

## SECTION 6 – Part A PHASE II RESULTS

Data collection in the second phase of the California Bridge Project study focused on the school level, as described in the research design of this report (Section 2). This section reports the results of our analyses of the quantitative data from surveys of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and their parents. The main thrust behind this data was to better understand student aspiration for postsecondary education and student college knowledge.

First, we conducted crosstabular analyses of student aspiration for postsecondary education by grade, race, socioeconomic status, school performance, academic track, influence by key agents, and grade point average. Next, we conducted similar analyses of student knowledge and understanding of higher education admission and placement policy based on four measures: (1) college costs, (2) college admission curricular requirements, (3) college placement exams, and (4) college selection criteria. Qualitative data from student focus groups and faculty and administrator interviews provide context and elaborate on the quantitative findings. In a final section, we compare student college knowledge with parent college knowledge.

### Characteristics of the Student Sample

Despite minor imperfections in the sample, the sample was quite good. Table 6-1 provides a general characterization of the student sample. The table contains the mean, standard deviation, and case count for the primary independent variables of the study. Each variable in Table 6-1 was constructed as a dichotomous variable, so that the mean represents the proportion of the sample described by each variable.

**Table 6-1**

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Case Counts for Primary Independent Variables*

| Variable (all dichotomous) | mean | standard deviation | n   |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------|-----|
| Women                      | .63  | .48                | 451 |
| High-SES                   | .40  | .49                | 332 |
| Mid-SES                    | .39  | .49                | 332 |
| Low-SES                    | .21  | .41                | 332 |
| African American           | .11  | .31                | 450 |
| Chinese American           | .12  | .33                | 450 |
| Southeast Asian            | .12  | .32                | 450 |
| Other Asian                | .13  | .34                | 450 |
| Latino/a                   | .10  | .30                | 450 |
| Native American            | .004 | .07                | 450 |
| White/Caucasian            | .27  | .44                | 450 |
| Mixed Race                 | .15  | .36                | 450 |
| 9th graders                | .47  | .50                | 451 |

|                           |     |     |     |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 11th graders              | .53 | .50 | 451 |
| Dual Honors               | .39 | .49 | 431 |
| Single Honors             | .28 | .45 | 431 |
| Non-Honors                | .33 | .47 | 431 |
| High-performing schools   | .41 | .49 | 451 |
| Middle-performing schools | .28 | .45 | 451 |
| Low-performing schools    | .31 | .46 | 451 |

Slightly more young women (63%) participated in our survey than young men. As teachers explained, honors courses are predominantly female; thus, our sample was skewed in this direction. In addition, more 11th graders (53%) than 9th graders (47%) participated. In terms of socio-economic status (SES), students tended to fall in our mid-SES and high-SES categories, with only 21 percent falling into the bottom third of our SES scale. Although we sampled two high-performing, two middle-performing, and two low-performing schools, the proportion of students surveyed in the high-performing category was slightly larger than for the remaining two.

The sample was racially and ethnically diverse. Students of Asian descent comprised almost 40 percent of our sample, yet student demographic information for the two counties in which our six schools reside indicates that only 17 percent of the high school population is of Asian descent. What accounts for this oversampling of Asian-American students is the fact that our sample included college preparatory and honors students only, and that Asian-American students tended to be in these tracks. In contrast, African American and Latino students were undersampled (11 percent African Americans in our sample vs. roughly 15 percent overall within the two counties, and 10 percent Latinos in our sample vs. roughly 16 percent within the two counties).

To better characterize the student sample, we calculated the distribution of selected demographic variables by grade and school performance. As shown in Table 6-2, we found just two statistically significant differences between the 9th and 11th grade; a higher proportion of 9th grade students were classified as "dual honors" students relative 11th graders; consequently, a smaller proportion of 9th graders were designated "single honors." We found many demographic differences among high, middle, and low performing schools. Consistent with the research, the low performing schools in our study had the poorest students, had a higher proportion of non-honors students, and had higher proportions of African Americans, Southeast Asians, and Latinos.

Table 6-2  
*Selected Demographic Variables by Grade and School Performance*

| Variable         | Grade   |          | t-test          | School Performance |           |           | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|------------------|---------|----------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                  | 9th (%) | 11th (%) | □(9-11) p-value | High P (%)         | Mid P (%) | Low P (%) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| Female           | 66.7    | 59.7     | .130            | 66.2               | 63.9      | 59.3      | .693               | .221   | .434  |
| High-SES         | 43.6    | 39.4     | .450            | 57.0               | 49.0      | 14.9      | .240               | .000   | .000  |
| Mid-SES          | 39.7    | 37.4     | .675            | 31.6               | 41.3      | 43.0      | .136               | .076   | .808  |
| Low-SES          | 16.7    | 23.2     | .149            | 11.4               | 9.6       | 42.1      | .731               | .000   | .000  |
| African American | 13.6    | 8.1      | .059            | 6.3                | 8.2       | 16.1      | .613               | .005   | .026  |
| Chinese American | 11.7    | 12.3     | .845            | 23.2               | 1.5       | 10.9      | .000               | .004   | .000  |
| Southeast Asian  | 10.8    | 12.3     | .611            | 4.2                | 1.5       | 25.3      | .172               | .000   | .000  |
| Other Asian      | 13.6    | 12.3     | .690            | 19.7               | 13.4      | 7.5       | .161               | .002   | .096  |

|                 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Latino/a        | 9.9  | 9.8  | .980 | 5.6  | 11.2 | 12.1 | .099 | .042 | .813 |
| Native American | 0.5  | 0.4  | .945 | 0.0  | 0.0  | 1.1  | ---  | .158 | .158 |
| White/Caucasian | 24.4 | 28.5 | .328 | 26.8 | 38.8 | 17.2 | .022 | .053 | .000 |
| Mixed Race      | 15.0 | 15.7 | .833 | 14.1 | 24.6 | 9.2  | .027 | .183 | .000 |
| Dual Honors     | 44.5 | 33.5 | .019 | 43.8 | 33.1 | 39.6 | .070 | .464 | .259 |
| Single Honors   | 23.7 | 33.0 | .032 | 24.3 | 26.3 | 33.8 | .711 | .071 | .163 |
| Non-Honors      | 31.8 | 33.5 | .703 | 33.5 | 31.9 | 40.6 | .136 | .315 | .013 |

## Student Aspiration for Postsecondary Institutions

In our survey we asked students to state their interest in attending various postsecondary institutions. We allowed students to check as many of the ten types of institutions that we listed on our survey. In this section, we provide analyses of student aspiration by grade, race, SES, school performance, academic track, and key agent.

