

The University of California: A National Model for Providing Quality Educational Opportunity to Low-Income Students

The University of California educates approximately 185,000 undergraduates and 50,000 graduate students across its ten campuses. One campus, UCSF, educates only graduate students in the health sciences. UC serves as a model for the nation's colleges and universities in *combining* access, affordability, and positive student outcomes. Many public institutions serve large numbers of first-generation-college and low-income students. Similarly, many nationally ranked private and public institutions provide quality instruction, high-value degrees, and excellent graduation and time to degree rates. **But no other institution combines world-class quality with such a large and diverse student body.** This is UC's unique contribution to California and to higher education nationally.

Access to Higher Education for a Socio-Economically Diverse Student Body

UC leads the nation's research universities in the socio-economic diversity of its undergraduate student body:

- More than 40% of UC undergraduates come from low-income families (family income less than \$50K).
- 42% of all UC undergraduates receive Pell grants. This is a far higher percentage than any other major research university, either public (average = 22%) or private (average = 15%). Four UC campuses *each* enroll more Pell Grant students than the entire Ivy League combined.
- 46% of UC's entering California residents come from families where neither parent graduated from college and 25% come from families where English is not the primary language spoken.
- Nearly 30% of UC's entering students transfer from California community colleges.
- Approximately 25% of undergraduates are from racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education (African American, Chicano/Latino, Native American).
- Three of UC's nine undergraduate campuses qualify as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). UC Santa Barbara, currently 24.8% Hispanic, is expected to qualify next year and will be the first HSI within the prestigious American Association of Universities (AAU).

UC's leadership in this area reflects not simply the rich diversity of California, but also a strong institutional commitment that drives UC policy in the areas of outreach, admissions, and student financial support:

- Both the University of California system and our individual campuses operate robust outreach and academic preparation programs for low-income, disadvantaged students in California high schools and community colleges. These programs reach nearly 100,000 students annually in 1,100 public K-12 schools and are funded by more than \$12 million in UC funds as well as an equivalent level of state funding. Services provided include college awareness and readiness,

advising, academic preparation (including in-depth instruction in math, science, and English), and partnership programs with students, parents, teachers, and community organizations.

- Socioeconomic factors are weighted heavily in our admissions criteria and each campus admits students based on an individualized holistic review that evaluates all academic criteria *in the context of the student's personal and educational circumstances*—allowing students from under-resourced schools to compete on a more even playing field with those who have access to greater socioeconomic and academic advantages.
- As a matter of both state and institutional policy, UC evaluates undocumented students according to the same admissions criteria as all other applicants. Most undocumented students from California high schools are eligible for in-state tuition and can receive state and institutional financial aid on par with documented students.

New University and Campus Initiatives:

- **Additional Support Services for Undocumented Students.** President Napolitano has allocated \$5 million in seed funding to enhance support services for undocumented UC students—who experience unique problems in housing, employment and other areas and often have fewer family resources to draw on—and to provide access to financial aid that seeks to place them on equal footing with their documented peers.
- **Expansion of Campus Outreach to Schools with Low College-Going Rates.** *Achieve UC* is a systemwide program that sends University leaders, including the President and all ten campus chancellors, to disadvantaged high schools for a full day of programming designed to encourage students to prepare for and apply to UC. Several campuses have recently increased efforts in this area. For example, UC San Diego recently announced the UniversityLink program that provides priority admission and other support to transfer students from local community colleges with historically low transfer rates.

Commitment to Affordability

Like most public universities in the nation, UC has suffered significant reductions in state support for higher education that have led to tuition increases. However, throughout the serious budget challenges in California, the University has maintained its commitment to tuition and financial aid policies that protect low- and middle-income students:

- Virtually all of UC's undergraduate financial aid is awarded based on need, and UC commits to providing financial aid packages that allow California undergraduates from every income level to enroll, to succeed, and to graduate.
- As a matter of institutional policy, UC continues to return approximately one-third of all new tuition revenues to need-based financial aid—one of the most progressive student aid policies in the nation. This policy protects most financially needy students from the impacts of tuition increases.

- On average, UC undergraduates receive more gift aid than undergraduates at any other public AAU university in the country. UC's "Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan" extends gift aid into the middle class, with a commitment that aid-eligible students from families making up to \$80,000 annually will pay *no tuition*.

As a result of this institutional commitment, UC remains very affordable for students from low-income backgrounds:

- More than half of UC undergraduates receive grants and scholarships equivalent to the full amount of tuition and thus pay no *net* tuition.
- Although the "sticker price" for tuition has increased in response to withdrawal of state support, the *net cost of attendance* for families earning less than \$100,000 has remained steady since 2004-05.
- Roughly half of UC undergraduates graduate with no loan indebtedness. For those who borrow, the average debt is \$19,751—well below the national average of around \$26,000.

