



May 2004

University Eligibility Study for the Class of 2003—Fact Sheet

Findings

- The eligibility rate for CSU is 28.8%. This is about the same as it was in 1996.
- The eligibility rate for UC is 14.4%. This is up from 1996, when it was 11.1%.
- Eligibility rates for African American and Latino graduates have increased substantially since the Commission's last study on the class of 1996. The UC eligibility rate for African American graduates rose from 2.8% in 1996 to 6.2% in 2003. The rate for Latinos increased from 3.8% to 6.5%. The CSU eligibility rates for African American and Latinos also increased between 1996 and 2003.
- Although eligibility rates for African American and Latino graduates have shown great improvement, the rates are still much lower than the eligibility rates for Asians and Whites. In 2003, 31.4% of Asian graduates and 16.2% of White graduates were eligible for UC.
- California public high schools graduated 335,700 students in 2003. Of these, an estimated 96,700 were eligible for CSU and 48,400 were eligible for UC.
- The number of graduates eligible for CSU has increased by 27% since the commission's last study on the class of 1996. The number eligible for UC has increased by 70% since 1996. About half of this increase is the result of growth in the number of high school graduates and about half is the result of the increase in the UC eligibility rate.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is meant by the eligibility rate?

- A. The Eligibility Rate is the number of public high school graduates who meet the minimum entrance requirements of CSU and UC divided by the total number of graduates from public comprehensive high schools, public continuation high schools and public alternative schools.

Q. Why do the figures for the number of high school graduates in the eligibility study report differ from figures published elsewhere?

- A. The count of graduates is the total number of graduates from public comprehensive high schools, public continuation high schools, and public alternative schools. Figures published elsewhere may include graduates of private schools, or graduates of public schools that are outside the scope of the eligibility study. These include special schools, county community schools, California Youth Authority facilities, and juvenile court schools.

Q. Do the figures include charter schools?

- A. Most charter schools are classified as comprehensive high schools by the California Department of Education. Graduates of these schools are included in the calculation of eligibility rates.

Q. What is the master plan?

- A. The *Master Plan for Higher Education in California* was published by the California Department of Education in 1960. The plan established the educational missions of the Community College system, the California State University, and the University of California and established the degree levels of programs that each system should offer.

The plan recommended that the California State University select its freshmen from the top third of California public high school graduates and the University of California select its freshmen from the top eighth of California public high school graduates.

Q. Do the figures include private schools?

- A. The eligibility rates are for public schools only. One of the main purposes of the study is to compare eligibility rates with recommendations in the Master Plan, which are expressed in terms of public school graduates.

Q. Have eligibility requirements changed since your last study for the class of 1996?

- A. UC added a requirement for one year of visual and performing arts. UC also added the requirement that all students must achieve a qualifying score in the SAT I and SAT II. CSU increased its requirements for History and Laboratory Science.

Q. UC seems to have more stringent requirements than in 1996. Why has the eligibility rate for UC increased while the eligibility rate for CSU stayed about the same?

- A. The Commission cannot answer that question without a more detailed analysis of the data. One possibility is that an increasing proportion of the students who completed the *a–g* courses and so are eligible for CSU also took the SAT I and SAT II and got scores that qualified them for UC.

Q. Why does the Commission conduct eligibility studies?

- A. For the benefit of state policymakers as they strive to ensure consistency with the Master Plan and provide equitable access for all students.

CSU and UC use the results to adjust their admission requirements to make them consistent with the Master Plan recommendations.

Q. How often does the Commission conduct eligibility studies?

- A. Every 3–8 years. The commission did studies in 1975, 1983, 1986, 1990, and 1996. The Commission's predecessor, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education, did a study in 1966, and the Master Plan Survey Team did a study in 1961.

The Committee of the Restudy of the Needs of California in Higher Education conducted a study in 1955, before the Master Plan was written.

Q. Is there an eligibility study for the community colleges?

- A. State law requires that the community colleges admit all California residents who are 18 years of age or older and can benefit from instruction. Virtually all high school graduates are eligible for admission to community colleges, so there is no need for an eligibility study.

Q. Does the 2003 study differ from past eligibility studies?

- A. The sampling method is different. In past eligibility studies, every high school in the state was contacted and a sample of transcripts was collected from each school. In the 2003 study, a sample of schools was selected and all transcripts from the selected schools were reviewed.

A different sampling method was used in the 2003 study. Transcripts were collected electronically, so it was more efficient to take all transcripts from a particular school once arrangements for data transmission had been made.

Q. Are the results of the 2003 study comparable with those of past studies?

- A. The eligibility rates are defined the same way as in past studies so it is valid to compare the results.

Q. How can transcripts collected from a sample of 48 schools give results that are representative of all California high schools?

- A. Great care was taken to ensure that the schools in the sample were representative of all California high schools. The sampled schools cover the range of several factors related to school performance and university-going.

The distribution of Academic Performance Index (API) for the schools sampled closely matches the distribution for all California public high schools. The distribution of other factors, such as recent university entry rates and the percentage of students taking the SAT is also a close match.

Q. Which schools were in the sample?

- A. When the schools were selected, the Commission, CSU, and UC agreed that they would not be identified in the study.

Q. What is a confidence interval?

- A. The eligibility rates are estimates based on review of a sample of transcripts. The true value is unknown and cannot be determined unless every transcript from the graduating class is reviewed. However, the results can be used to estimate a confidence range, or margin of error, for the estimated value. This is a standard statistical procedure and is used when presenting the results of opinion polls or any study based on a sample.

Q. What else can the Commission do with the data collected from schools?

- A. The Commission can look at the way that eligibility rates vary from school to school. It will look at the factors that are related to eligibility rates and see if they affect disadvantaged students in the same way they affect rates for other groups.

The Commission can also examine the reasons why students do not meet the eligibility requirements. For example, there might be many students with good grade point averages who did not qualify because they did not take all of the *a–g* requirements, or did not take the SAT.

Q. How do recent budget cuts affect eligibility and admission?

- A. Students become eligible by the courses and tests they take at high school, so the universities' budgets do not affect who is or is not eligible.

Budgets affect the number of students who can be admitted. UC and CSU have long-standing policies of admitting all eligible applicants, although not necessarily to the applicant's first choice of campus or program.

This year, both segments have had to deny admission to some eligible applicants. These applicants will be offered places in programs where they are guaranteed admission as transfer students, provided they first complete a specified program at a community college.

Study procedure

The Commission contacted a sample of high schools and requested transcripts for their 2003 graduation class. Test scores for these graduates were obtained from the College Board and ACT. Approximately 16,000 transcripts were collected from 48 high schools.

Each transcript was then reviewed by university admission staff to see if the pattern of courses, grades, and test scores would make the graduate eligible for admission. The results of this review of a sample of transcripts were used to estimate statewide eligibility rates for the two university systems.