### Aspirations by Grade

As Table 6-3 below shows, the juniors in our sample expressed greater interest than the freshmen in attending three institutions: a local community college, UC campuses other than UC Davis, and CSU campuses other than CSU Sacramento. Interestingly, the largest difference by grade was associated with interest in community college. Eleventh graders are nearly twice as likely to include the two-year institution on their list of postsecondary options. One explanation for this difference in postsecondary aspiration is that juniors may have greater knowledge in terms of institutional variety (schools further from home) and of their objective chances for admission across institutions (e.g., including their local community college as a "safety" school).

**Table 6-3**

*Postsecondary Aspirations by Grade*

| Institution             | Percent Among  |                 |                  | t-test<br>p-value |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                         | 9th<br>(n=214) | 11th<br>(n=237) | Total<br>(n=451) |                   |
| Local community college | 19.6           | 39.2            | 29.9             | .000              |
| UC Davis                | 51.4           | 45.1            | 48.1             | .185              |
| Other UC campus         | 42.5           | 52.3            | 47.7             | .038              |
| CSU Sacramento          | 27.6           | 36.2            | 26.8             | .737              |
| Other CSU campus        | 19.2           | 27.4            | 23.5             | .039              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

### Aspirations by Race

Small cell sizes in the crosstabulations make it difficult to render strong inferences with respect to racial differences. However, we feel it is instructive to note a few interesting differences by race. In Table 6-4 (which shows postsecondary aspiration by race), white, Latino, and multi-racial students were the most likely to include their local community college on their postsecondary options list. The students in all three Asian American sub-categories along with multi-racial students showed a greater interest in UC Davis than the other racial groups. Chinese-American students by far showed the

greatest interest in other UC campuses. Furthermore, Southeast Asians showed the most interest in CSU Sacramento. Finally, African American students were least interested in other CSU campuses while white students were the most interested. In fact, the interest in other CSU campuses among African Americans was less than one-third that of white students.

**Table 6-4**  
*Postsecondary Aspirations by Race*

| Institution Aspired (%) | Race                     |                  |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            | Total<br>(n=450) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
|                         | African-<br>Am<br>(n=48) | White<br>(n=120) | Latino/a<br>(n=44) | Chinese-<br>Am<br>(n=54) | SE Asian<br>(n=52) | Other<br>Asian<br>(n=59) | Multi-<br>racial<br>(n=69) |                  |
| Local community college | 25.0                     | 34.2             | 34.1               | 25.9                     | 21.2               | 28.8                     | 36.2                       | 30.0             |
| UC Davis                | 33.3                     | 40.8             | 45.5               | 57.4                     | 53.8               | 57.6                     | 53.6                       | 48.0             |
| Other UC campus         | 29.2                     | 54.2             | 38.6               | 70.4                     | 30.8               | 49.2                     | 49.3                       | 47.6             |
| CSU Sacramento          | 27.1                     | 22.5             | 27.3               | 22.2                     | 36.5               | 32.2                     | 23.2                       | 26.4             |
| Other CSU campus        | 10.4                     | 35.0             | 22.7               | 16.7                     | 17.3               | 16.9                     | 30.4                       | 23.6             |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

#### Aspirations by SES

In terms of SES, one expected trend was confirmed – high-SES students showed greater interest in UC Davis (61%) than low-SES (45%) and middle-SES students (48%). Similarly, and perhaps more telling, is that interest in other UC campuses increased with SES, with high-SES students aspiring to these schools at the twice the rate of their low-SES counterparts. The opposite is true, however, for interest in CSU Sacramento. Forty percent of low-SES students indicated interest (40%) compared to only 23 percent of high-SES students. Finally, mid-SES students indicated the greatest interest in their local community college (35%), which was significantly greater than the aspirations among students from high-SES families.

**Table 6-5**  
*Postsecondary Aspirations by SES*

| Institution Aspired (%) | SES               |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                         | Low-SES<br>(n=62) | Mid-SES<br>(n=121) | Hi-SES<br>(n=130) | lo-mid             | mid-hi | lo-hi |
| Local community college | 32.3              | 34.7               | 21.5              | .728               | .021   | .124  |
| UC Davis                | 45.2              | 47.9               | 60.8              | .721               | .042   | .043  |
| Other UC campus         | 32.3              | 49.6               | 66.2              | .023               | .007   | .000  |
| CSU Sacramento          | 40.3              | 28.9               | 23.1              | .106               | .305   | .014  |
| Other CSU campus        | 22.6              | 24.8               | 28.5              | .740               | .513   | .379  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

#### Aspirations by School Performance

Interest in the UC campuses (Davis and other UC campuses) was significantly greater for students in high- and middle-performing schools than in low-performing schools (see Table 6-6). Interestingly, while there was no significant difference in interest in CSU Sacramento by school-performance, there were significant differences in

interest in the other CSU campuses. Students at the middle-performing schools were twice as likely than were students at the low- or high-performing schools to indicate interest in other CSU campuses. Furthermore, students in high-performing schools indicated greater interest in their local community college than did students in low-performing schools. We caution against quick inferences from these data in terms of aspiration level, however. Since students were asked to indicate their interest in as many types of institutions as they wished rather than their order of preference, a greater percentage of students in high-performing schools showing interest in community college does not necessarily mean that these students are more inclined to apply and enroll in a community college or to aspire for non-selective colleges. A more likely reason for this difference is that students in high-performing schools are apt to be more broadly interested in postsecondary education.

