

Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on  
Race, Ethnicity and Diversity

Discussion Paper

**California at a Crossroads:  
Confronting the Looming  
Threat to Achievement, Access  
and Equity at the University of  
California and Beyond**

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*Our purpose with this short document is to spark discussion among higher education leaders and policymakers in California. While we cite a number of supporting studies, we acknowledge that more research is needed. We hope this document will serve as an impetus for rigorous research, sustained policy discussion, and detailed design of implementation options. And we hope all of this can occur expeditiously.*

A looming crisis in K-12 and higher education threatens the future of California. Educational achievement, attainment and equity in the Golden State, at one time the envy of the world, have been in decline for too long. While California has become more diverse, the longstanding K-12 achievement gaps may actually be widening. Moreover, access to the University of California (UC) for many racial

and ethnic minorities and for graduates of disadvantaged high schools (defined by socioeconomic status, geography and other indicators) continue to be discouragingly low.

Unless steps are taken soon to reverse these trends, California's social and economic well-being will be in jeopardy. This paper outlines an agenda to reform California higher education and retool UC admissions policy. Some recommendations can be adopted immediately, while others involve fundamentally restructuring the relationship among the three segments of California public higher education under the Master Plan. Our short-term recommendations focus on UC policy because, as UC faculty and administrators, this is what we know the most about. We look forward to working with our CSU colleagues regarding parallel reforms that may garner support within the CSU system.

**I. A Long-Term Commitment  
to Improving Baccalaureate  
Access and Attainment**

For the reasons described below, we recommend the following:

- **For the good of California, more students should go directly from high school to four-year universities. The percentage of public high school graduates UC admits as freshmen should be expanded above the one-eighth prescribed by the Master Plan, and CSU's eligibility pool should likewise be expanded beyond the top one-third of high school graduates.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Numerous individuals and stakeholders have raised the issue of expanding UC/CSU eligibility over the years, which speaks both to the importance of the idea and the formidable challenge in making this policy reform a reality. See e.g., California Commission for the Review of the Master Plan, *Issue Paper #1*, in ISSUE PAPERS—THE MASTER PLAN RENEWED pp. 1-6 (Aug. 1987); Patrick M. Callan, *California's Master Plan for Higher Education: Some Second Thoughts for the Fourth Decade*, in THE OECD, THE MASTER PLAN AND THE CALIFORNIA DREAM: A BERKELEY CONVERSATION 79, 81 (Sheldon Rothblatt ed., 1992); Bruce D. Hamlett, *Access to California Higher Education: The Promise and the Performance*, in EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION 265, 270-71 (Patricia Gándara et al. eds., 2006).

## How California Ranks Compared to Other States on Measures of College-Going and Degree Completion<sup>2</sup>

Percentage of high school seniors who enroll in 4-year colleges	49th
Percentage of 18-29 year olds who enroll at 4-year colleges	48th
Percentage of college-age population earning BA degrees	46th
Percentage of college-age population earning BA degrees in science and engineering	38th

A highly educated citizenry is more critical than ever to the health of California, as jobs requiring B.A. degrees and advanced degrees are growing at a faster rate than the job market overall. A recent study by the UC Berkeley Survey Research Center estimated that for every new dollar California invests in getting more students in and through college, the state would receive a net return on investment of three dollars.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) recently found that California's baccalaureate production appears low relative to labor market demand.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, despite this growing need that is integral to a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, California's ranking in baccalaureate production has declined since

<sup>2</sup> The first statistic is from the College Board's state-by-state data on 2005 high school seniors, available at <http://www.collegeboard.com/highered/res/hel/hel.html>; The second third and fourth statistics are from U.S. Census, IPEDS, and NCES data for 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Brady et al., Return on Investment: Educational Choices and Demographic Change in California's Future (Nov. 2005), available at [http://www.collegecampaign.org/Return\\_On\\_Investment\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.collegecampaign.org/Return_On_Investment_Final_Report.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> California Postsecondary Education Commission, California Baccalaureate Production and Labor Market Demand p.1 (June 2005), available at <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FactSheets/FactSheet2005/FS05-06.pdf>. This report also notes that a complete picture of labor market needs cannot be made without examining the education levels of workers moving in and out of California. This point is true enough, but we would add the caveat that if workers who attended K-12 schools in California must move out of this state or get locked into low paying jobs because their lack of higher education attainment does not allow them to compete for well-paying jobs in their home state, such a scenario would reflect not only market forces, but also public policy choices about investment in higher education.

the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> The previous table indicates that California ranks near the bottom of all the states on several key measures of B.A. degree access and attainment. A recent UCLA study found that only Mississippi sends a smaller proportion of its high school seniors directly on to four-year colleges.<sup>6</sup> The same study found that high school seniors are only half as likely to enroll in 4-year colleges in California (23%) compared to New York (46%) or Massachusetts (47%).

