly sought-after public resource. Access to this resource should be based on sound principles and an understanding of the educational and social implications of different choices.

BOARS review of the history of the development of admissions tests and of their use at the University of California points clearly to the fact that the original decision to adopt the testing requirement and create the Eligibility Index was driven only in part by policy goals. Pragmatic needs to reduce the size of the eligibility pool and to rank-order applicants to selective campuses in a simple, efficient way also played substantial roles. In BOARS current view, these pragmatic reasons while important are insufficient justification in themselves for the adoption of a test requirement or the selection of a specific test battery. And while the additional predictive validity that admissions tests provide is convincing in terms of the value of admissions tests in general, the differing statistical properties of the admissions tests currently in use by the University are not sufficient on their own to support their continued use without modification or to drive a decision regarding the specific design of a future test battery. On what, then, should the University base decisions regarding its use of admissions tests? In BOARS lengthy discussions of the role of admissions tests and the desirability or lack thereof of particular kinds of tests, the following interrelated policy issues emerged that BOARS concluded should be carefully considered when making decisions about UC s admissions test requirement.

1. The relative merits of tests that measure achievement versus those that purport to measure aptitude. BOARS is strongly persuaded that achievement-type tests offer the University a number of advantages over aptitude-type tests. The original justification for the use of admissions test scores in determining eligibility rested largely on their role as objective measures that could be applied to the whole applicant pool and, therefore, provide information that was independent of high school grades, which are subject to inconsistency across schools and teachers. BOARS assumes that the University seeks to measure mastery of the content of the high school curriculum, that using scores from appropriate admissions tests to complement high school grades increases our ability to achieve this goal, and that achievement exams are more suited to measuring mastery of the high school curriculum than exams designed to measure general intellectual aptitude. Moreover, achievement tests provide information that students and their families can use to prepare for college and that schools can use to evaluate and improve their own programs. Focusing on achievement tests rather than aptitude tests also avoids the historical association of aptitude tests with intelligence tests.

2. The messages that our test requirement sends to students and their families. Clearly, an important factor of any admissions test is the nature of the message it sends to students. The University's traditional eligibility requirements i.e., the combination of the coursework (A-G) and scholarship (GPA) requirements send a clear message: *the best way to prepare for post-secondary education is to take a rigorous and comprehensive college-preparatory curriculum and to excel in this work.*

This message is reinforced by the University's new comprehensive admissions review policy that emphasizes the importance of taking a challenging curriculum and excelling across a broad range of areas. In the view of BOARS, achievement tests reinforce this message: students who take challenging courses and work hard will see their effort pay off not only in good grades but also in high scores on tests that measure mastery of the work they have undertaken in high school. This message is consistent with, and underscores, current efforts to improve the quality and rigor of K-12 education in the state.

3. The degree to which admissions tests should be related to the curriculum UC applicants are expected to study in high school. BOARS is mindful of the influence that colleges and universities have in determining what is taught in high schools. The University's own historical role as the accreditor of high school curricula in California speaks to this influence. UC's A-G requirements for coursework in history and social science, English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language, and the arts help shape the curricula California's public schools offer. In BOARS' view, it follows that the University's testing policy should be more consistent with the A-G expectations regarding the breadth of the areas studied in high school. In this regard, it is noteworthy that while UC applicants are required to complete coursework in six curricular areas, they are currently expected to submit admissions test scores in only three: English/ language arts, mathematics, and a third area that they may choose.

4. The burden that our test requirements place on students and schools. At present, applicants to the University of California are required to take four examinations that require a minimum of six hours and from two to four separate testing sessions. Although this requirement has not changed in the years that have passed since UC adopted its admissions testing policy, the context in which the requirement is seen has changed. Educators, students, and families frequently decry the proliferation of tests that have accompanied the growth of the standards and accountability movements in education. Not only do students spend more time taking tests, but increased competition for spaces in the University and the proliferation of test preparation services put additional pressure on them to spend even more time preparing for admissions tests. In addition, each test charges a fee (although major testing agencies offer fee waivers for low-income students) and the cumulative total of these fees not to mention the cost of test preparation programs can be daunting to many families. One of BOARS' goals in considering options for revising the admissions test policy was to not increase the burden, in terms of time or money, that UC's requirements place on potential applicants. In the view of BOARS, consideration of these issues underscores the need for a sound set of principles and a description of desirable admissions test properties to guide the development of a new admissions test requirement for the University of California.

V. Recommendations

In the view of BOARS, admissions tests offer important benefits to the University by providing information about student mastery of key areas of the college preparatory curriculum that adds to and complements the information provided by the high school GPA. *Therefore, BOARS endorses the continued use of admissions tests.*

Given the important role that admissions tests play in determining access to UC, it is critical that their use be governed by clear principles and that the properties of tests to be used by the University be clearly articulated.

Recommended Principles for the Use of Admissions Tests at the University of California

Therefore, BOARS recommends to the faculty the adoption of the following policy regarding the purposes and properties of admissions tests used by the University of California.

1. Admissions tests will be used at the University of California

¥ to assess academic preparation and achievement of UC applicants;

¥ to predict success at UC beyond that predicted by high school GPA;

¥ to aid in establishing UC eligibility; and

¥ to aid in selecting students for admission at individual UC campuses.

2. The desired properties of admissions tests to be used for these purposes include the following.

¥An admissions test should be a reliable measurement that provides uniform assessment and should be fair across demographic groups.

¥An admissions test should measure levels of mastery of content in UC-approved high school preparatory coursework and should provide information to students, parents, and educators enabling them to identify academic strengths and weaknesses.

¥An admissions test should be demonstrably useful in predicting student success at UC and provide information beyond that which is contained in other parts of the application. (It is recognized that predictors of success are currently limited, and generally only include first-year college GPA and graduation rate. As this field advances, better predictors should be identified and used in validating admissions tests.)

¥An admissions test should be useful in a way that justifies its social and monetary costs.

BOARS also recommends that, as a matter of principle, the faculty regularly review UC's admissions testing policy and practices to ensure that tests are being used in a way that is consistent with these principles and desired properties of admissions tests.

Recommendations Regarding an Admissions Test Array to be Adopted by the University of California

BOARS has undertaken to propose a policy based on agreed-upon principles of testing, and upon the purposes for which admissions tests are created, rather than simply working within the constraints of existing tests. We consider this an opportunity to work with testing agencies and interested parties to move toward admissions tests that more precisely fit the needs of the University of California. In setting forth this far-sighted goal, BOARS is cognizant that no existing test or tests precisely fit the goals of the University. However, there are valid, reliable, and well-respected tests available that can be adapted for our purposes, and possibly developed, to more closely match the proposed UC purposes and principles for admissions tests.

BOARS recommends to the faculty of the University of California a new testing array with the following components.

1. A core achievement examination required of all students covering mastery of the fundamental disciplines needed for University-level work: language arts (reading and writing, including a writing sample) and mathematics. This examination would be roughly three hours in length. Although no currently available test meets this specification, BOARS members have discussed it in general terms with the two major national testing agencies, the College Board/Educational Testing Service and ACT Inc. Both have indicated interest in pursuing such a test option within the timeframe required roughly two years for test development, assuming the requirement would go into effect no earlier than for the class entering in fall 2006. BOARS will remain in close conversation with both testing agencies and any new tests will undergo rigorous evaluation to ensure that they are consistent with BOARS' principles. In addition, BOARS is interested in other examination alternatives (e.g., versions of the Golden State Examination) that might emerge in the more distant future.

A critical requirement for any agency developing such a test is that it be able to produce or derive from the California core test an acceptable score equivalent to one of the two major admissions tests currently available nationally (the SAT I and the ACT). Both the College Board/ETS and ACT INC. have indicated that this is feasible. Thus, California students would not be required to take additional tests in order to apply to non-UC institutions.

2. Two one-hour long examinations in specific content areas within the subjects covered by University's A-G requirements, allowing for some level of student choice in the selection of specific tests.