**Table 6-6**  
*Postsecondary Aspirations by School Performance*

| Institution Aspired (%) | School Performance |                     |                    | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                         | Hi-Perf<br>(n=145) | Mid-Perf<br>(n=134) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=174) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| Local community college | 37.2               | 26.9                | 25.9               | .058               | .848   | .027  |
| UC Davis                | 53.8               | 52.2                | 40.2               | .794               | .036   | .016  |
| Other UC campus         | 54.5               | 54.5                | 36.8               | .999               | .002   | .002  |
| CSU Sacramento          | 23.4               | 27.6                | 28.7               | .428               | .829   | .284  |
| Other CSU campus        | 16.6               | 37.3                | 18.4               | .000               | .000   | .694  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Aspirations by Academic Track

Analyses of aspirations by academic track confirmed some expected trends: Interest in local community college decreased with academic track, dual-honors students indicated a greater interest in the UC campuses than non-honors students, and single- and dual-honors students indicated a greater interest in other UC campuses than non-honors students. The concrete numbers are stark. Compared to non-honors students, dual-honors students are 60 percent less likely to aspire to a community college, 50 percent more likely to aspire to UC Davis, and nearly one and a half times (145%) more likely to aspire to a UC campus other than UC Davis. One way to interpret this last comparison is that dual-honors students are more "mobile" geographically and aspire for colleges that are more selective than UC Davis. Based on our conversations with their school counselors, we found that the top students aspired to attend UC Berkeley and UCLA. Finally, similar to the analysis of aspiration by school performance, students in the "middle" academic track category (i.e., single-honors students) indicated a greater interest in other CSU campuses compared to students in the higher and lower academic tracks.

**Table 6-7**  
*Postsecondary Aspirations by Academic Track*

| Institution Aspired (%) | Academic Track   |                     |                   | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                         | Non-H<br>(n=141) | Single-H<br>(n=122) | Dual-H<br>(n=168) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| Local community college | 44.0             | 28.7                | 17.9              | .006               | .041      | .000     |

|                  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| UC Davis         | 39.0 | 50.0 | 58.9 | .074 | .133 | .000 |
| Other UC campus  | 26.2 | 54.9 | 64.3 | .000 | .097 | .000 |
| CSU Sacramento   | 28.4 | 30.3 | 24.4 | .729 | .268 | .434 |
| Other CSU campus | 20.6 | 33.6 | 18.5 | .012 | .003 | .660 |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

### Aspirations by Use of Key Agent

As described in Section 2, we analyzed the dependent variables by “use of key agent” as well. To review, use of a key agent is defined as speaking at least once to a parent, teacher, counselor, or higher education outreach officer about college admission requirements. As shown in Table 6-8, a greater percentage of students spoke to their teachers than to their counselors. Juniors had significantly greater contact than freshmen with their teachers, counselors, and college representatives. The greatest difference between freshmen and juniors is that less than half of the freshmen had spoken to a counselor about college admission whereas over three-fourths of the juniors had done so.

**Table 6-8**

### *Use of Key Agents by Grade*

| Key Agent                | Percent talking about admissions at least once |              |               | t-test p-value |
|--------------------------|--|--------------|---------------|----------------|
|                          | 9th (n=214)                                    | 11th (n=237) | Total (n=451) |                |
| Parents                  | 91.6   | 92.4         | 92.0          | .740           |
| A teacher                | 72.3   | 84.9         | 79.0          | .001           |
| A counselor              | 44.9   | 76.9         | 61.7          | .000           |
| A college representative | 29.6   | 39.2         | 34.7          | .032           |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Table 6-9 compares the aspirations of students who reported use or non-use of the four key agents. Students who had talked to a parent, teacher, or college representative at least once about college admission requirements were significantly more likely to show interest in the UC campuses. Teachers appear to be an important source of information to students; students who had spoken to a teacher were significantly more likely to indicate interest in each of the four 4-year options and particularly CSUS, in which interest nearly doubled. Surprisingly, interest in each type of institution was not significantly different between those students who had and who had not spoken to a high school counselor.

Note also that in our survey we asked only about the quantity of talk with these adults and nothing about the quality of the conversation. Thus, we caution quick interpretation of our data to imply that percentage of talk directly translates to the quality of information key agents provide students. Despite the fact that most students in our surveys indicated that they had spoken to teachers about college admission requirements, students in the focus groups generally dismissed the influence of teachers. A few students, however, mentioned one or two teachers who had a strong influence on their preparation for college.

