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The University of California Changes the Way It Evaluates Students

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accomplishments will be assessed as well as the educational contexts in which they achieved them.

The University of California announced some policy and admission requirement changes for students applying next year and beyond. These modifications should not change the way our students prepare for college. All college admissions offices are looking for bright and diverse students. Students should work hard in school and actively explore and demonstrate their interests both in and outside of the school environment. Although academic strength is important, every college in the country tries each year to build a well-rounded freshman class that includes budding scientists, talented musicians and athletes, community-minded individuals as well as students hailing from all parts of the nation and the world.

Combined with some old misconceptions that persist around high school corridors, the changes to UC admission requirements can be somewhat confusing. In this article I will clarify the updated UC admission requirements and emphasize how they affect students in our community.

Students Who Are Entitled

to Comprehensive Review

All California high school seniors who fulfill 3 basic requirements will be entitled to a comprehensive review of their applications at each UC campus to which they apply. These requirements are:

- Complete 15 UC-required college-preparatory courses (the "a - g" courses) with 11 of these completed prior to the start of 12th grade. Courses taken in summer after junior year will be considered as part of the application.
- Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or better (based on a fully weighted academic GPA in these courses)
- Submit scores from the ACT with Writing or the SAT Reasoning Test

In essence this policy means that all students who meet these 3 eligibility requirements will have their applications reviewed comprehensively by the UC campuses to which they apply and these students will compete with everyone else for available seats. A comprehensive review means that students' academic and personal

Students Who Receive

Guaranteed Admission

Among these applicants two groups of students will be guaranteed admission. Students who are in the top 9 percent of their graduating class or in the top 9 percent of all high school graduates (based on a fully weighted academic GPA) will be guaranteed a place at one of the UC campuses, although not specifically to their first choice school. This is a substantial change in guaranteed admissions (from the original 4 percent) and allows students in all high schools to focus on learning and doing well. It is intended to level the playing field and give more California students a greater opportunity to receive an offer of admission to a UC campus.

UC Drops SAT Subject

Test Requirement

The UC used to require scores from the SAT or ACT as well as two SAT Subject Tests from different disciplines. The SAT Subject Tests are intensive one hour exams that test a student's proficiency in a specific content area, such as history, biology or mathematics. The UC still requires students to take the SAT or ACT with Writing, but it has eliminated the Subject Test requirement starting with students applying for fall 2012 admission.

Although our students are not required to take and submit scores from SAT Subject Tests, they can still choose to submit Subject Test scores for consideration as part of the application. It is important to know that the UC may still recommend one or more Subject Tests for certain majors. For example, students who want to major in engineering may need to take the SAT Subject Test in math to demonstrate proficiency. Those who apply should carefully check requirements and recommendations for each major.

Students in our community often take two or even three SAT Subject Tests in different disciplines. This prepares them for competitive college admissions to both the UC and many other selective universities. Although some colleges have reduced or eliminated Subject Test requirements, many selective schools still require or strongly recommend them. For example, Georgetown University strongly recommends three Subject Tests and MIT requires two.

One reason the UC system eliminated the SAT Subject Test requirement is because studies indicate that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to take SAT Subject Tests. The UC decided not to hamper applications from these students. That does not change the fact that SAT Subject Test scores give schools another objective way to make academic assessments. If a student attends a high school where relevant coursework is available (e.g. AP and honors classes in subject areas covered by SAT Subject tests) and the student has the resources (e.g., time, motivation, money) to prepare for and take the exams, good scores will add value to the college application.

For more detailed information on undergraduate admission requirements visit <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/admissions> and check under freshman admission.

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