In BOARS opinion, this recommended test requirement provides greater breadth, depth, and rigor than the current policy. It ensures sufficient coverage of the skills most vital to post-secondary work without encompassing unneeded redundancy. Further, the proposed array increases the breadth of high school coursework covered in the subject examinations; it preserves the element of choice that allows students to demonstrate particular strengths in areas they feel they know best; it slightly reduces the test burden on students by reducing the total number of sessions and seat time required; and it ensures that scores are fully transportable to other institutions.

Remaining Questions and Timing for Implementation

This recommendation lays out general guidelines for a desirable admissions test array. However, a number of questions require additional faculty discussion and study. Among these are the following:

1. Specification of the mathematics examination requirement. At present, students are tested in general level math skills as part of the core SAT I or ACT examination and are then offered the choice of two achievement examinations in math: the SAT II Mathematics level 1 or level 2 test. BOARS wishes to reduce the overall amount of test time devoted to mathematics, but also believes that it is highly desirable for students wishing to pursue majors in science or engineering to be able to demonstrate higher-level math achievement. Several options exist for achieving this goal. One attractive option is to allow students to choose one of two levels of math within the new core examination. Another option would be to require all students to take the same math tests (presumably a lower-level examination) within the core, but permit them to choose higher-level math as one of their two additional subject tests. These options need further study as well as conversation with the testing agencies.
2. The specific nature of the choice students would be given for the subject examinations. Several different options exist here. Students could be given an entirely free choice for these examinations. They could be required to take tests in given disciplines (e.g., science) but given choices (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, or Physics) within those disciplines. They could be given a menu of four general disciplines (e.g., natural science, social science, literature, foreign language) and asked to select tests from among two of the disciplines. New tests could be developed in A-G areas (e.g., the arts) not now covered by any existing tests. Again, this question requires additional study and discussion as well as consultation with the testing agencies.
3. Issues related to the language examinations. These issues are many and complex. There is considerable faculty and public concern over the perceived fairness of submitting language exam scores in a multicultural society with many languages spoken in homes and communities, and tests that were designed to measure a second language learned in high school. BOARS is preparing a position paper on this complex issue that will be available to inform faculty discussion and decision-making.

4. The future role of the SAT I. The testing array proposed by BOARS does not include the SAT I and the requirement that any new test developed to meet BOARS specifications include scores that are transferable to other institutions means that students taking the California core examination would not have to take the SAT I. Presumably, however, some will choose to take the SAT I, just as at present some students choose to take multiple tests. What role the existing SAT I would have as an optional additional piece of information remains to be discussed and decided.

Regarding timing of the implementation of this proposal, BOARS recognizes that, traditionally, the University of California has given students substantial advance notice of changes in eligibility requirements. In this case, because some students could conceivably choose to take subject area tests as early as the spring of their tenth-grade year, BOARS proposes that the new admissions test requirement take effect for students entering the University in fall 2006 that is, for students who will begin ninth grade in fall 2002. This gives students time to plan their full high school program with the new requirements in mind. It also allows ample time to address the remaining questions (and those that have not yet been anticipated) and develop and evaluate new tests. We would assume that additional refinement of BOARS specifications and development of new tests that meet the requirements for the core examination would take place over the next two years and that new tests could be piloted and evaluated beginning in 2004.

This policy recommendation will now be refined in discussion with faculty colleagues and other experts, as well as continued consultation with the major testing agencies. BOARS looks forward to a vigorous and productive exchange over its proposed recommendation for the future of admissions testing at the University of California.

APPENDIX C

- The College Board's Spin



Questions and Answers About the New SAT® I

Overview of Changes to the SAT I

- **Question:** Why is the College Board changing the SAT® I: Reasoning Test ("The SAT")?

Answer: The College Board continually seeks to improve the SAT I. These are not the first changes we've made to the SAT I and they will not be the last. The latest changes are designed to align the test more closely to curriculum and skills required for success in college today. Writing, three years of high school math, and strong preparation in critical reading are regarded as the cornerstones of a good college preparatory curriculum.

- **Question:** How is the College Board changing the SAT I?

Answer: The College Board is changing the SAT I in three areas:

Writing: For the first time, there will be a writing test, including multiple choice, grammar usage questions, and a written essay.

Math: The new SAT I Math test will add content from Algebra II, and the quantitative comparisons will be eliminated. (Quantitative comparisons currently ask test-takers to assess two mathematical equations or statements and make a determination as to which amount is greater.) As with analogies, students often are unfamiliar with this type of question and need to familiarize themselves with this type of question in advance of the test.

Verbal (now Critical Reading): Content changes to the new SAT I Verbal test will include adding shorter reading passages to the existing long reading passages and eliminating analogies. (Analogies ask test-takers to determine the relationship between two given words and find the most similar relationship among four pairs of words.)

- **Question:** When will the new changes go into effect?

Answer: The new test will be administered to the high school class of 2006 in March of 2005. Until then, the current SAT will be given.

- **Question:** Is the new SAT I going to be more of an achievement test than a reasoning test?

Answer: The New SAT I will measure reasoning and critical thinking skills in the context of current curriculum and college skills. The College Board has offered rigorous subject-specific achievement tests since the 1930s, with a current battery of 22 SAT II: Subject Tests.

- **Question:** When was the SAT I last changed?

Answer: Changes were last made in March 1994, after four years of research and development based on the College Board's Blue Ribbon Panel Report, *Beyond Prediction*. Changes included greater emphasis on critical reading questions, longer reading passages, and the introduction of student-generated answers in math. For the first time, the use of calculators was encouraged.

- **Question:** Are these changes a response to the University of California's comments about the current SAT I?

Answer: Changes to the SAT I are based on the College Board's own research; recommendations dating from 1990; and consultation with members of the education community. The University of California's challenge certainly hastened some of these changes.

- **Question:** Did other colleges and universities that were dropping the SAT I motivate you?

Answer: We welcome the opportunity to correct the record on this important issue. Very few colleges have dropped the SAT I over the past 30 years and only a handful have made it optional. About 80 percent of the nation's 1,800 four-year colleges use test scores in admissions, and that percentage has been relatively stable for at least 10 years. Unfortunately, a misleading list of "dropping" colleges developed by FairTest has been widely cited by the media. That list includes colleges with open admissions policies and other institutions that ordinarily do not require test scores, such as Bible colleges and community colleges. This distortion of facts has been further amplified in the context of media attention given to the UC issue.

- **Question:** Is the new SAT I likely to affect the PSAT/NMSQT®?

Answer: Yes, the PSAT/NMSQT will also change. In fact, some of the proposed changes, including a multiple-choice writing section, have already been made to the PSAT/NMSQT. Like the SAT I, the PSAT/NMSQT will be based on the principle of aligning the test more closely to curriculum and college skills. The first new PSAT/NMSQT will be administered in the fall of 2004, again for the class of 2006.

Fairness

- **Question:** What will be the effect of these changes on students at high schools with the fewest resources?

Answer: It is widely recognized that American education does not offer a level playing field. One of the College Board's most important goals is to promote excellence and equity in education. We believe policymakers must continue to work to improve the basic quality of education for all of America's students. Changes to the SAT I should reinforce the importance of a strong curriculum for students regardless of their socioeconomic status. All schools, affluent or poor, should work to provide greater access to more rigorous courses for all their students.

• **Question:** Now that the SAT I is becoming more closely aligned with curriculum, is there a possibility that disparities in test scores across socioeconomic lines will increase because of the associated inequities in the courses offered and the quality of material covered?

Answer: Initial research shows that the gap between underrepresented racial and ethnic groups will not be exacerbated by the changes. However, we will continue to field-test the new SAT I to gain a clearer picture of the possible impact of all of the changes on a variety of subgroups in the testing population. The College Board is committed to promoting educational opportunity for all students from all backgrounds and we will do whatever we can to minimize the impact of the existing inequities in America's educational system.

• **Question:** Will the new test make things better or worse for underrepresented minority students?

Answer: These changes were not designed to give any group an advantage but to benefit all students by more closely reflecting the curriculum and skills required for college success. Initial research shows that the gap between underrepresented racial and ethnic groups will not be exacerbated by the changes.

• **Question:** Will the new SAT I hinder the chances of students in schools where third-year math is not taught?