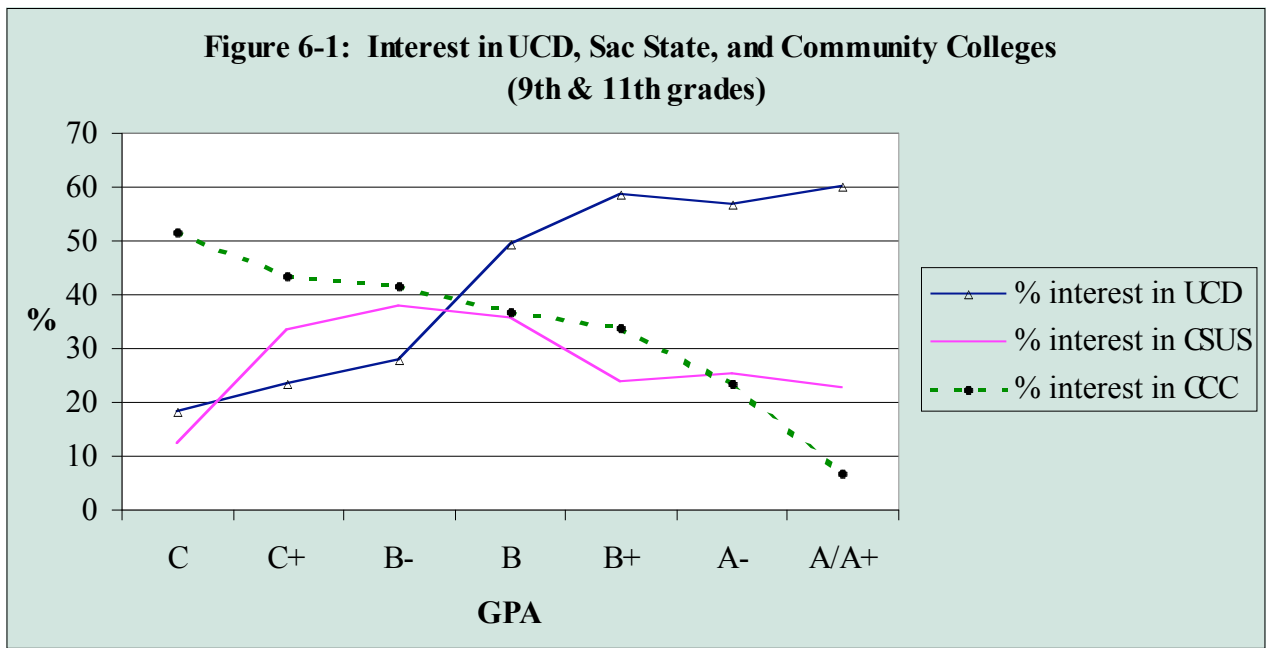
**Table 6-9**  
*Postsecondary Aspirations by Use of Key Agent*

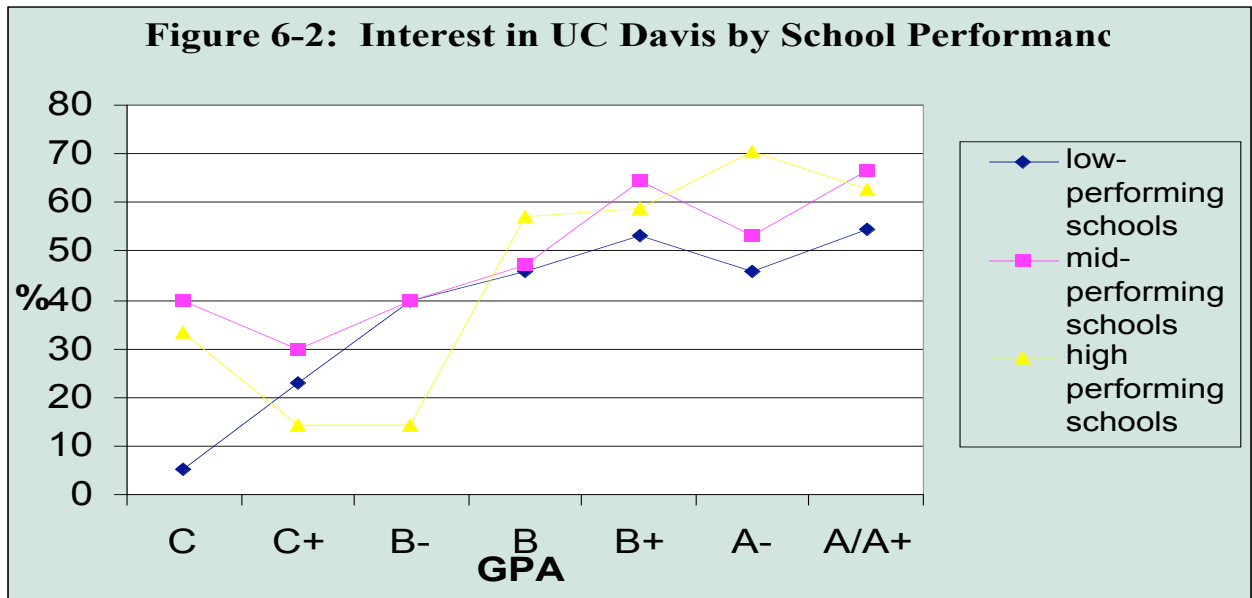
| Institution             | Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions (percent) |              |                |              |                |               |                |               |
|-------------------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
|                         | Parent  |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |               | College Rep    |               |
|                         | Yes<br>(n=416)                                | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=357) | No<br>(n=95) | Yes<br>(n=279) | No<br>(n=173) | Yes<br>(n=156) | No<br>(n=294) |
| Local community college | 30.3  | 25.0         | 31.1           | 25.3         | 32.6           | 25.4          | 30.1           | 29.3          |
| UC Davis                | 49.5  | 30.6*        | 50.4           | 38.9*        | 50.5           | 44.5          | 56.4           | 44.2**        |
| Other UC campus         | 49.3  | 27.8**       | 51.0           | 34.7**       | 50.5           | 42.8          | 56.4           | 43.2**        |
| CSU Sacramento          | 27.6  | 16.7         | 29.7           | 15.8**       | 26.5           | 27.2          | 30.8           | 24.5          |
| Other CSU campus        | 24.5  | 11.1         | 25.5           | 15.8*        | 21.9           | 26.0          | 28.2           | 20.7          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.  
 Significant differences use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

Aspirations by Grade Point Average

Figure 6-1 shows students' interest in UC, CSU, and local community colleges as a function of students' self-reported grade point average (GPA). Interest in community colleges and GPA were inversely proportional; the stronger the student's GPA, the less interested he/she was in attending a community college. Fifty-two percent of the "C" students were interested in the community colleges, while only about 7% of the "A/A+" students were interested in these colleges.