California's low baccalaureate production primary involves policy choices about *public* higher education, as UC and CSU in combination award three-quarters of all bachelor's degrees in the state.<sup>7</sup> The sobering statistics above are an unintended and unforeseen legacy of California's 1960 Master Plan, which prescribes that UC draw from the top one-eighth of the state's high school graduates and that CSU draw from the top one-third. And the chart below shows that the percentages who actually enroll as freshmen at UC and CSU are significantly lower.

## 2005 College-Going Rates of High School Graduates in California<sup>8</sup> (No. Freshmen/No. H.S. Graduates)

University of California (UC)	6.0%
California State University (CSU)	9.2%
California Community College (CCC)	24.8%

The Master Plan envisioned that the California Community College system should be open to

<sup>5</sup> Gerald C. Hayward, Ensuring Access with Quality to California's Community Colleges p. 11 (May 2004), available at <http://www.highereducation.org/reports/hewlett/Hewlett3.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> John Rodgers et al., California Educational Opportunity Report 2006 p.3 (March 2006), available at <http://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/eor06/fullreport/pdf/EOR-2006.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> CPEC, California Baccalaureate Production and Labor Market Demand, *supra* note 4, at 2.

<sup>8</sup> California Postsecondary Education Commission, College-Going Rates of California High School Graduates: Statewide and Local Figures (Draft, Sept. 2006), available at [http://www.cpec.ca.gov/Agendas/Agenda0609/Tab\\_07.pdf](http://www.cpec.ca.gov/Agendas/Agenda0609/Tab_07.pdf). These draft figures for UC appear a bit low for unknown reasons -- typically UCOP reports a UC participation rate of 7.5% -- but we rely on this chart to provide a broad picture of the three segments of California higher education.

all, and that those who successfully complete coursework could transfer to UC or CSU. While this may have been an egalitarian notion relative to the higher education attainment levels of the 1960s, subsequent research indicates that such a policy resulted in “diverted dreams” for too many young people.<sup>9</sup> Policies like the Master Plan that limit direct access to four-year universities and rely more heavily on the community college transfer route end up with fewer students successfully earning B.A. degrees.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, while the Master Plan was a success in a number of respects, the Plan’s UC and CSU eligibility restrictions are now outdated and serve to artificially and unnecessarily depress opportunities for Californians to earn a college degree. As one example, only 2.8% of African American high school graduates entered UC as freshmen in 2005, which is a lower college-going rate than ten or twenty years ago.<sup>11</sup>

Importantly, the Master Plan’s “zero-sum” UC eligibility construct used by UC (and CSU) to implement the Master Plan’s access limitations also, unbeknownst to most, precludes underrepresented minorities from making substantial gains in UC eligibility rates absent corresponding declines in eligibility rates for

whites and Asian Americans.<sup>12</sup> Limits on UC enrollment also restrict opportunities for low-income and first-generation college students, English learners, those from rural backgrounds, and so on.

Granted, the expansion of UC and CSU eligibility pools involves significant political and fiscal challenges for California, though the comparative data suggest that other states have been able to meet such challenges. The bottom line is that California’s current Master Plan model represents an increasingly poor tradeoff of short-term and long-term economic and social consequences. An under-educated and non-representative workforce, especially among its leaders, will dampen economic growth in California<sup>13</sup> and will contribute to burgeoning social challenges (e.g., eroding tax base, greater need for social services, social disharmony).<sup>14</sup>