Answer: Students at schools that do not offer third-year math are already at a disadvantage. The majority of four-year colleges require three or more years of math, and students with more math courses have much higher SAT I math scores and freshman grades than those with two years of math. The change to the SAT I should encourage schools to reexamine existing curriculum to ensure that all students are prepared for the critical skills required for college success. These SAT I changes will not be made overnight. The more advanced math will be phased in over several years, allowing schools time to ensure that their teachers cover Algebra II.

• **Question:** Will the writing test hinder the chances of students who have learned English as a Second Language?

Answer: The College Board recommends, and most colleges use, a comprehensive admissions approach that takes into consideration students' individual circumstances, including an ESL background. All students will write the essay under the same conditions and all essay prompts will be screened to ensure an absence of bias that could advantage or disadvantage any group. Of course, students with more advanced preparation and skill in reading and writing in English are likely to attain higher scores in those subjects. It is important to know that 48 states assess language arts, reading, and writing. Thirty-seven states have high school writing tests, 33 of which include a student-written essay.

• **Question:** Will the addition of the writing component skew the SAT I in favor of girls, who tend to have stronger verbal skills?

Answer: Males currently score slightly better on the Verbal section of the SAT I and females score slightly better on Sat II: Writing Tests.

- **Question:** Will the new test be more or less coachable than the current test?

Answer: The issue of coachability was not a major consideration in making changes to the SAT I. However, we expect the new test will be even more closely related to what is taught in school and how it is taught. The best way to prepare for the SAT is by taking more rigorous courses in high school. This rule of thumb will be even more relevant to the new test. It is worth noting that students who completed 20 or more core academic courses in high school scored over 130 points higher on the SAT I than students with fewer than 20 courses.

A Closer Look at the Proposed Changes

- **Question:** Overall, how is the new SAT I more closely aligned to what is being taught in the classroom today?

Answer: In several important ways. The elimination of analogies, for example, reflects the fact that teachers prefer context-rich instruction, which is recommended by most professional education associations and the National Council of Teachers of English. With the elimination of analogies, greater emphasis will be placed on critical reading passages with a variety of texts ranging from science to history, and from humanities to popular texts, all of which are taught in the classroom. The addition of third-year math followed a College Board survey that found that 97 percent of all college-bound seniors take mathematics coursework through Algebra II. On the other hand, many students do not receive instruction on how to do quantitative comparisons, whereby magnitudes of different mathematical quantities are estimated. Quantitative comparisons were dropped because they might give an advantage to students who have had this special instruction, which most students have not had. Obviously, the addition of a writing section is entirely consistent with the increased emphasis being placed on writing inside and outside of the classroom nationwide.

- **Question:** What is the difference between critical reading and verbal reasoning?

Answer: A shift to “critical reading” indicates more of a shift in how the test is described rather than a true construct shift. The term “verbal reasoning” is confusing and difficult to explain to students. Critical reading, which the SAT I has emphasized since its last set of changes in 1994, involves a higher level of reading than simple comprehension. It is, rather, the complicated process of acquiring meaning from text.

- **Question:** Why are you eliminating analogies?

Answer: Analogy items in the current SAT I measure knowledge of the meaning of words, ability to see a relationship in a pair of words, and ability to recognize similar parallel relationships in another pair of words. While analogical reasoning is important, this construct has become rather artificial. Analogies, as they are assessed on the SAT I, are rarely taught in school and students often need to familiarize themselves with this type of item before taking the test. Replacing analogies with critical reading will allow more relevant measurement of the kinds of skills taught in the classroom and regarded as essential for college success.

- **Question:** Why are you adding a writing test?

Answer: The ability to express ideas clearly and effectively in writing is critical to success in college and beyond. Writing is a core college success skill, and we hope that by including a writing section on the SAT I, students and educators will approach writing with renewed focus. College professors do not believe students are adequately prepared to write well. Eighty-one percent of professors recently rated freshman and sophomores' ability to write clearly as "fair" or "poor" (*Public Agenda, Reality Check 2001, Finding 6*). Students are expected to write throughout college—whether they major in psychology, business, science, education, or the humanities—and the SAT I can serve as one impetus for students to write as much as possible to hone that skill throughout high school. It is important to note that U.S. business leaders also indicate that American students must improve their writing skills in order to thrive in today's economy. According to the Business Roundtable, there is only one other nation (Japan) that relies as heavily as the United States on multiple-choice questions. Most exit exams in Germany and France, for example, require students to write essays (*A Business Leader's Guide to Setting Academic Standards, the Business Roundtable*, June 1996).

- **Question:** Is it not the case that scores on the writing sample will be excessively subjective?

Answer: The new SAT I writing sample will be scored as the SAT II: Writing Test has been for many years. Two trained readers will read each essay and assign a score ranging from 1 to 6 to each essay, using specific criteria. These scores will be combined for a total score. If the judgment of readers differs by more than two points, a third reader will judge the essay to resolve the discrepancy. The reliability of this entire writing test will equal or exceed that of most high-stakes tests used today. Currently, fewer than 2 percent of essays require a third reader.

- **Question:** Will the writing section be graded manually or electronically?

Answer: Two well-trained individuals will grade each written essay. High school and college faculty have traditionally scored the SAT II: Writing Test and will continue to be the source of readers. The essays will be scanned and electronically transported to readers across the country who will then score the actual written essay.

- **Question:** How will this writing test find and assess creative writing talent?

Answer: This test will not assess creative writing. It is intended to identify the basic writing skills required for writing college papers and answering essay questions for students in all disciplines ranging from education to science.

- **Question:** How long will the writing test take?

Answer: These details will be worked out in the next 12 to 18 months following field trials and research. It is estimated that the writing test will take 50 to 60 minutes, which includes an essay of about 25 minutes. The entire test is to last about 3 1/2 hours.

- **Question:** What can such a short test tell you about a student's writing ability?

Answer: The total SAT II: Writing Test score is highly predictive of college performance. Even though it is only a sample of the kind of writing that students will do in college, the essay portion will provide invaluable information to colleges. The SAT II: Writing Test is the best predictor of college writing, with a correlation of .56. In comparison, high school GPA and high school writing grades only correlate at .26 and .37, respectively. Research has shown that increasing the time allocated for the writing sample does not substantially affect validity or reliability.

- **Question:** Will the new SAT I have diagnostic capability?

Answer: A diagnostic feature, similar to the one we recently added to the PSAT/NMSQT, will be added to the SAT I to provide feedback to help improve a student's academic skills. We will conduct research to confirm the value of this diagnostic feature to students, high schools, and colleges.

Mechanics

- **Question:** Will the changes disturb longitudinal trend data or is this like recentering?

Answer: No, the new test will not disturb longitudinal test data and it will not be like recentering. The new test will be equated to the current test. A student who scores a 600 on the current verbal test and a 680 on the current math test should also score a 600 on the new critical reading test and a 680 on the new math test. We are making changes that test math and verbal reasoning (or critical reading) in ways that are aligned to what is happening in schools. Colleges will continue to get the same high-quality information from us that they have come to expect.

- **Question:** Will it affect predictive validity?

Answer: Changing how mathematical and critical reading/verbal reasoning are measured does not affect the underlying construct and should not impact their predictive validity. However, the predictive validity of the entire battery might increase slightly for students taking the writing test because the writing test introduces a third and important measure of college success.

- **Question:** Will it affect "transportability"?

Answer: No. A 200 to 800 score scale, with 200 being the lowest possible score and 800 the highest, will continue to be used. The math and critical reading scores will be fully equatable to the existing math and verbal scores. The meaning of the scores will not change, and institutions that accept SAT I scores now should continue to do so.

- **Question:** How should students prepare for the new changes? Will students have to change study methods for the SATs?

Answer: The best preparation for the new SAT I will remain unchanged: taking challenging coursework and reading and writing as much as possible. Of course, familiarization with the types of questions that will be on the new SAT I is recommended, but these are the types of questions that students are exposed to on classroom tests and other national and state assessments. The College Board, well in advance of administration of the first test, will make ample free materials available.

- **Question:** Will the expense associated with grading essays greatly increase the cost of the tests?

Answer: Our best guess is that the increase will be between \$10 and \$12. To ease the burden on low-income students, the College Board will continue its generous fee-waiver program. Last year \$4.5 million in fee waivers were granted for SAT I test-takers.

