

California students feel UC admission squeeze

Most campuses take a lesser number of state students even as more get in from elsewhere.

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Los Angeles Times
April 18, 2014, 6:43 p.m.

California high school seniors faced a tougher time winning a freshman spot at most of the UC campuses for the fall, with their chances at [UCLA](#) and [UC Berkeley](#) now fewer than one in five, according to a report released Friday.

Six of UC's nine undergraduate campuses accepted a smaller number of California students than last year even though the number of applicants rose. Competition was fiercest at UCLA, where only 16.3% of state students were admitted, down from 17.4% last year, and at UC Berkeley, where 18.8% were accepted, compared with 21.4% last year.

Increased competition is part of a national trend this year at the most elite level of higher education. Even though the population of American high school graduates dropped a bit, students are applying to more colleges, and schools are recruiting more overseas, especially in Asia. In the most extreme example, [Stanford University](#) accepted only 5% of applicants; many other highly selective campuses reported record low rates.

In a controversial move, UC substantially increased the number of students from outside California who were offered admission to at least one campus. Those admitted from other states rose 8.9% from last year, to 12,840, and those from other countries were up 17.6%, to 12,905, according to the new statistics.

UC has been trying to enroll more non-Californians for the extra \$23,000 a year those students pay in addition to regular UC tuition. Officials said they expect that 13% of all undergraduates will be from outside California in the fall, up from 12% this year and just 5% four years ago.

Officials said, however, that no qualified Californian was displaced by an out-of-stater and that all in-state students who met UC eligibility requirements would be offered a spot somewhere in the system, with UC Merced a possibility for those shut out of all other campuses. In general, students must rank in the academic top 9% of their high school class or in the top 9% statewide to be admitted to the system.

For the first time, the number of Latinos from California offered freshman admission to UC was larger than that for whites. Reflecting demographic trends, 28.8% of those admitted to at least one UC campus were Latino, compared with 26.8% white. At 36.2%, Asian Americans again made up the largest ethnic group among admitted students from California. Blacks from California were just 4.2%, a number that officials said was disturbingly low.

"It remains a difficult issue for the university," said Stephen Handel, UC's associate vice president for undergraduate admissions. "We certainly would like to see more African Americans enrolling at the University of California."

UCLA admitted 406 black students from California, nine more than last year, representing 4.4% of the accepted pool. Youlonda Copeland-Morgan, UCLA's associate vice chancellor for enrollment management, said that even though applications from black students increased by about 5% this year, the campus must increase recruiting to better compete with top universities that offer students more financial aid.

State law forbids the use of racial affirmative action in public university admissions.

Tyra Monette, a senior at Wilson High School in Long Beach, said she has committed to UCLA because of its strong psychology program and proximity to home. But she was aware of the paucity of other black students while touring the Westwood campus Friday during a weekend event for African Americans who had been admitted.

"It seemed like the only people who were black were in the tour group," said Tyra, 17. But, she said: "I'm used to being in a small minority at my high school, and I feel like we can come together and support each other socially and academically."

UCLA received the most applications of any university in the nation – 86,521. The school accepted just 18.2%, including those from out of state. UC Berkeley received 73,771 and took 17.3%.

(UCLA and UC Berkeley, which already enroll the most non-Californians in UC, were the only campuses to admit fewer of them for the fall.)

The share of California applicants offered a space on at least one of UC's nine undergraduate campuses was 61.2%, compared with 60.6% last year. That meant 61,120 of the 99,890 state students were admitted to the UC system for the upcoming fall term. Overall, the number of in-state applicants increased by 758, or less than 1% from last year.

UC San Diego was the third-most competitive of the nine, with a 33.4% overall admissions rate. Next was Irvine, at 35.4%; Santa Barbara, 36.1%; Davis, 40.6%; Riverside, 56.7%; Santa Cruz, 56.9%; and Merced, 64%. Only the Davis, Riverside and Santa Cruz campuses offered admission to more Californians than last year, and their overall admission rates, including out-of-staters, rose.

[UC Davis](#) said it plans to grow over the next few years, and UC Santa Cruz said it had room because of a smaller-than-expected freshman class this year.

Across the system, schools have been holding events to persuade accepted students to enroll. At UCLA on Friday, nearly 200 black students attended the campus' "Black by Popular Demand" admissions weekend, sponsored by the Afrikan Student Union. Among other events, prospective students joined peers from other ethnic groups for a picnic and were shown locations of historic significance, such as Janss Steps, where in 1965 [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), delivered a speech about race relations.

Some African Americans have said they feel isolated and uncomfortable because of their small numbers at UCLA. Online videos detailing their complaints were widely viewed across the country this year.

Many of the students said joining a diverse student body that included other black students was an important part of their decision-making.

Bakare Awakoaiye, a senior at Bishop O'Dowd High School in Oakland, was also admitted to UC Davis, USC, Johns Hopkins and Howard universities.

He liked what he saw at UCLA, but he, too, is looking for an inviting campus where he will fit in.

"I think it's really important to be a part of a community and work in a community where people look like us," said Bakare, 17. "That's why I'm also really thinking about Howard too. But I'm really impressed with the people here."

Students on average applied to four UC campuses. Accepted students have until May 1 to decide whether to attend, and campuses then will offer spots to some on waiting lists.