## II. Immediate Proposals for Redesigning UC Admissions to Enhance Excellence and Equity

Eligibility and admission to UC can be remade into a more enlightened set of policies that better fulfill UC’s mission of serving all Californians. In part, that means apportioning the privilege of a UC education in a way that accounts for a wide range of achievements and personal characteristics, and that shuns, to the extent possible, the use of apportioning tools that are known to disadvantage large segments of the population absent strong educational justification. Accordingly, we make the following recommendations:

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<sup>9</sup> STEVEN BRINT & JEROME KARABEL, *THE DIVERTED DREAM* pp. 87-88 (Oxford U. Press, 1989) (“[T]he master plan in fact tightened and further institutionalized the three-tiered tracking structure already long in place in California’s public higher education...The decision to expand the bottom track of the system far more rapidly than its upper two tiers was by no means inevitable. Instead, it was a policy choice based in part on a desire to insulate the University of California from those demanding access and in part on the substantially lower cost of educating freshman and sophomores in junior colleges. The effect of the institutionalization of the three-tiered structure, though not its intent, was to create a system of tracking in public higher education closely linked to students’ social origins.”).

<sup>10</sup> Gary Orfield & Faith G. Paul, *State Higher Education Systems and College Completion -- Final Report to the Ford Foundation* (1992). See also David Karen & Kevin J. Dougherty, *Necessary but not Sufficient: Higher Education as a Strategy of Social Mobility*, in *HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE COLOR LINE* 33, 37 (Gary Orfield et al. eds., 2005) (other things being equal, community college entrants are less likely to earn B.A. degrees than students of comparable backgrounds and aspirations who enter four-year colleges).

<sup>11</sup> CPEC, *College-Going Rates*, *supra* note 8.

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<sup>12</sup> John Aubrey Douglass, *Anatomy of Conflict: The Making and Unmaking of Affirmative Action at the University of California*, in *COLOR LINES* 118, 137 (John David Skrentny ed., 2001).

<sup>13</sup> John Aubrey Douglass, *Investment Patterns in California Higher Education and Policy Options for a Possible Future* p.4 (May 2002), CSHE Research Paper 5.02, available at <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROP.JD.CalFuture.5.02.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Brady et al., *supra* note 3.

- **The ideal should be for UC campuses to read fully the entire application of every California high school graduates who satisfies basic academic requirements, which might be defined as completing all the A-G courses with grade point averages (GPAs) of C-plus or better. All such applications should be evaluated by comprehensive review.<sup>15</sup>**
- **The top 5% of graduates, based upon GPA within each public high school, should be admitted to the UC system, thus assuring them admission to at least one campus following comprehensive review. This “guarantee” based on a quantitative measure alone seems desirable on several grounds: (1) it will reward and thus promote academic achievement in every high school, consistent with UC’s social contract; (2) it will minimize the extent to which students in disadvantaged, under-resourced schools are penalized; and (3) it eases administrative feasibility concerns associated with the UC admission process. Looking only at test scores and GPA straitjackets UC’s ability to identify those with the most promise. UC can tap a deeper and broader talent pool by expanding the scope of comprehensive review in admissions rather than relying on the current “UC-eligibility” construct defined on the basis of GPA and test scores alone.**

UC is a land grant institution and as such, the UC Regents recognize that a core part of UC’s mission is to enroll a student body that “encompasses the broad diversity of backgrounds characteristic of California.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Michael T. Brown et al., UC “Eligibility,” Campus Selection, and Diversity (Oct. 2006) (Paper to be presented at the Warren Institute’s Conference at UC Berkeley).

<sup>16</sup> UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, Inclusiveness Indicators Report (2006) (quoting Regent Resolution RE-28, approved in 2001), available at <http://ucaccord.gseis.ucla.edu/indicators/PDF/Inclusivenessreport.pdf>. UC’s charter legislation directs it to admit “a representation of

On some measures of inclusiveness, such as the proportion of Pell Grant recipients (i.e. low-income students), UC is a leader among highly selective institutions. On several dimensions of inclusiveness, however, UC can and must do a better job.