College Board and ETS

- **Question:** What's the difference between the College Board and the Educational Testing Service (ETS)?

Answer: The College Board, founded in 1900, is a nonprofit membership organization that consists of educational institutions nationwide, and owns the SAT.

ETS was founded in 1948, when the College Board, the American Council of Education, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching formed a single nonprofit testing agency, and it is recognized as a world leader in educational testing.

The College Board controls and makes all policy and educational decisions relating to the delivery, cost, and scoring of the SAT. The Board furthermore decides on the content of the test. ETS develops the test items, assembles test forms, and administers and scores the test. It also provides score reports to students and schools on behalf of the College Board.

APPENDIX D

- University of California
Essay Writing Guidelines
- UC Berkeley Essay Writing Guidelines

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ESSAY WRITING GUIDELINES

Writing your personal statement can be one of the most satisfying—or frustrating—writing experiences you'll ever have.

The personal statement is an important part of your application package. Depending on the topic you choose, the essay you write provides additional evidence of your intellectual and creative achievement. The essay is also the only opportunity for the readers of your application to get a feel for you as a person as well as for you as a student. The essay is also the place where you can put your academic record into the context of your opportunities and obstacles.

There is no one correct way to write a personal statement, but in general those who will read your essay are looking for two important things:

- HOW the essay provides evidence of your achievements that isn't reflected in other parts of your application
- HOW and WHY the events that you describe have shaped your attitude, focus, and, most of all, your intellectual vitality.

This information will help you think about and craft a personal statement by taking you step by step through a process of brainstorming, drafting and revising. At the end, we hope that you will produce a personal statement that you are proud of and that will provide admissions officers with an accurate portrait of who you are and why a college education is important to you.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT

But before you write a single word, make sure you know what is expected of a successful college essay.

A good essay...

-Is thoughtful and honest

A strong personal statement is reflective; that is, it demonstrates that you have thought about and gained a clear perspective on your experiences and what you want in your future. It does not simply tell a reader what you think he/she wants to know. Instead, it gives the reader a vivid and compelling picture of you—in essence, telling the reader what he or she should know about you. Remember that the focus of the essay is YOU—your achievements, your obstacles, your goals, your values.

-Strives for depth, not breadth

A good essay is not a list of your accomplishments. Remember when your mom told you that it's quality, not quantity, that counts? Well, the same adage applies for your college essay. A reader will be much more interested in how your experience demonstrates the theme of your essay, not the number of accomplishments you can list. What is NOT interesting: an essay that devotes one paragraph each to a variety of different topics. This type of approach denies you the ability to give depth to your essay.

-Follows the conventions of good writing

A good essay uses appropriate grammar and syntax, uses precise and vivid language, and does not contain any spelling errors.

-Conforms to guidelines

If the essay instructions tell you that the essay should be two pages long, on white 8.5x11 inch paper, then the essay should be two pages long, on white 8.5x11 inch paper. Less is not more, and more is not better, either.

-Answers the question!

A good essay is the result of a writer who has examined the essay question and written an essay that explicitly addresses that question. For example, if you are asked to describe your greatest accomplishment or any unusual circumstances or challenges you have faced, then your reader will expect you to use vivid language that will enable the reader to visualize your accomplishment and share your sense of success.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PERSONAL STATEMENT**-Benefits from several drafts and feedback from others**

Revision allows an essay to grow. Revising is not editing; revising is the act of “re-seeing” and of looking for those parts of the essay that would benefit from more explication, more (or less) vivid language, or even deleting parts that simply don’t work to move your primary theme forward. Similarly, feedback from others can help you identify those parts of the essay that work well—and those that don’t.

-Contains a catchy introduction that will keep the reader interested

It is important to recognize that essay readers will read hundreds, maybe even thousands, of essays during the application review period. That means that an essay with a catchy introduction, one that gets right to the point and uses precise language and vivid imagery, is going to stand out more than an essay that is predictable and conventional in its opener.

-Transforms blemishes into positives

It’s okay to have flaws! The essay is your chance to show how you have transformed blemishes. For example, if your essay theme is “overcoming obstacles” and you earned a poor grade in a class, but went to a community college at night to repeat the course, it is important for your reader to know this because it is an example of your perseverance. The reader does not want to hear complaints about poor grades or circumstances, but rather wants to know how you have overcome them.

-Demonstrates your knowledge of the major/college

No one expects you to know everything about the college or university to which you are applying. However, readers will want to know that you have done your homework. For example, if you write an essay that states your interest in becoming an engineer, but the college does not have an engineering program, then you haven’t done your homework.

-Exudes confidence—you will be successful no matter what

A good essay doesn’t beg or brag. Colleges and universities want to admit the best students, and the best students are those who can demonstrate their ability to pursue their goals regardless of where they are admitted. Think of this as quiet confidence—the kind that reveals itself through your description of lifelong interests, sustained commitment, and/or perseverance in the face of adversity.

Keep these characteristics of a good essay in mind as you compose. And be sure to avoid the typical college essay blunders.

COLLEGE ESSAY BLUNDERS!

Just as you should know what to do, you should also know what NOT to do! Here are some of the biggest blunders students make in their essays:

The essay repeats information contained elsewhere in the application

Sometimes students, to be on the safe side, simply repeat in the essay the same information that is in the application itself. This strategy results in the reader gaining no more insight into what drives you than he/she discerned from the rest of the application packet. Remember, your reader already knows from your application, for example, that you are in the California Scholarship Federation and a member of the Ethnic Studies Club. What the reader doesn't know is why you chose to participate in these activities and how your involvement in these activities is evidence of your particular interests and talents—your essay's theme. If one of these experiences is a good example of your essay's theme, then by all means include it. If you're just including it because you think that you'll impress the reader with everything you've ever done, think again.

Here's an example of this blunder:

In my junior year I was a cheerleader for my school. I worked really hard at it, and found it to be fun and challenging. I was also part of my school's Kids in the Kitchen program, which helped to make food available to poor people in my community. Cheerleading and volunteer work kept me very busy. I spent approximately twenty hours each week cheering and another five hours volunteering. I learned a lot from this experience and can manage my time effectively and maintain a positive attitude in the face of adversity.

The writer complains about his/her circumstances rather than explains them.

Remember that admissions officers want to know how resilient you are. While it is certainly okay to write about obstacles you've faced, what is important to your reader is how you overcame the obstacle, not what a terrible obstacle it was.

Here's an example of this blunder:

Because my mother is a single parent, she has had to make a lot of sacrifices to keep me and my brother in a private school. It means that we have to go without a lot of things, which is sometimes embarrassing. But even though everyone in my school knows that we are poor, no one is willing to give me a break. This is especially true of my English teacher, Sister Magdalena. Because she didn't like me, and she is not comfortable with poor people, she gave me a C in English when I really should have gotten a B.

The writer discusses money or a college's ranking as a motivating factor for applying to a particular major/college.

Yes, we all want to attend college to earn more money. And we all want to attend the most prestigious colleges. But college faculty who read your essay want to know that you are motivated by a love of learning. So, even though money or a school's ranking may be important to you, keep this information out of your essay.

Here's an example of this blunder:

I want to study engineering because a recent US News and World Report article said that engineering is the fastest-growing industry in the nation and the best place to study engineering is UCLA. With a degree in engineering, I will be able to buy a house for my mom.

The essay relies on gimmicks rather than substance.

A “gimmicky” essay is one in which the reader tries to get the reader’s attention through unconventional means. This does not mean that your essay has to follow one set format; what it means is that gimmicks can’t replace substance.

Here's an example of this blunder:

College, oh college/How much I want thee/for college, oh college/will strengthen me/and with a degree in hand/I will change this land/and make a better life for you and me. (This is supposed to be a poem.)

The writer makes claims in the essay that are not backed up by the application.

The essay is a component of the application and is read within the context of the application. A description of yourself as the top student in the school should be supported by your grades. Similarly, claims made about your extracurricular experiences should be backed up by the application. For example, a student who claims that her lifelong ambition is to save the environment would want this claim supported by examples of involvement in environment-related hobbies, clubs and classes.

The essay contains the wrong school name

Oops! In these days of computerized cutting and pasting, this is an easy blunder to make. Proofread carefully!