Looking now on the interest in the two four-year options only, students in our focus groups consistently reported that one needed a higher GPA to gain admission to Davis than to Sac State. Interest in both campuses increased with GPA from C to B-. Within this grade range, interest in CSUS was generally greater than interest in UC. However, for students with a GPA of B or better, interest in UC Davis was consistently greater than interest in CSUS, and interest in CSU decreased with GPA while interest in UC increased. These trends may indicate students' awareness of UC's eligibility index, which sets the lower boundary for eligibility at a 2.8 grade point average (B-minus). In other words, if the eligibility requirements that the UC system signals to students are strong, students with at least a B average should know that they are UC-eligible and therefore aspire for this more selective system.

These trends are generally consistent even when comparing students' aspirations across school performance. Figure 6-2 shows interest in UC Davis by school performance and self-reported GPA. However, interest in UCD for students with C+ and B- averages was markedly lower in the high performing schools, and the jump in interest at the "B" level is greatest in those schools as well. This difference suggests that the students in high-performing school have better information of UCD requirements and are more realistic about their college aspirations.

To summarize briefly, in terms of postsecondary aspirations, students from higher SES families, in higher academic tracks, from higher-performing schools, and with higher GPAs displayed greater aspiration for the most selective tier, the UC.

### Student Knowledge of College Tuition

Our survey asked students to provide a dollar amount for their "best guess of the cost of tuition for one year" at UC Davis, CSU Sacramento, and their local community college, excluding "the cost of books, housing, [and] other expenses." For the 1998-99

academic year UC Davis charged an annual tuition of roughly \$4,000, CSU Sacramento charged roughly \$2,000, and the community colleges charged roughly \$300. Across the board, students tended to overestimate these costs. On average, our sample of students estimated annual tuition costs of nearly \$30,000 for UC Davis, nearly \$27,000 for CSU Sacramento, and just over \$10,000 for a local community college. When we informed students in the focus groups of the actual costs, students laughed in disbelief at what they perceived as great affordability. When asked why students overestimated these costs, one student expressed, “[b]ecause people make such a big deal of it.” The following analysis looks more closely at students' cost estimations.

Knowledge of Tuition by Grade

Table 6-10 displays the mean tuition estimates as well as the proportions of students estimating tuition within two times or over five times the actual cost. Ninth graders’ estimates of tuition were greater than eleventh graders’ estimates.

**Table 6-10**  
*Knowledge of Tuition by Grade*

| Institution                            | Grade          |                 | Total<br>(n=421) | t-test<br>p-value |
|--|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|  | 9th<br>(n=198) | 11th<br>(n=223) |                  |                   |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                        |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Mean estimate                          | \$39,599       | \$21,429        | \$29,974         | .016              |
| % within twice the actual cost         | 41.1           | 39.7            | 40.4             | .753              |
| % more than five times the actual cost | 22.9           | 16.5            | 19.5             | .083              |
| <b>CSUS</b>                            |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Mean estimate                          | \$39,376       | \$15,170        | \$26,548         | .001              |
| % within twice the actual cost         | 32.7           | 31.6            | 32.2             | .810              |
| % more than five times the actual cost | 37.9           | 26.6            | 31.9             | .010              |
| <b>Local Community College</b>         |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Mean estimate                          | \$15,147       | \$5,744         | \$10,151         | .010              |
| % within twice the actual cost         | 27.1           | 34.2            | 30.9             | .105              |
| % more than five times the actual cost | 56.5           | 42.6            | 49.2             | .003              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Defining "gross overestimation" as guessing beyond five times the actual cost of tuition and "within target" as guessing within twice the actual cost, a greater percentage of students grossly overestimated the cost for community college than for the CSU and UC. On the other hand, a greater percentage of students (40%) were within target for UC Davis than the other two sectors. One explanation for the latter result is that the ranges for all three institutions were so high that the students were more likely to guess "within target" for the highest-priced institution (UC Davis) and more likely to "grossly overestimate" the lowest-priced institution (community college).

That 9th graders possess relatively less accurate information than their older peers concerning college access and entry is not surprising, and even somewhat expected, given their greater temporal distance to actualizing transitions to postsecondary education.

Therefore, in the subgroup analyses that follow for knowledge of tuition, admissions policy, and placement policy, we examine 11th graders only.

### Knowledge of Tuition by Race

Among our seven racial/ethnic categories, Southeast Asian 11th graders were the most likely to overestimate the three tuition costs (see Table 6-11). While Latinos also overestimated the costs, they offered mean estimates that were closest to the actual values among all groups of students.

**Table 6-11**  
*Knowledge of Tuition by Race (11th graders only)*

| Institution                    | Race                     |                  |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            | Total<br>(n=450) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
|                                | African-<br>Am<br>(n=48) | White<br>(n=120) | Latino/a<br>(n=44) | Chinese-<br>Am<br>(n=54) | SE Asian<br>(n=52) | Other<br>Asian<br>(n=59) | Multi-<br>racial<br>(n=69) |                  |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                |                          |                  |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            |                  |
| Mean estimate                  | \$19,883                 | \$14,066         | \$11,622           | \$19,262                 | \$51,193           | \$19,604                 | \$22,243                   | \$21,429         |
| % w/in twice actual cost       | 31.6                     | 43.3             | 43.5               | 41.4                     | 34.5               | 27.6                     | 48.6                       | 39.6             |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 15.8                     | 11.9             | 13.0               | 24.1                     | 27.6               | 17.2                     | 10.8                       | 16.6             |
| <b>CSUS</b>                    |                          |                  |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            |                  |
| Mean estimate                  | \$16,678                 | \$11,035         | \$8,533            | \$10,610                 | \$33,978           | \$12,604                 | \$17,903                   | \$15,170         |
| % w/in twice actual cost       | 26.3                     | 34.3             | 39.1               | 44.8                     | 24.1               | 17.2                     | 32.4                       | 31.5             |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 36.8                     | 36.9             | 17.4               | 17.2                     | 44.8               | 24.1                     | 21.6                       | 26.8             |
| <b>Local Community College</b> |                          |                  |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            |                  |
| Mean estimate                  | \$8,467                  | \$4,073          | \$1,397            | \$4,133                  | \$15,817           | \$4,532                  | \$3,862                    | \$5,744          |
| % w/in twice actual cost       | 42.1                     | 34.3             | 34.8               | 41.4                     | 27.6               | 20.7                     | 37.8                       | 33.6             |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 26.3                     | 41.8             | 26.1               | 41.4                     | 58.6               | 58.6                     | 37.8                       | 43.0             |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