For example, the UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS), the faculty committee that formulates UC admissions policy, found that California high schools that produced only 20% of the State’s graduates accounted for almost half (47%) of UC freshmen admission offers in 2001-04.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, CPEC found that some counties (e.g., Santa Clara, Alameda) have UC entry rates that are three to four times higher than other large California counties (e.g., Fresno, Kern).<sup>18</sup> Disparities in UC access between feeder high schools reflect patterns of socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and geographic inequality.<sup>19</sup>

Encompassing the broad diversity of California is a principle that is in keeping with UC’s comprehensive review admissions policy, which attempts to view students’ accomplishments in light of their unique personal and academic circumstances. By contrast, “UC eligibility” is rigidly and narrowly defined by test scores and high school GPA or, separately, by class rank in UC-approved courses; it ignores other important information about a student’s potential for success at UC and beyond. The Master Plan does not mandate a particular method to “draw from” the “top” 12.5%; that is left up to UC’s discretion.

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students . . . [so] that all portions of the state shall enjoy equal privilege therein.” Section 14 of the Organic Act of 1868, California Stats. 1867-68, p.248.

<sup>17</sup> UC BOARS Inclusiveness Indicators Report, *supra* note 16, at 30-33.

<sup>18</sup> CPEC, College-Going Rates, *supra* note 8, at 6.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g., Robert Teranishi & Tara Parker, An Apartheid System of Opportunity: The Racial Composition of Feeder Schools to the University of California (Oct. 2006) (Paper to be presented at the Warren Institute’s Conference at UC Berkeley); Karen Miksch, Inequities in the River: Challenges to Unequal Schools to Contest Prop. 209 (Oct. 2006) (Paper to be presented at the Warren Institute’s Conference at UC Berkeley).

In defining “merit” in such an inappropriate way, the current eligibility construct ill-serves educational preparation and academic achievement. Instead of the intended effect of reinforcing learning and achievement, the status quo encourages students to treat college preparation as an arms race, to focus only on amassing grade and test score points, to prep for the test and retake them as many times as they can afford, and to load up on as many UC-approved college preparatory courses and honors courses as might be available. Schools are encouraged to limit access to the best teachers and the best courses, to teach to the tests, to avoid assigning “B” grades or less to college prep students, and to play games with the course approval process. Both teachers and students are encouraged by the current construct to treat UC admissions as a high-stakes game, won by those who can play it best, with the reward of “branding” being considered perhaps more important than subject matter mastery for success in society. Four years of high school experiences are boiled down to only GPA and test score points, absent consideration of the realities of whether the points are equally available to all the players. Bottom line, it is impossible for those points alone to tell the whole story about most students’ readiness to profit from and succeed in a high quality UC, CSU, or community college education.

Yet, under the present eligibility system, an applicant who does not meet the current “eligibility” requirements for guaranteed admission to UC is not guaranteed that his or her file will be evaluated, much less evaluated under UC’s fourteen guidelines for comprehensive review. Expanding the use of comprehensive review to determining eligibility will enable UC admissions decision-makers to consider the full set of information in the application, in addition to information about the school the applicant attended.

Our recommendation for expanding comprehensive review is in keeping with the

National Research Council’s blue ribbon commission, which concluded:

- “Neither the SAT nor the ACT was designed to make fine distinctions at any point on their scales ... These tests are most useful, then, for sorting an applicant pool into broad categories: those who are quite likely to succeed academically at a particular institution, those who are quite unlikely to do so, and those in the middle.”<sup>20</sup>

UC has a very talented applicant pool, as most of these students can succeed at a UC campus with the right support structures. In this light, the broad array of students’ background information captured by comprehensive review should be considered in making admissions decisions.

Studies of academic performance at UC indicate that together high school grades and standardized test scores explain less than one-quarter of the variance in freshmen GPA across the UC campuses.<sup>21</sup> Note also that when the GPA is also considered, the data show that students within 100 or 200 points on the SAT are essentially comparable in terms of likely UC performance outcomes.<sup>22</sup> In short, GPA and test scores cannot account for the other 75% of variance in students’ academic performance. Although this level of predictive validity has justified the use of these variables

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20 NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL’S COMMISSION ON BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION, MYTHS AND TRADEOFFS: THE ROLE OF TESTS IN UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS p. 24 (Alexandra Beatty et al., eds., 1999), available at <http://darwin.nap.edu/books/0309065976/html>. This report, for example, notes Vars and Bowen’s research that at highly selective universities, a 100-point difference in SAT scores (verbal + math) only translates to a 0.11 gain in predicted freshmen GPA (e.g., 3.0 versus 3.11). *Id.* at 23.

