



Update on the Commission's University Eligibility Study for the Class of 2007

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The Commission is preparing to collect data for the 2007 University Eligibility Study. This study is the latest in a series of studies that began in 1966 to estimate the percentage of California public high school graduates who meet the admission requirements of the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). CEC §66903 (q) directs the Commission to conduct eligibility studies. The most recent eligibility study was for the high school graduating class of 2003.

Eligibility studies are conducted by collecting a sample of transcripts from high schools throughout the State. The transcripts are reviewed by university staff to compare the courses, grades, and test scores of the sampled students with admission requirements. Statewide eligibility rates are estimated from this sample.

A critical issue in eligibility studies is the method used to select the schools in the study. The number of schools in the study is limited by the availability of university staff to contact schools, make arrangements for data transmission, and review transcript data. The sample of schools must be selected in a way that gives the most accurate estimates of eligibility rates possible given this limitation. In addition, the sample must be representative of the full range of California public high schools.

Sampling plan

Several steps must be completed before collecting data from schools. Preparing a sampling plan is one of the most important. Since February, Commission staff and the Commission's Eligibility Study Advisory Committee have been working with a statistical consultant to develop a this plan. The main requirements of the plan are as follows:

- The sample should include enough schools for statewide eligibility rates to be estimated with an expected margin of error of 2% or less.
- The sample must be drawn from schools that maintain their student records with systems that can export data in a form that can be read by a system used by UC's admissions office. Currently, UC's system can accept data from eight types of student record systems. About 1,200 of the 1,900 comprehensive, continuation, and alternative high schools in California use one of these systems. These schools accounted for 67% of eleventh grade enrollment in 2005.
- Schools should be selected so that the sample covers the full range of school performance and other factors related to university eligibility.
- Schools should be selected so that the ethnic composition of the selected schools will allow eligibility rates for ethnic groups to be estimated with a margin of error similar to or lower than that reported in the 2003 eligibility study. This is particularly important for the Asian/Pacific Islander ethnic group which had an unacceptably large margin of error in the 2003 study.

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- The sampling plan should be based on realistic assumptions regarding the response rate. Experience with previous eligibility studies suggests that about 90% of the schools selected will agree to participate in the study.

In early May, the consultant presented his recommended sampling plan. California public high schools will be divided into 13 categories, or strata, based on their type, historical college-going rate, ethnic composition, and Academic Performance Index. Schools will be stratified in this way to ensure that the sample covers the range of school performance and that the graduates in any given ethnic group include graduates from a wide range of schools.

After stratification, a sample of 205 schools will be drawn, with a specified number of schools drawn from each stratum. Initially, 185 of these schools will be contacted. Twenty will be held in reserve and contacted later if the initial response is not up to expectations.

The Advisory Committee concurred with the sampling plan and on May 11, 2007, staff at the Survey Research Center at UC Berkeley drew the sample. The sampling procedure was carried out under the supervision of staff from the Commission and the University of California Office of the President.

Next steps

Commission staff is preparing a letter announcing the study that will be sent to district superintendents. This letter will be signed jointly by the Commission's Executive Director and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In August, the Commission will contact schools and UC staff will begin making arrangements to transmit data. Data collection will start in September, when results are available for students qualifying as 2007 graduates by taking the California High School Exit Examination through the summer session.

Because the sample has to be drawn from schools using student record systems that are compatible with UC's data system, it is important to verify that these schools are similar to schools using other student record systems. The consultant will conduct an analysis comparing the sample with the entire population of California public high schools and, if needed, will develop a procedure to adjust for any differences so that the results give an accurate estimate of statewide eligibility rates.

Report completion

Based on the work plan agreed to by the Commission, CSU and UC, and the work completed so far, the final study report is on track for completion in December 2008.