Committee on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools
2011-2012 Annual Report

To the Irvine Divisional Assembly:
The Committee on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools (CUARS) respectfully submits its report of activities for the academic year 2011-12.

I. Council Operations
Lee Bardwell, Professor of Developmental and Cell Biology, chaired the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools (CUARS) in 2011-12. The Committee met ten times during the year. The meetings were attended by ten elected members, the Interim Director (ex officio) of the Office of Admissions & Relations with Schools (OARS), the Associate Director of Evaluation, Opprs and System (ex officio), the Board of Admissions & Relations with Schools (BOARS) Representative, the Librarians Association of the University of California, Irvine (LAUC-I) Representative, the Associated Graduate Students (AGS) Representative, and the Associated Students of University of California, Irvine (ASUCI) Representative. The CUARS Chair is an ex officio member of the Enrollment Council, and contributed to Council meetings as appropriate. Throughout the year, Interim Director of Admissions & Relations with Schools Brent Yunek kept CUARS well-informed of the activities of OARS and the Committee provided comments and advice when requested.

II. Divisional Issues/Policies
A. Freshman and Transfer Comprehensive Review Guidelines
The Freshman Comprehensive Guiding Principles originated from UC Berkeley, then were revised by UCLA when their campus adopted them and further revised for UCI once our campus adopted them. At the January 2012 meeting, the Council reviewed the Freshman and Transfer Comprehensive Review Guidelines. The Freshman guidelines were edited for local context. The previous guidelines stated that the eligibility in local context (ELC) top 4% would be admitted, but with the new holistic review and the change in ELC from 4 to 9%, this was no longer possible.

The council voted unanimously to approve the Freshman Comprehensive Review Guiding Principles with two changes.

1. Remove item 2 on page 1 under the abstract: Identifying Excellence based on Eligibility in the Local Context.

2. Under Section IV, Freshman Selection Criteria, item 1, amend the last sentence to read: In assessing achievement levels, consideration will be given to individual grades earned, to the pattern of achievement over time, and to an applicant’s achievement relative to that of other in his/her high school for example being eligible in the local context.

The council also voted unanimously to approve the Transfer Comprehensive Review Guiding Principles with no changes.

The Council reviewed the guidelines for a second time at its July 2012 meeting and voted to keep the guidelines with no changes for the 2012-13 academic year.
B. UC Irvine Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) Requirements

In Spring 2012, UC San Diego announced that it would be ending its TAG program. The last cycle to be grandfathered in Fall 2014. The Council reviewed how this would affect UC Irvine and reviewed modeling outcomes presented by Admissions. It is anticipated that TAG applications to UC Irvine will as a consequence to the change at UC San Diego increase, and that TAG students will make up a greater portion of the admit pool. The Council reviewed and discussed possible means by which the campus could continue to shape the admit pool while controlling the number of admits. It was determined that the most effective means would be through GPA requirements. On August 8, 2012, the Council voted to raise the minimum GPA for transfer students admitted through TAG from 3.2 to either 3.4 or 3.5 and that the change be “grandfathered in” appropriately by the Office of Admissions with input from the Enrollment Council.

III. System-wide Issues/Policies

A. BOARS Transfer Admissions Proposal

The Systemwide Senate requested comments by the divisional committees related to the proposed policy on transfer admissions. The proposal represented a major revision to UC’s transfer policy to emphasize major preparation as the key component in the comprehensive review of transfer applications. The proposal was revised based on the feedback received from each Division and then resubmitted for a second review.

The two major components of the proposal were:

1. Transfer Pathways. Transfer applicants who complete one of three paths will be entitled to a Comprehensive Review of their application for admission to UC with advanced standing. This review will not guarantee admission to UC; however, existing Transfer Admission Guarantees (TAG) will remain in place at participating UC campuses. Each pathway requires 60 (90 quarter) transferrable units, and a minimum overall GPA established by the campus to which they are applying. The three paths are completion of a yet-to-be-developed UC Transfer Curricula for the applicant’s chosen major along, completion of an SB 1440 Associate Degree for Transfer, and completion of the minimum criteria of seven courses specified in SR 476C.

2. Evaluation Criteria. All campuses use major-based preparation as central evaluation criteria. UC will admit applicants with credentials indicating the strongest likelihood of completing their major in approximately two years, comprehensive review remains in place, and admits to a “pre-major” status will be discouraged (if not abandoned) at most campuses.