New University and Campus Initiatives:

- **New Tuition Policy.** In November, President Napolitano announced a one-year freeze on tuition increases while the University considers a new, long-term approach to tuition designed to minimize both the amount and the volatility of tuition increases.
- **Campus Expansion of Aid for Middle-Class Students.** Many campuses supplement UC institutional financial aid with additional campus funds. Mindful that middle-income students may be most affected by tuition increases that are covered by financial aid for low-income students and that students from high-income families can afford, UC Berkeley has launched a drive to raise private funds specifically directed to middle-income families. UC's efforts will operate in tandem with California's new Middle Class Scholarship program, designed to provide additional grant aid for students with family income up to \$150,000.

Strong Record of Student Success

UC's graduation and time-to-degree rates for all students, including the very large proportions of low-income and first-generation college students, are far better than national averages for public institutions.

- Average four- and six-year graduation rates for freshman entrants are currently at 60% and 83%, respectively, and continue to improve. Our most well-established campuses have graduation rates equivalent to the national leaders among public institutions (Michigan and Virginia)—while enrolling a far greater proportion of low-income and first-generation college students.
- A third of all undergraduate degrees awarded by UC are in STEM fields, compared to about a quarter at public and private AAU institutions.

- An estimated 26% of UC students who graduated with bachelor's degrees in 2004-05 went on to graduate school within four years.
- UC campuses routinely lead the nation on measures related to the public service of their graduates. Three of the top ten colleges in sending volunteers to the Peace Corps are UC campuses (including #1 UC Berkeley) and six UC campuses rank in the top 20. UC captured three of the top five spots in the 2013 rankings of the *Washington Monthly*, which evaluates national universities on the service they and their graduates provide the nation.

New University and Campus Initiatives:

- President Napolitano announced new incentives for non-traditional undergraduates to pursue graduate study, including a \$5 million augmentation to fellowship programs for students who intend to pursue diversity-related research and those who enter UC after graduating from Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- UC Riverside's Student Success Initiative employs multiple strategies (including first-year learning communities, supplemental courses, and summer bridge programs) to substantially increase retention and graduation rates for at-risk students. Retention rates have increased by 6-8% for cohorts involved in the program and UC Riverside has *essentially eliminated the completion gap between underrepresented and other students*.

We Can Do More

Although UC has already taken significant steps to address access, affordability, and academic success for low-income and first-generation college students, there is more work to do to further these goals. Accordingly, in 2014, UC will take the following steps:

- President Napolitano is committing to new efforts to enhance the flow of community college students into UC, as well as to improve the academic success of enrolled transfers. These efforts will include a major overhaul of the existing electronic system that provides information on preparation and transfer pathways across all public higher education institutions in California, as well as increased transfer opportunities in community colleges that enroll large numbers of underrepresented and low-income students but send relatively few of these students on to UC.
- As part of a joint effort to rejuvenate the promise of college access and opportunity expressed in the California Master Plan for Higher Education, President Napolitano is committing to working jointly with the heads of the California State University and California Community College systems to increase college awareness and opportunity. Elements of this plan will include enhanced public outreach regarding the value of higher education and the availability of financial aid, a joint communication from the heads of the three systems to every California seventh grader, and expanded outreach through high school.
- A large number of California high school students demonstrate their ability to perform college-level work through their outcomes on the PSAT test. And yet, a substantial percentage of these students, particularly minority students, do not then take the recommended courses to prepare them for college. President Napolitano is committing to partnering with the College Board in a

variety of ways to help address this gap, including through broad-based mailings, targeted outreach to individual students, and concentrated visits to high schools to promote college readiness.

- Each of the nine UC undergraduate campuses is committing to expanding outreach to low-income students in high schools and community colleges in their communities and to enhancing financial and academic support for these students once enrolled. Examples of these commitments include:
 - UC Berkeley is committing to expand its outreach programs for low-income, first-generation-college students. The Destination College Advising Corps will be expanded to place additional college counselors in under-resourced high schools. The campus will also expand early college awareness efforts and the Transfer Alliance Project, which provides intensive one-on-one advising, academic enrichment opportunities and application assistance to prospective transfer students.
 - UC Davis is committing to expanding its Special Transitional Enrichment Program (STEP), which provides first-generation, low-income freshman students with transitional classes and skills development activities to enhance their capacity in meeting academic goals. This year, 50 additional students will participate and ultimately the program will have capacity for every eligible student. STEP begins with a four-week summer residential program and continues through students' first two years on campus.
 - UC Merced is committing to supporting student success in multiple arenas, including increasing internship and employment opportunities for low-income students, expanding student services for former foster youth and for undocumented students, and enhancing financial literacy and money-management skills particularly for students identified as potentially at risk for default on student loans.
 - UC San Diego is committing to a scholarship program to cover the full cost of attendance for 100 very low-income students from the San Diego area. The campus will also expand outreach services to improve college pathways for disadvantaged students in K-14 STEM programs and expand service learning opportunities for low-income undergraduates.