The essay contains mechanical errors or errors of usage, clichés, or meaningless prose

Although your reader is not grading your essay or scrutinizing your grammar, a poorly written essay signals a reader that you are unfamiliar with conventions of good writing or simply did not put enough time into composing your essay. Either way, there will be other applications whose essays are very polished, so don’t disadvantage yourself.

Here are some examples of this blunder:

My father always told me that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. (A cliché)

A feeling of indescribable disbelief overcame me. (Wordy prose)

The essay is too long or too short

Show that you know how to follow directions. An essay that is too short may indicate carelessness; one that is too long may signal arrogance. Remember that your readers have many other applications to read, so be sure that the limited time available to peruse yours will be spent reading an essay that is the appropriate length.

BRAINSTORMING FOR YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Brainstorming is the first stage of writing, often called “prewriting.” Brainstorming is the process of gathering all of your ideas and getting them on paper without editing them.

The brainstorming stage does not involve editing, so don't censor your ideas. There will be enough time to edit later; right now you want to get all of your ideas down so that you don't forget anything. Brainstorming is NOT an outline, NOT a draft and certainly NOT an essay. The purpose of brainstorming is to write out ideas, thoughts, pieces of thoughts, without regard for their connections with each other. Structure and form are not important at this point. What is important is to get everything out of your head and onto paper.

Begin by creating a brainstorm sheet. Be totally honest! Ask yourself the following questions, and write out your answers.

- What are my strengths?
- What are my weaknesses?
- What is special about me?
- What kind of person am I?
- What do I care about?
- Why is (BLANK) more important to me than (BLANK)? (Fill in the blanks.)
- What is it like growing up in (BLANK)?
- What is it like going to school at (BLANK)?

GATHERING INFORMATION AND DEVELOPING A THEME

After you've completing your brainstorming, you'll want to filter the fruits of your brainstorming and identify ONE area you wish to pursue in more detail. Look for areas that might seem interesting or different to a reader. A good way to do this is to group similar ideas together to highlight patterns; these patterns can then uncover a potential theme for your essay. (Your essay's theme is its controlling idea.)

For example, if after brainstorming and grouping your ideas, you find that your talent for writing shows up in your hobby as a budding novelist, your community service as a teacher of creative writing to youngsters, your extracurricular work as a writer for the school newspaper, and your award for outstanding history essay, then you should consider focusing your essay around this talent and how this interest in writing shapes your place in the world and your goals.

Remember—it is the quality of your experience as you describe it that matters, not the number of experiences.

STEP ONE

Begin to focus your thoughts by examining your actual experiences. Use the information you've uncovered through brainstorming to address the following topics.

- An achievement that made me feel terrific...
- Something I have struggled to overcome or change about myself or my life...
- An event or experience that taught me something special...
- A "real drag" of an experience that I had to get past...
- Someone's act of strength or courage that affected me...
- A family experience that influenced me in some powerful way...
- A lesson, class project, activity or job that had an impact on my academic or career goals...

- A time I blew it, failed, made bad choices, and how I got past it...
- Some memorable event or advice involving an older person...
- An event that helps to define me, in terms of my background...

STEP TWO

Choose one or two of your favorite responses from the list above (or combine a couple that evoked similar responses). Check to make sure your written description addresses the following three questions. If it doesn't, add details so that the experience you describe will be vivid to a reader who doesn't know you.

1. What were the key moments and details of the event?
2. What did I learn from this event?
3. What aspect of this event stays with me most?

STEP THREE

Decide on a theme for your essay. Taking the experience you wrote about in Step Two, answer the following questions:

- What does this event reveal about me?
 - What makes it special or significant?
 - How does this event make me special or make me stand out?
 - What truth about me is revealed through this event?

Your answers will reveal your theme.

STRUCTURING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT: THE INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

Your introduction is where you establish the tone of your personal statement and set the scene, define its theme, and generally hook your reader by sparking interest with details and quotes. It's important that you avoid meaningless prose and get right to the point. Be sure, too, that your language is clear and specific—avoid filler words and clichés. Most importantly, be sure that the introductory paragraph captures the main idea of your essay.

Sometimes the introduction is the last portion of the essay to be completed, and that's okay. The introduction should provide a snapshot of what the rest of the essay will develop and expand upon, so if you don't know where the rest of the essay is headed, the introduction is impossible to write. Therefore, it is important to outline your essay so that you know how each of your examples will build upon one another and can better draft your introduction to reflect this.

Here are some sample introductory paragraphs. You're the judge—which one is strongest?

1. On September 16, 1990 I experienced the worst feeling of my life the feeling of incompetence. It was a feeling of indescribable disbelief. My mother, my only parent, fell down the stairs of our home. It was then that I knew that I had to become a doctor to help people who were suffering like my mother. By attending your college, I will be able to fulfill my dream and to give back to my community through medicine. Click here if you selected this opener.
2. My father divorced us when I was in seventh grade. At that time, I was going through what my mother called my "difficult stage" because my world revolved around school, friends and boys, and "family" was often put on

the back burner. I was unprepared for the resulting family crisis; my father, the man who nurtured my passion for art, literature and my love of languages, would no longer be a part of my life. At the time, I thought that I could not go on. Now I realize that my father’s rejection, while extremely painful, gave me a resiliency and strength of character that I did not previously know I possessed. [Click here if you selected this opener.](#)

3. It was once said that “We have nothing to fear but fear itself,” and that is a motto that I have lived by for all of my seventeen years on this earth. It is a motto that I have based all of my academic endeavors on. It literally came into effect one Wednesday morning earlier this year. I got called into the House One Principal’s office at our school. I walked towards the office a little pondered. I had never been called into that office before, because that principal only handled the math and science departments of the entire school. I doubted that the principal even knew me. When I entered the office I was greeted by a group of familiar faces that I knew from my physics class. Our principal told us to have a seat and relax. The reason that we were called in was that there was going to be a Science Competition happening that Saturday and the school really wanted us to enter into it. The principal said that she knew it was short notice, but based on our performances in all our science classes she knew that we could pull it off. She stated that we were some of the only high school juniors and seniors who had completed and gone beyond the required science courses. (I personally had already taken a semester of both Physics and Physiology that year, and two of the other girls that were in there with me had already completed AP Biology.) [Click here if you selected this opener.](#)

STRUCTURING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT: BODY PARAGRAPHS

Body paragraphs are the meat of your essay, and as such are the most important component of your essay. In the body paragraphs, you will expand upon and provide support for the theme you introduced in the first paragraph and will provide the details that move that theme forward. A two page essay will typically contain 2-4 body paragraphs. Each paragraph contains:

A topic sentence that expands your theme and makes a transition from the previous paragraph

Development of ideas that support your essay’s theme

An ending sentence that wraps up the paragraph and helps to transition into the next paragraph

The first body paragraph is the place to start building your support for your theme. Here you will begin with the smallest components of your theme and, in subsequent paragraphs, work toward the most significant. Or you can organize chronologically. Try both methods and see which one is most persuasive for your particular theme.

TIP: As you draft each paragraph, use the following Signpost Questions in as you develop your essay to help ensure that you have developed your paragraphs fully.

Introduction and/or First Body Paragraph

What are my values and philosophies about my theme? What is the basis of these values?

Body Paragraphs 2-4

What accomplishment am I most proud of, and why?

What incident/event provides evidence of my responsibility, and how?

What difficulties or disadvantages have I faced and how did I overcome them? (This is especially important if you are applying for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).)

What is one area in which I am weak, and how have I overcome it?

TIP: Avoid simplistic transitions between paragraphs. If your topic sentences (generally the first sentence in each paragraph) all begin with some sort of numerical transition (first, second, third, finally), or you find yourself relying to heavily on “also” to move your paragraphs forward, look for more interesting and sophisticated transition words and phrases to move the essay along.

2-4 body paragraphs that develop your theme through examples and detailed experiences and build upon each other. The final body paragraph will contain your most poignant information

A conclusion that widens the lens and wraps up your essay without summarizing or repeating what has already been written.