The Council initially had major concerns regarding the transfer pathways and shared those concerns with Systemwide. The revised proposal submitted after feedback from each of the Divisions freed departments to state their requirements on a department by department basis, allowed them to use ASSIST to communicate with transfer applicants, gave Admissions the continued authority to use exceptions at 6%, and every department on campus would have two years to work to improve their web presentation to community colleges. The Council endorsed this revised proposal with one suggestion and one minor concern. The suggestion given was that the proposal be divided up into sections and numbers. The minor concern raised was regarding the TAG statement and
how it might be interpreted to mean that the TAG program must remain in place on every campus that currently offers it

B. Comprehensive Review Status Report
In March 2012, Systemwide BOARS requested a status report on the Comprehensive/Holistic Review from each of the Divisions. The report was an opportunity for each campus to report back on the successes and concerns of the Holistic Review process. Holistic Review provides a single score inclusive of factors such as GPA, test scores, school API, student leadership, activities, course rigor, first generation, and low income status. Prior to this, a major component of our selection process was an Academic Cohort Model, which distributed students into ranked cohorts based on GPA, test scores, and other academic criteria. In addition to the new comprehensive review adopted by UCI for Fall 2011 applicants, there have also been changes in terms of eligibility requirements. Starting this year (Fall 2012 applicants), the requirements have changed from being in the top 12.5% statewide or the top 4% eligible in the local context (ELC), to being in the top 9% statewide or the top 9% ELC.

The overall advantages of the Holistic Review shared by the Council were that the new review process has certain benefits with regard to inclusiveness, flexibility, and efficiency. The most significant benefit of the Holistic Review method is that it allows consideration of the entire application within the context of all information provided by and about the applicant. Additional benefits include the ability to share scores with other campuses, a reduced necessity to check for eligibility, and a simplified review process for the reader.

In spite of the advantages provided by the Holistic Review process, new concerns and possible challenges have also arisen. The new holistic review process coupled with the new 9% statewide and 9% ELC eligibility requirements could be disadvantaging and possibly even shutting out candidates that are academically strong from good high schools. These are students who may not necessarily be standouts at their high school but who if removed and put in any other context would be considered exceptional.

The Council also found that over the past two years, UCI’s California freshman applicant pool has changed; these changes reflect similar Systemwide trends. The total number of applications has increased (up 3% last year, up 15% this year). In terms of metrics, applicant GPA has held flat, SAT scores have trended slightly down, and first-generation college and low-high-school API applications have trended up. At this point, it is not possible to determine which, if any, of these changes are consequences of the new eligibility requirements. With respect to the increased number of ELC applications, it is quite clear students who are in the top 9% in both categories are exceptionally strong as a cohort.

The Council shared in its report that the Holistic Review model appears to have the potential to be an efficient, inclusive, and flexible approach for selecting undergraduate freshmen to the UC Irvine campus but that Holistic Review needs careful monitoring, and is likely to require constant fine tuning, in order to ensure that certain groups are not disadvantaged by the review process.

IV. Guests
A. University High School Counselors
The counselors were invited to the May 8 meeting so that CUARS could get their perspective on the UC Admissions process and why University High students might be
having difficulty gaining admittance to UCI. There seemed to be some misperceptions on their end regarding our process which could possibly be attributed to a PR problem. Chair Bardwell will forward the topic to be discussed at the next Chancellor’s luncheon in Fall of 2012.

V. Council Membership

Members
Lee Bardwell, Biological Sciences, Chair
Belinda Campos, Social Sciences
Cynthia Claxton, Humanities
Michael Cranston, Physical Sciences
Raul Lejano, Social Ecology
Zhiqin Lu (replaced Michael Cranston, Spring Quarter 2012)
Andrej Luptak, Health Sciences (replaced Rainer Reinscheid Spring Quarter 2012)
Rainer Reinscheid, Health Sciences
Jeff Russell, Arts
William Sirignano, Engineering
Yaming Yu, ICS
Lu Zheng, Business

Ex Officio:
Brent Yunek, Interim Director, OARS

Consultants:
Deborah Brandon, Sr. Assoc. Director, Evaluations, Operations & Systems- OARS
Brent Yunek, Assistant VC, Enrollment Services - OARS

Representatives
Jeffra Bussman, Associated Librarians University of California, Irvine
David Cao, Associated Students University of California, Irvine
Nicole Pierski, Associated Graduate Students University of California, Irvine
John Whitely, BOARS