### Knowledge of Tuition by SES

As Table 6-12 indicates, knowledge of tuition appears to increase with SES. Low-SES students had mean estimates that were statistically greater than the mean estimates of high-SES students. As with the analyses of aspiration, the differences were stark. For UC Davis and CSU Sacramento, the estimates for low-SES students were roughly four times greater than the estimates for high-SES students. Statistically significant differences were also evident between the percentage of mid-SES students and the percentage of high-SES students who guessed within twice of UC Davis' and CSU's tuition. For the local community college, the mean estimate for low-SES students was over six times greater than the mean estimates for high-SES students and four times greater than the mean estimates for middle-SES students.

**Table 6-12**  
*Knowledge of Tuition by SES (11th graders only)*

| Institution                    | SES               |                   |                  | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                                | Low-SES<br>(n=36) | Mid-SES<br>(n=59) | Hi-SES<br>(n=62) | lo-mid             | mid-hi | lo-hi |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                |                   |                   |                  |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$47,391          | \$16,521          | \$12,095         | .068               | .751   | .034  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 38.9              | 25.9              | 50.8             | .202               | .005   | .238  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 19.4              | 12.1              | 13.1             | .358               | .865   | .431  |
| <b>CSUS</b>                    |                   |                   |                  |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$31,561          | \$12,942          | \$8,430          | .054               | .573   | .016  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 27.8              | 20.7              | 41.0             | .464               | .016   | .169  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 36.1              | 27.6              | 19.7             | .363               | .329   | .078  |
| <b>Local Community College</b> |                   |                   |                  |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$17,162          | \$4,297           | \$2,675          | .031               | .742   | .014  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 25.0              | 32.8              | 37.7             | .440               | .202   | .569  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 61.1              | 39.7              | 36.1             | .044               | .690   | .018  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

#### Knowledge of Tuition by School Performance

An important and somewhat surprising finding is that students in the middle-performing schools generally provided tuition estimates that were closer to the actual values than those provided by students in high- and low-performing schools (see Table 6-13). The only significant difference in the means, however, was for community college tuition. Tuition guesses from students in low-performing schools were over four times that for students in middle-performing schools. In terms of "gross overestimation," students in low-performing schools were the most likely to grossly overestimate the cost of UC Davis and community college. Finally, students in the high-performing schools were most likely to fall in the "within target" range. However, the only significant difference was found between students in high-performing (44%) and middle-performing schools (19%) for their estimates for CSUS.

**Table 6-13***Knowledge of Tuition by School Performance (11th graders only)*

| Institution                    | School Performance |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                                | Hi-Perf<br>(n=72)  | Mid-Perf<br>(n=69) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=98) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$23,144           | \$11,592           | \$27,400          | .091               | .113   | .720  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 44.3               | 43.5               | 33.7              | .923               | .167   | .204  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 17.1               | 5.8                | 23.5              | .069               | .270   | .002  |
| <b>CSUS</b>                    |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$16,920           | \$9,703            | \$17,984          | .176               | .147   | .889  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 44.3               | 18.8               | 31.6              | .001               | .077   | .079  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 25.7               | 21.7               | 30.6              | .597               | .204   | .481  |
| <b>Local Community College</b> |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| Mean estimate                  | \$5,008            | \$1,939            | \$9,021           | .444               | .056   | .282  |
| % within twice actual cost     | 38.6               | 36.2               | 29.6              | .772               | .375   | .229  |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 38.6               | 34.8               | 51.0              | .651               | .108   | .037  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

**Knowledge of Tuition by Academic Track**

Table 6-14 shows that non-honors students were the most likely to overestimate tuition costs for the three institutions. For each postsecondary option, tuition estimates by non-honors students were at least twice those offered by single- and dual- honors students. Significant differences were found only for CSU Sacramento estimates, however.

**Table 6-14***Knowledge of Tuition by Academic Track (11th graders only)*

| Institution                    | Academic Track  |                    |                  | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                                | Non-H<br>(n=74) | Single-H<br>(n=72) | Dual-H<br>(n=74) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| Mean estimate                  | \$34,804        | \$15,750           | \$14,604         | .110               | .922      | .086     |
| % within twice actual cost     | 37.0            | 40.3               | 38.4             | .687               | .814      | .866     |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 16.4            | 18.1               | 12.3             | .798               | .341      | .483     |
| <b>CSUS</b>                    |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| Mean estimate                  | \$26,188        | \$10,085           | \$9,986          | .026               | .989      | .023     |
| % within twice actual cost     | 27.4            | 30.6               | 35.6             | .678               | .521      | .288     |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 34.2            | 22.2               | 23.3             | .103               | .855      | .135     |
| <b>Local Community College</b> |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| Mean estimate                  | \$9,079         | \$3,387            | \$3,487          | .145               | .979      | .146     |
| % within twice actual cost     | 38.4            | 31.9               | 31.5             | .422               | .955      | .389     |
| % more than 5 times cost       | 42.5            | 43.1               | 43.8             | .943               | .925      | .868     |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

### Knowledge of Tuition by Key Agent

Table 6-15 suggests that key agents influence students' knowledge of college tuition. Students who spoke to their parents about college admissions were greater than three times more likely to guess within twice the cost of CSUS and community college, compared to students who did not speak to their parents. Similarly, a majority (~70 percent) of students who had not spoken to their parents about college admission requirements grossly overestimated the cost of community college compared to just 40 percent among students who had spoken to their parents. Speaking with high school counselors also appears to improve students' knowledge of tuition, particularly with respect to CSUS. Overall, students who spoke to counselors were more likely to provide tuition estimates that were "within target" and not "grossly overestimated" for CSUS. This pattern does not hold for estimates of UC Davis's costs, however. Students who spoke to their counselors were significantly more likely to grossly overestimate UC Davis' cost than students who did not speak to their counselors.