STRUCTURING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT: CONCLUSIONS

Your conclusion is your chance to extend your essay’s parameters and to demonstrate the significance of your experience in a larger context A conclusion is not a repeat or summary of ideas presented elsewhere in the essay or application. Instead, it should re-affirm the validity of your essay’s theme. This means that your conclusion should widen the lens rather than narrow the focus.

Here’s an example of a poor conclusion:

I hope that this has helped you see me more as an individual. Whatever challenge is handed to me I give it my best effort. If my goals are a little far from my reach, I push harder. I know that if I don’t reach my destination, I will understand. I will never quite and never think negatively. My hopes and dreams may be similar to others, but how I go about reaching my goals are different. This difference between us all is what determines our individuality.

This type of conclusion relies on predictable language about goals and dreams and does not seem to be directly connected to any theme. In fact, this conclusion could be tacked on to the end of just about any college essay, which means it is not particularly significant to the essay to which it belongs.

The Writing Process

Writing a good college essay requires a significant investment of personal reflection, thought and time. There are no right or wrong answers—you are who you are, after all. The best way to get in touch with who you are through writing is to undertake a process of self-exploration and writing that will culminate in an essay that will reveal how unique and interesting you are.

Using all the stages of the writing process will help you to

- Understand your essay’s theme—its controlling idea
- Analyze and reflect upon your experiences as they relate to your theme
- Craft a polished essay

Drafting, Revising and Proofreading Your Personal Statement

Drafting and Revising

A draft is a work in progress. A good essay undergoes several revisions—don’t assume that your first draft is your best draft! Composing often involves going back and forth among planning the essay, generating ideas,

organizing the contents, and editing the results. Drafting allow you to get the most out of these composing stages.

Through the brainstorming and gathering information stages, you have generated the raw material to compose effectively. Now you will begin the process of creating your essay.

Your First Draft

In a first draft, you are attempting to capture your essay's meaning and get it down on paper. In this way, you are attempting to draw out the essay's concept.

Use your first draft to:

- formulate a working introduction
- organize your ideas

A first draft is often the skeleton of the paper; it contains the overall structure, but may lack a clear theme, vivid language, fully developed paragraphs, and strong transition words and phrases.

Revising Your Draft

The key to revising your essay is to determine how it seems not just to you, but to your reader. So—think like an admissions officer! Remember that readers need a sense of your essay's structure and a clear idea of why they should read your essay in the first place. To revise your essay:

Step One: Concentrate on the whole by examining your essay's frame: the introduction, the conclusion, and a sentence in each that states your main theme. Ask the following questions

Will my reader know where my introduction ends and where the body of my essay begins?

Will my reader know where the body of my essay ends and where my conclusion begins?

Will my reader know which sentence is the main sentence in my introduction, and which is the main sentence in my conclusion?

Step Two: Examine your essay for continuity

Make sure that your points work together conceptually—that is, that key points are unified by your essay's theme.

One strategy is to **OUTLINE** your draft. Create an outline of your draft after you've finished writing. Your outline should include:

- I. Your theme as it is stated in your introduction
- II. Topic sentence from the first body paragraph
 - example used in first body paragraph that supports the theme
- III. Topic sentence from the second body paragraph
 - example used in second body paragraph that supports the theme and so on.

Examine the outline (which is actually an abbreviated version of your draft): does the organization make sense? Do the topic sentence indicate a conceptual progression of ideas? Does each paragraph's topic sentence FOCUS your theme, and does each example ILLUSTRATE your main idea?

Step Three: Revise for focus, clarity and depth. Make sure that the skeleton of your personal statement is fleshed out with sufficient examples, fully developed paragraphs, and meaningful prose.

Style Tips

Examine the personal statement for word accuracy; whenever possible, use a simpler word in place of a longer or more obscure word.

Make sure that every word you use means what you think it means.

Be yourself!

Avoid empty words and phrases like "basically," "really," "goals and dreams."

Use active verbs whenever possible. Go through your essay and circle every form of "to be" that you find ("is", "are", "were", etc). Substitute more active verbs. For example:

Instead of: My love of science was fostered by my second grade teacher

Write: My second grade teacher fostered my love of science

Avoid predictable (and stereotypical college essay phrases) such as "I learned a lot," "I learned to work with others," "It was a fun and challenging experience" "I learned that everyone is different," etc.

Avoid using clichés and proverbs, or other over-used phrases from literary sources. They detract from the freshness of your essay.

Use a normal, 10-12 point font to type your essay. Don't type in all italics, or in bold, or in an unusual font size.

Standard fonts that look nice are Times, Palatino, New York, and Courier. Avoid fancy font types—they are difficult to read.

Proofreading

Leave plenty of time to proofread. If you can, put your essay aside for a few days, and then come back and look at it with fresh eyes.

Some proofreading tips:

- Try reading your essay backwards (last sentence first) to catch fragments or other glaring errors.
- Have another pair of eyes read it as well to catch errors in spelling and grammar—your eyes, because they are used to the words on the page, can easily miss errors that another reader will easily spot.

Avoid these common errors

- Fragments
- Run-on sentences (comma splices)
- Redundancy (“The reason...is because”)
- Spelling errors
- Slang or colloquial language

GETTING FEEDBACK ON YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Getting feedback from others is a critical part of writing your essay. If your teachers, peers, or parents have suggestions, listen carefully. You don't have to take every suggestion, but try them out and find out which ones work. You'll want to be very specific in asking for feedback; if there are sections of your essay that you are particularly concerned about, ask your readers to pay special attention to those parts.

It is very important that your essay be your own creation and be conveyed in your own words, but it is okay (and even encouraged) to get feedback from others.

When soliciting feedback, steel yourself to criticism. Not everyone will see your essay the way you do. After receiving feedback, and before revising, write down the comments you receive and look for patterns. Use these patterns to decide how to proceed. If every one of your readers thinks that your essay is too wordy, then you can be pretty sure that your essay is too wordy, and revising for a simpler, more natural style should be a top priority.

Help your readers by providing a structure for them to respond. Ask your readers to comment first on larger issues, and lastly on grammar or syntax (problems with which often disappear in a second draft, so commenting extensively on grammar in the first draft is often a waste of your reader's time, particularly if the ideas you wish to convey are still unclear).

Use the following questions as a guide for your readers.

Overall Impression

1. After reading my essay, what three words would you use to describe me?
2. After reading the essay, what do you think its overall theme is?
3. In what way (or where) is the essay most persuasive?
4. In what way (or where) is it least persuasive?
5. Is the essay organized in a logical fashion?
6. Are the transitions between paragraphs fluid and logical?
7. Do the paragraphs build upon one another, and move from smaller issues to more significant ones?
8. Are there grammar errors? If so, what are they?
9. Are the words used appropriate?
10. What other comments/suggestions do you have that will strengthen my essay?

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA @ BERKELEY

THE PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR FRESHMAN

Whether you apply for admission as a freshman or as a transfer student, you must submit a personal statement with your completed UC application. Your personal statement is a vital part of Berkeley's comprehensive review of your application. It may be read and reviewed by either the Admission and/or Scholarship offices on many of the campuses to which you apply.

Note: The information and advice in this flyer is offered by the Berkeley campus and addresses what we look for in a personal statement. Other UC campuses to which you send your application may review your personal statement differently.

Why is the personal statement so important?

The personal statement provides you with an opportunity to tell the admissions office of significant and substantive aspects of your background, character, and level of achievement that may not be evident in other parts of the application. Since the personal statement is autobiographical in nature, it is important to give yourself plenty of time to reflect and thoughtfully prepare it. Reviewed together, your academic record and your personal statement, along with your list of accomplishments and activities, help us gain insight into your level of academic, personal, and extracurricular achievement. On the Berkeley campus we specifically use the personal statement to discover and evaluate distinctions that may ultimately guide us in making admission decisions among applicants whose academic records are quite similar.

What does Berkeley look for in a personal statement?

We look for essays in which the quality of an individual's character emerges. All achievements, both academic and non-academic, will be considered in the context of the opportunities you have had, any unusual circumstances or hardships you have faced, and ways in which you have responded to them. We look for the following personal characteristics: creativity; intellectual curiosity and achievement; exceptional personal or academic recognition; initiative; motivation; leadership; persistence; service to others; substantial experience with other cultures; and your ability to overcome or to manage significant challenges or obstacles. For example, let us know if you are the first in your family to go to college, or if you have contended with a serious illness or disability. It is important for you to tell us how you achieved academic success in spite of these challenges or obstacles. Your personal statement helps us to discover a sense of you as an individual and informs us of the contributions you might make to Berkeley.