21 Saul Geiser & Roger Studley, *UC and the SAT: Predictive Validity and Differential Impact of the SAT I and SAT II at the University of California*, 8 EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT 1, table 1 (2002); Rebecca Zwick et al., California and the SAT: A Reanalysis of University of California Admissions Data pp.22-24 Tables 4 & 6 (2004), available at <http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=cshe>.

22 NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL’S COMMISSION ON BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION, *supra* note 20, at 23 (reviewing Vars and Bowen’s research that at highly selective universities, a 100-point difference in SAT scores (verbal + math) only translates to a 0.11 gain in predicted freshmen GPA (e.g., 3.0 versus 3.11).

as factors in UC admissions, it also suggests that UC policymakers have an obligation to explore admission policies that foster greater achievement and access. In fact, research at UC indicates that comprehensive review factors (e.g., “spark” and leadership) improve prediction of GPA, graduation and other academic outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

We therefore have empirical reasons to expect that incorporating elements of comprehensive review into the definition of UC-eligibility may increase UC access for traditionally disadvantaged students with better (or at least equivalent) levels of overall predictive validity.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, doing so will focus students and schools on more broad and appropriate preparation for the rigors of college. In short, academic merit and inclusiveness are best thought of as complementary virtues; diversity and quality are not mutually exclusive.

An inclusive approach to merit can have benefits beyond admissions, by improving the college aspirations and UC application rates of Californians from disadvantaged high schools and backgrounds. Research shows that UC’s “Eligible in Local Context” (i.e., top Four Percent Plan) and particularly the Texas Ten

Percent Plan created such incentive effects,<sup>25</sup> so at UC we need to think creatively about additional ways to leverage UC eligibility and admissions policies to contribute to a college-going culture at every California high school.<sup>26</sup>

Conversely, CPEC found that requiring the SAT II was the “the most important single factor limiting the eligibility of students who meet most, but not all, of UC’s requirements.”<sup>27</sup> The current conception of “UC eligibility,” which involves the formulaic use of test scores and grades, and requires SAT II scores even when it is irrelevant to the admission decision (i.e., Eligibility in Local Context) siphons off talented and diverse students through a process of self-selection.<sup>28</sup> Stereotype threat, for instance, can undermine the standardized test performance of individuals belonging to groups about whom our society maintains stereotypes of inferiority, with research indicating this phenomenon disproportionately affects highly talented and motivated students.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the Master Plan’s outdated limits on the proportion of students to be admitted to UC and CSU, and the narrow criteria used in the current “eligibility” formula for UC, another challenge to inclusiveness at UC is Proposition 209. Prop. 209 prohibited race-conscious affirmative action beginning with the

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<sup>23</sup> See e.g., Samuel J. Agronow et al., An Admissions Outcome Study: Report on a Work-in-Progress p. 8 (May 2005) (paper presented at the Association for Institutional Research Conference indicating the value-added predictive power of comprehensive review factors at UC Berkeley); Steve Chatman, Can UC Davis Admissions Measures Predict Graduation Rates?, pp. 10-11 (June 2004) (report by UC Davis Student Affairs Research & Information indicating that students with high leadership ratings in the Davis admission process graduated at rates higher than would be expected based on high school grades and test scores alone), available at <http://www.sariweb.ucdavis.edu/downloads/325AdmissionsMeasurePredictGradRates.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g., Frederick E. Vars & William G. Bowen, *Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores, Race, and Academic Performance in Selective Colleges and Universities*, in *THE BLACK-WHITE TEST SCORE GAP* 457, 475-76 (Christopher Jencks & Meredith Phillips eds., 1998) (“Taken together, these [SAT scores and other] variables account for only about a quarter of the variance in academic performance....The relatively weak relationship between SAT scores and academic performance, especially for black students, underscores why admission officers must be free to consider factors other than grades and SATs when choosing among candidates.”).

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<sup>25</sup> [Requested Roger Studley’s latest study of ELC]; See also Marta Tienda et al., College Attendance and the Texas Top 10 Percent Law: Permanent Contagion or Transitory Promise? (Oct. 2003), available at [http://www.texastop10.princeton.edu/reports/wp/college\\_attendance.pdf](http://www.texastop10.princeton.edu/reports/wp/college_attendance.pdf).