**Table 6-15**

*Knowledge of Tuition by Use of Key Agent (11 graders only)*

| Institution                | Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
|                            | Parent                              |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |              | College Rep   |               |
|                            | Yes<br>(n=220)                      | No<br>(n=18) | Yes<br>(n=201) | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=183) | No<br>(n=55) | Yes<br>(n=91) | No<br>(n=144) |
| UC Davis                   |                                     |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % within twice actual cost | 41.4                                | 22.2         | 39.4           | 41.7         | 39.9           | 40.0         | 33.3          | 43.8          |
| % more than 5 times cost   | 15.5                                | 27.8         | 14.8           | 25.0         | 18.6           | 7.3*         | 16.1          | 16.0          |
| CSU Sacramento             |                                     |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % within twice actual cost | 33.6                                | 11.1*        | 32.0           | 30.6         | 35.5           | 20.0*        | 29.0          | 33.3          |
| % more than 5 times cost   | 24.5                                | 44.4         | 24.6           | 36.1         | 23.5           | 36.4*        | 25.8          | 26.4          |
| Local Community College    |                                     |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % within twice actual cost | 36.4                                | 11.1*        | 35.0           | 30.6         | 35.5           | 30.9         | 31.2          | 36.1          |
| % more than 5 times cost   | 40.0                                | 72.2*        | 41.4           | 50.0         | 39.9           | 50.9         | 47.3          | 39.6          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Significant differences use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

In sum, though students understood the relative tuition costs of the three types of institutions, they greatly overestimated these costs. Knowledge of tuition appears to increase with SES and non-honors students were the most likely to overestimate the three tuition costs. Students who had spoken to their parents about college admissions were less likely to grossly overestimate and more likely to estimate within target. In focus groups, students spoke of college costs as an important factor in their ability to attend college. They expressed the need to receive more information on college costs. As one student simply put it, "That's what we should talk about more, too, in school – is how much it costs."

### **Student Knowledge of Curricular Requirements for College Admission**

In our survey, we asked students to write down the number of years of study required for admission to UCD and CSUS in each of six subject areas (English, math, social science, laboratory science, foreign language, and visual/performing arts). For

each university, we looked at the percentage of students who guessed the number of years correctly for each subject. We also noted the percentage of students who provided the correct number of years required for at least half (three out of six) of the subject areas. In terms of the latter measure, students knew more about CSUS's subject requirements (about 50% got 3 or more correct) than UCD's requirements (only 29% got 3 or more correct). In focus groups, students consistently expressed that UC Davis was more difficult to gain admission (i.e., had more requirements) than CSU Sacramento.

Students in focus groups expressed some confusion as to what was required for high school graduation and what was required for admission to the CSU and UC. For these college-bound students, their expectations for college may have replaced the requirements their high school set for all students. Consequently, these students focused more on, and therefore displayed greater knowledge about, what it took to gain admission to college than what it took to merely graduate from high school. Only a few students were familiar with the term "A through F" and its meaning, but most students mentioned having seen a list of university requirements that their high school provided them.

Many students spoke of a booklet given to them by their school counselors during class scheduling that listed the UC and CSU course requirements. Most students understood that the universities expected a few more years of study than their high school in certain subject areas, but only a few could pinpoint these differences. Students expressed some confusion, however, as to what the universities required and what the universities recommended. Only a few students were able to articulate, for example, that their high school required only one year of foreign language whereas the universities required two, and that their high school required two years of math whereas the universities required three years of college preparatory math (basic math and pre-algebra not included).

#### Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Grade

Table 6-16 shows the percentage of 9th and 11th graders that gave the correct number of years among six subjects required for admission to UCD and CSUS. Overall, the two subject requirements that students knew best were for English and foreign language. The math requirement was the third most accurately reported requirement for UCD, but behind visual/performing arts for CSUS. Juniors generally had better knowledge of the curricular requirements than freshmen. Specifically, juniors were more likely to know the English requirements, the math requirements, and at least three of the six requirements for UC Davis and CSU Sacramento. In addition, juniors were more likely to know the laboratory science requirement for UC Davis and the foreign language requirement for CSU Sacramento.

**Table 6-16**  
*Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Grade*

| Course Requirement                    | Grade          |                 | Total<br>(n=451) | t-test<br>p-value |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                                       | 9th<br>(n=214) | 11th<br>(n=237) |                  |                   |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                       |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Know English requirement (=4 yrs)   | 80.4           | 91.1            | 86.0             | .001              |
| % Know foreign lang req (=2 yrs)      | 47.2           | 53.6            | 50.6             | .176              |
| % Know math requirement (=3 yrs)      | 31.3           | 50.6            | 41.5             | .000              |
| % Know soc science req (= 2 yrs)      | 32.2           | 29.5            | 30.8             | .536              |
| % Know lab science req (=2 yrs)       | 22.0           | 34.6            | 28.6             | .003              |
| % Know visual/perf arts req (= 0 yrs) | 2.8            | 2.5             | 2.7              | .858              |
| % Know 3 or more of 6 requirements    | 36.9           | 56.1            | 47.0             | .000              |
| <b>CSU Sacramento</b>                 |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Know English requirement (=4 yrs)   | 69.6           | 80.2            | 75.2             | .010              |
| % Know foreign lang req (=2 yrs)      | 57.0           | 73.4            | 65.6             | .000              |
| % Know visual/perf arts req (= 1 yr)  | 46.1           | 51.9            | 49.2             | .233              |
| % Know math requirement (=3 yrs)      | 35.5           | 51.5            | 43.9             | .001              |
| % Know lab science req (=1 yr)        | 9.3            | 9.3             | 9.3              | .982              |
| % Know soc science req (= 1 yr)       | 11.2           | 7.2             | 9.1              | .137              |
| % Know 3 or more of 6                 | 42.5           | 61.1            | 52.3             | .000              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