Your personal statement need not include all of the characteristics listed above. You may wish to focus on one or two aspects of your life that clearly state what you think is important for us to know about you and that convey a sense of the person behind the GPA and test scores. Through your personal statement you can highlight your individual "story" with details of your background, interests or unique circumstances that might not otherwise be evident. For example: perhaps you have had to work to help your family while in school; if so, you may choose to address that. Alternatively, you might choose to explain your grade patterns in terms of crucial events; or your successes resulting from participating in rigorous academic outreach programs; or you

may wish to describe the experiences that have led you to your career choice and what you have done to move closer to that goal. You may also write about the way in which an activity or experience changed your attitude about something, crystallized a conviction, or helped you to establish a goal. No matter what you choose to write about, remember that this statement is your opportunity to tell us, in your own voice, who you are and to give us a sense of your background, intellectual vitality, and level of achievement.

What makes a good personal statement?

There is no single “good” personal statement. An honest, carefully composed, reflective personal statement that tells us about you is much more likely to be effective than a hastily written one. Therefore, give yourself plenty of time to prepare your personal statement. Start early enough so that you can refine and improve your personal statement; allow time to make several revisions. Overall, correct grammar, spelling, and sentence construction can contribute to a good personal statement, though we do not evaluate essays on those specific factors. Providing specific details and including examples also can help to make a personal statement effective.

Think carefully about how you have chosen to spend your time, what you have accomplished, and what you have gained from those undertakings. Remember your audience! Berkeley looks for specific qualities, not for specific activities and accomplishments. We look to see what those accomplishments reveal about you. We are interested not only in what you’ve done but also the choices you have made and what you have gained as a result of those choices. Remember, your personal statement should complement, not repeat, the information included elsewhere in the application. After we have read your essay, we will ask the question, “What do we know about this individual?” If we have learned very little about you, your personal statement has not been successful.

What makes a personal statement unsuccessful?

In general, ignoring the prompt or failing to give adequate thought or preparation to your statement will most certainly make it less effective. Additionally, there are particular types of statements that are written in ways that make them ineffective. You can certainly succeed in your personal statement if you decide using any of the following approaches or subjects. Keep in mind, however, that an unsuccessful statement rarely results from the topic itself, but rather the manner in which the topic is presented.

Do not mistake a list for an essay! The “list” usually repeats information that is found elsewhere in the application. Similarly, some applicants try to be funny or rely heavily on a gimmick such as a poem or an unusually creative essay. These types of personal statements add little to our understanding of your individuality and do not help in a competitive admissions process.

Other applicants choose to write about someone who is important to them - a parent, grandparent, teacher, or friend. This kind of essay can be compelling and very moving. Nevertheless, to be effective, you must tell us how this person influenced your life, your response to that influence, or the ways in which he or she contributed to your development. It is important to remember that the admissions office is considering you for admission, not the other person.

Some students choose to focus their personal statement on an experience from early childhood. In order to have any relevance or to be useful, the information you share must reflect more recent activities or events, and explain the ways in which these experiences have helped you grow, learn, or mature. To recount childhood events without putting them into the context of your current life fails to take advantage of the opportunity afforded you by the personal statement.

Many applicants write about a turning point in their lives. To be successful, however, this type of personal statement must clearly and convincingly show us the way this experience relates to your current goals and aspirations. This is especially important if the experience you are recounting occurred early in your life.

Do I have a better chance of being admitted if I write about unusual circumstances or hardship?

Not necessarily, applicants without significant hardship are just as likely to be admitted as those whose statements include hardship. Unusual circumstances or hardship alone do not make a personal statement more effective. In fact, it is far better to describe how you were able to succeed after confronting significant challenges or obstacles in life rather than to describe a “hardship” or “unusual circumstance” just for the sake of including such an experience. If you do choose to write about difficulties you have faced, focus on insights gained and what you learned or achieved as a result of these circumstances, not on the specific hardship.

What should I discuss as Freshman applicant?

Read the instructions in the application packet, follow the guidelines we suggest, and present yourself in a mature and thoughtful way. It is important to remember that Berkeley receives thousands more applications than there are admission spaces. Our selection process involves comparing your application to those of other highly qualified and competitive students. Since many of you share similar experiences, e.g., served as student body officers, chaired committees, played on sports teams, joined organizations, traveled to foreign countries, and accrued significant work or volunteer experience - the manner in which you present yourself is very important. Distinguish yourself in your personal statement by writing about your unique experience in a way that sets you apart from these other applicants. Your personal statement can be very successful if it elaborates on the insights you gained from an experience, or the ways someone or something has influenced your outlook, activities, commitment, or goals.

What if I’m applying to a professional school or college (such as engineering, chemistry, or architecture)?

If you are applying either as a freshman or as a transfer student to a professional school or college, it is very important that you discuss your intended field of study in your personal statement. Faculty members may review applications for these schools and colleges and they look for evidence of your interest in and commitment to their academic fields.

The College of Engineering, in particular, strongly advises applicants to discuss their reasons for selecting the study of engineering in their statements. You should not only describe your developing interest in the specific major you have chosen, but also the impact of any work-related experiences on your decision.

What should I write about if I am applying to the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)?

If you wish to be considered for participation in EOP (an academic support program for students from low income families in which neither parent is a four year college graduate), your personal statement should discuss your circumstances, the way you have responded to them, and the benefits the program might provide you. We are especially interested in learning about your determination and motivation to succeed academically, even though you may have lacked the kind of support and understanding available in families of second or third generation college bound students.

What if I am applying for a scholarship?

Many scholarships seek information about exceptional achievements that might qualify you for an award. You should elaborate on the academic and extracurricular information in the application that demonstrates your motivation, achievement, leadership, and commitment.

How do I get more information?

Teachers and counselors in your high school or community college are good sources of information about writing your personal statement. You may also want to consult various books or videotapes available in your counseling office, career center, transfer center, or local library. There is also a Personal Statement Web Site developed by UC Berkeley's Office of Academic Preparation and Articulation that you can view. When consulting these materials, however, please keep in mind that different colleges and universities may look for different kinds of information in a personal statement. In addition, many of them have specific topics that they expect you to address. If you are applying to a number of private and public institutions, the same personal statement/admission essay will probably not serve you very well.

Important Directions

Read the instructions in the application packet carefully.

The most common mistake applicants make is to skim the written instructions or to rely on information received from others.

Topics for Freshman Applicants:

- * Reflecting on your family's experiences and personal circumstances, what would you like to tell us that is not already revealed or explained sufficiently in your application?
- * What you do in the classroom defines only a part of who you are. How do you spend your time when you are not in class or studying? Focus on one activity, two at the most, and discuss what you have gained from your involvement.

Additional Topics for Freshman and Transfer Applicants:

The following two topics are relevant for some applicants. Devote some or all of your personal statement to either of these topics, if pertinent to your application.

- * If you indicated in Item 50 that you participated in a special program such as EAOP, MESA, AVID, Puente, Upward Bound, etc., describe your involvement in the program and discuss how you have benefited from the experience.
- * If there are any circumstances not evident in your application that may have affected your academic performance explain the circumstances and discuss how you responded to them.

APPENDIX E

- The Harvard Center for Expository Writing

Shaped by Writing: The Undergraduate Experience

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE FILM

The Origins of Shaped By Writing

In the fall of 1997, with the assistance of my colleagues in the Harvard Expository Writing Program, I embarked on a four-year study of undergraduate writing. Through a combination of surveys, in-depth interviews, and analysis of individual essays, we tracked the writing experiences of 400 students, a quarter of the class of 2001. Our goal was to gain a better understanding of the role writing plays in a college education and to compose as complete a portrait as possible of the college writing experience. While many themes—some predictable and some unexpected—emerged from our study, we were especially surprised by the similar language that so many of the students used to describe their writing experiences. Although they approached college writing with different levels of preparation and through different disciplines, the students we interviewed described a writing intensive education that offered cumulative rewards and ultimately gave them a sense of ownership over their education and their ideas.