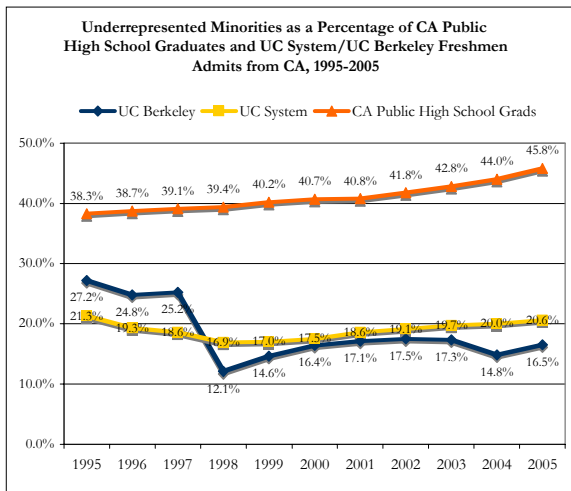
<sup>26</sup> Jeannie Oakes, Critical Conditions for Equity and Diversity in College Access: Informing Policy and Monitoring Results pp. 2-3 (Feb. 2003), UC/ACCORD briefing paper available at <http://ucaccord.gseis.ucla.edu/research/indicators/pdfs/criticalconditions.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> California Postsecondary Education Commission, University Eligibility: Are Locally Reported Figures Comparable to the Commission’s Estimates? P.2 (June 2006) <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/FactSheets/FactSheet2006/fs06-03.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g., DANIEL KORETZ ET AL., TESTING AND DIVERSITY IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION: THE CASE OF CALIFORNIA (2001), available at [www.bc.edu/research/nbetpp/statements/M1N3.pdf](http://www.bc.edu/research/nbetpp/statements/M1N3.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Claude M. Steele et al., *Contending with Group Image: The Psychology of Stereotype Threat and Social Identity Theory*, 34 *ADVANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY* 379 (2002).

1998 entering class (1997 for UC graduate and professional schools). Across the UC system, the percentage of freshmen admission offers for African Americans, Chicanos/Latinos and American Indians (“underrepresented minorities”) was slightly lower in 2005 than in 1995, which was just before the Regents’ SP-1 Resolution began to have a chilling effect in conjunction with Prop. 209. Declines for underrepresented minorities were more pronounced at the most selective campuses, Berkeley and UCLA.



Sources: UCOP, CA Dept. of Education, CA Dept. of Finance

While it is true that underrepresented minorities’ percentage of freshmen admissions in the UC system was nearly the same in 1995 and 2005, it is also true that such a framing of the issue underestimates the nature of the challenge that lies ahead. Underrepresented minorities will soon constitute a majority of California’s public high school graduates. The chart above displays data on the “opportunity gaps” at UC, which is a metric for assessing the racial/ethnic inclusiveness of UC amidst California’s changing demographics. Here, “opportunity gap” is defined as the difference between the percentage of underrepresented minorities graduating from California public high schools and the percentage offered admission to UC. Between 1995 and 2005, this opportunity gap widened from 17.0 points to 25.2 points throughout the UC system and from 11.1 points to 29.3 points at UC Berkeley.

### III. Conclusion

While inequities in California’s K-12 education system and Proposition 209 continue to have an impact on access to UC and CSU, those who are committed to excellence and equity in California higher education should not overlook the two core themes in this discussion paper:

- **The Master Plan’s UC and CSU eligibility limits, developed nearly a half-century ago, are compromising the competitiveness of California’s workforce in a global and knowledge-based economy. Likewise, the Master Plan’s zero-sum eligibility limits are increasingly undercutting efforts at diversification at a time when underrepresented minorities are about to comprise the majority of California’s public high school graduates.**
- **UC’s faculty and administration must take responsibility to craft policies that promote both greater achievement and access, particularly in how merit in admissions is defined. All applicants to UC who meet basic academic requirements deserve to have their application looked at carefully under comprehensive review. An admission policy that treats “merit” as being reducible to only GPA points and standardized test scores lacks a solid educational justification, and it sends the wrong signals to the young people of California.**