As the study progressed, we knew we wanted to find a way to bring the eloquence and passion of these students' voices into a larger pedagogical discussion. It was with this goal in mind that, in the summer of 2002, we invited study participants, along with some of their professors, to speak on camera. Although the eight students we interviewed for the film had graduated, and thus had gained some critical distance from their early writing experiences, they speak about college writing with the same enthusiasm they and their classmates displayed when we interviewed them during their years at Harvard.

In the series of conversations that ultimately became *Shaped By Writing*, these students describe the challenges and rewards of college writing. We hope the film will serve as a starting point for further discussions about the undergraduate writing experience, both among instructors and between instructors and students. For more detailed information on the results of the Harvard Writing Study, please visit our web site at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expas>. If you have any questions or comments about the film, please contact us at wstudy@fas.harvard.edu.

Nancy Sommers, Sosland Director of Expository Writing, Harvard University

First Encounters

In the fall of their freshman year, when we asked our study participants to compare the academic demands of high school with those of college, nearly 80% cited the expectations for reading and thinking on a deeper level as the most significant difference. According to one student, "In high school they gave us information we were supposed to memorize. In college they say to us: Here are some ideas—here are what people think about these ideas—and now we want to know what you think too."

As freshmen, our study participants initially viewed college writing with discomfort and uncertainty. One student described his first-year writing experience this way: "I recognized that my writing was deficient. I was told to take my ideas and explore them in many directions. Sounded good, but it was uncharted territory, and I felt worried and anxious about trying something new." By the end of that first year, confusion and apprehension had given way to surprise, and even exhilaration. Students had discovered that rather than simply allowing them to fulfill an assignment, writing offered them an opportunity to explore ideas they cared about. One student, when asked what advice she would offer to future freshman, put it this way: "Write a lot. If you write a lot, you will learn to write about what matters to you."

"I felt coming in I was already at a disadvantage. I wasn't a very good writer and I had a lot to learn."

Jesse Ebrings

Challenge of Academic Writing

The biggest challenge undergraduates face as they make the transition from high school to college writing is learning how to conduct themselves as academics. They are asked to engage with difficult sources, to argue an original thesis when they feel they don't have the breadth of knowledge to do so, and to integrate their arguments into an already crowded scholarly debate. In a sense, then, the challenge of academic writing for undergraduates is the challenge of fashioning themselves into experts from the position of novices. Asking a freshman to do the work of an expert necessarily invites imitative behavior, but it is the means through which students learn and grow passionate about their work, as well as the means through which they eventually have a chance to write their way into original ideas.

The transformation from the high school model of writing to the college model of writing doesn't happen in one paper or even one course. In fact, the experience of being asked to have something more and deeper to say is often more profound for students than their early essays reflect. Ultimately, the students who are open to instruction, feedback, and experimentation—whether in course selection or paper topics—and to seeing the new demands as challenges rather than as obstacles, gain the most from their early expeditions into academic writing.

"Gradually I learned to pick small parts of a book or small parts of an idea and to really focus on that and say what I meant."

Jim McFadden

Process

When, three weeks into their freshman year, we asked students why papers are assigned to undergraduates, the two most common responses focused on evaluation—"so that professors can evaluate what we know" and because "writing is an important skill in the real world." What was missing from these responses was the sense that students might "get something" other than a grade, job, or career advancement, or that they might "give" something other than showing their faculty they had absorbed the course material. These responses stand in stark contrast to the responses at the end of that year, in which many students described writing as a process through which they learned to identify their own interests

"A lot of times you come up with something that's very different from what you'd expected at the beginning. You may start out writing one paper and end up with another."

Amy Chen

and to discover new layers of their own thoughts. Perhaps the biggest revelation for many undergraduate writers is that they are not finished with an essay once they have completed a first draft. When they are encouraged to revise, students have the opportunity to see their ideas gain depth and complexity.

Feedback

Each year when we asked the students in our study to describe their best writing experiences, a significant majority noted the crucial role faculty feedback played in those experiences. While a handful of students expressed pleasure at receiving praise or recognition from faculty members, many more described experiences in which an instructor challenged their ideas. Through sustained and detailed feedback, instructors encourage students to pose questions that are not easily answered, to take positions that are truly independent, and to recognize how writing can be used as a tool of discovery and learning.

Feedback exposes students to the rigorous demands of a critical audience, and by doing so facilitates their transition from writing that is private and idiosyncratic to writing that is public and shared. When their instructors encourage them to confront opposing viewpoints and sources that don't support their claim, or ask them questions that enlarge their vision, students see that their writing is being taken seriously, and they become more invested in the process. After freshman year, feedback is often the primary form of writing instruction, and, as our study participants confirmed, probably the most significant contribution an instructor can make to the education of a writer.

"(The instructor) basically said, 'I think you can try something harder. Make it more interesting for yourself. Pick the thing that you actually care about...what doesn't make sense and write about that. Have more guts.'"

Mary Bridges

Working With Sources

Undergraduates learn quickly that academic writing as a genre relies on sources, but it often takes them much longer to figure out how to integrate sources into their own arguments. Finding a place to step in among one's sources—to know what to question or qualify—is difficult work, especially when students are writing about unfamiliar topics. Study participants often pointed to close reading assignments as the experiences that helped them understand the connection between sources and their own ideas. When they are encouraged to read closely—to look for clues and test their assumptions—students begin to see how to uncover new layers of meaning, and how to ask their own questions.

In *Shaped by Writing*, Jim McFadden recalls that his struggle with sources led him at first to write "in vast generalities." Indeed, when we interviewed Jim during his freshman year, he expressed concern that he couldn't figure out what there was to say about a source that was different from what the source itself already said. By his senior year, Jim, like many of his classmates, was comfortable questioning sources and looking for connections between them. "I've learned that knowledge isn't put together in one place," he told us. "My sources sit in different sections of the library but come together through me."

"The first thing my head of department told us was 'question everything. When you read an article, what are the author's intentions? What is the author's background? Where do they want to take you? Could you look at those sources, and are they really there? Question everything.'"

Jesse Elzinga

Disciplines

When, at the end of their senior year, we asked study participants how their writing had changed over four years, many expressed satisfaction at having become more versatile in adapting to the demands of different disciplines. As students grow familiar with the methodology and questions unique to a discipline, they learn to move more comfortably within the community of scholars who share their interests. By mastering the expectations of a discipline, a student takes a key step in the transformation from novice to expert.

Students benefit from intensive training within one discipline as well as from learning the conventions and expectations of a range of disciplines. When they are exposed to the writing expectations of various disciplines, students learn that effective writing is an important tool across all disciplines.

"Philosophy writing has such a different style than historical writing and English writing, and learning the different styles is also part of considering the audience and considering what types of questions are appropriate."

Mary Bridges

Ownership

Writing, more than any other feature of academic life, gives students something that is their own—an opportunity to explore the issues that matter most to them and to figure out why they matter. A writing-intensive education allows students to participate in the world of ideas as producers rather than solely as consumers of knowledge. When students like Janina Morrison spoke to us passionately about gaining "ownership" of their ideas, they were, in essence, revealing that they had written themselves into the center of their own educations.

The students in our study taught us that the rewards of college writing are incremental and cumulative; writing doesn't shape a student's education in the space of one course or one semester or even one year. Undergraduates enter college with inchoate interests, and through the ongoing process of asking questions and finding answers, they begin to discover what matters to them most. At the end of four years, students have often written repeatedly on a set of related topics, working back again and again to subjects that capture their interest. The students who come to recognize writing as more than an academic exercise—as a chance to both "get" something meaningful from their education and to "give" something to the academic community—are those who benefit most from a writing-intensive education. Writing becomes the centerpiece of their education, the means through which they transform their personal interests into intellectual passions.

"I think the most important role that writing played in my undergraduate education was giving me ownership over what I was studying. You really take whatever you've been working on and you make it your own, and you think of something interesting within it and it does sort of feel like maybe you're the first person to think that. Or maybe you're the first person to think of it in this particular way, and there's something very exciting about that."

Janina Morrison