The data in Table 6-16 also show that knowledge of English requirements (over 75% correct) was much stronger than knowledge of mathematics requirements (under 50% correct). The following table shows that, generally, students tended to overestimate rather than underestimate the three-year math requirement. Nearly half of the students overestimated the number of years for math for UC Davis, and one third of the students overestimated the number of years for math for CSU Sacramento. Moreover, freshmen were more likely than juniors to overestimate the number of years needed for both campuses.

**Table 6-17**  
*Knowledge of Math Requirements by Grade*

| Knowledge of Math Requirement | Grade          |                 | Total<br>(n=444) | t-test<br>p-value |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                               | 9th<br>(n=208) | 11th<br>(n=236) |                  |                   |
| <b>UC Davis</b>               |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Underestimate (< 3 years)   | 12.1           | 7.3             | 9.5              | .088              |
| % Correct (=3 years Math)     | 32.5           | 51.7            | 42.7             | .000              |
| % Overestimate (> 3 years)    | 55.3           | 41.0            | 47.7             | .003              |
| <b>CSU Sacramento</b>         |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Underestimate (< 3 years)   | 19.2           | 24.2            | 21.8             | .194              |
| % Correct (=3 years Math)     | 36.5           | 52.1            | 44.8             | .001              |
| % Overestimate (> 3 years)    | 44.2           | 23.7            | 33.3             | .000              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

**Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Race**

As shown in Table 6-18, African American students were among the least likely to report correctly the number of years of math and English required for each campus, and for knowing at least three of the six subject requirements for CSU Sacramento. Chinese American students displayed the most accurate knowledge overall of UCD curricular requirements and were the most likely to know three of the six CSU requirements. Latino and Southeast Asian students appeared to have some specific but incomplete knowledge. For example, while 87 percent of Latinos knew the CSUS English requirement (the highest among all groups), only about 22 percent knew at least three of the subject requirements (the lowest among all groups). Similarly, while Southeast Asian students were among the most likely to know the UCD requirements (overall and particularly the math requirements), these students were the least likely to provide the correct number of English courses required for CSUS.

**Table 6-18**  
*Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Race (11th graders only)*

| Course Requirement      | Race                     |                 |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            | Total<br>(n=235) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
|                         | African-<br>Am<br>(n=19) | White<br>(n=67) | Latino/a<br>(n=23) | Chinese-<br>Am<br>(n=29) | SE Asian<br>(n=29) | Other<br>Asian<br>(n=29) | Multi-<br>racial<br>(n=37) |                  |
| <b>UC Davis</b>         |                          |                 |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            |                  |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 84.2                     | 92.5            | 95.7               | 96.4                     | 89.3               | 96.6                     | 94.4                       | 93.1             |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 42.1                     | 53.7            | 47.8               | 60.7                     | 57.1               | 48.3                     | 50.0                       | 51.7             |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 36.8                     | 32.8            | 30.4               | 44.8                     | 37.9               | 34.5                     | 24.3                       | 34.5             |
| <b>CSU Sacramento</b>   |                          |                 |                    |                          |                    |                          |                            |                  |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 78.9                     | 86.6            | 87.0               | 79.3                     | 72.4               | 80.0                     | 75.0                       | 80.9             |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 44.4                     | 59.7            | 56.5               | 44.8                     | 44.8               | 56.7                     | 50.0                       | 52.1             |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 42.1                     | 61.2            | 21.7               | 72.4                     | 62.1               | 62.1                     | 32.4                       | 53.2             |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Since only about half of the students knew the math requirements, whereas well over 80 percent of the students knew the English requirements, we further analyzed the responses for math in Table 6-19. The data show that African Americans were the most likely to overestimate the requirements. In addition, Latinos and Southeast Asians were the most likely to underestimate the math requirements for UCD while Chinese-Americans and Southeast Asians were the most likely to underestimate the math requirements for CSUS.

**Table 6-19**  
*Knowledge of Math Requirements by Race (11th graders only)*

| Knowledge of Math Course Requirement | Race              |              |                 |                   |                 |                    |                     | Total (n=235) |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|
|                                      | African-Am (n=19) | White (n=67) | Latino/a (n=23) | Chinese-Am (n=29) | SE Asian (n=29) | Other Asian (n=29) | Multi-racial (n=37) |               |
| <b>UC Davis</b>                      |                   |              |                 |                   |                 |                    |                     |               |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs)            | 5.3               | 6.0          | 13.0            | 7.1               | 14.3            | 0.0                | 5.6                 | 7.3           |
| % Correct (=3 years Math)            | 42.1              | 53.7         | 47.8            | 60.7              | 57.1            | 48.3               | 50.0                | 51.7          |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)             | 52.6              | 40.3         | 39.1            | 32.1              | 28.6            | 51.7               | 44.4                | 40.9          |
| <b>CSU Sacramento</b>                |                   |              |                 |                   |                 |                    |                     |               |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs)            | 16.7              | 16.4         | 21.7            | 41.4              | 44.8            | 13.3               | 22.2                | 24.4          |
| % Correct (=3 years Math)            | 44.4              | 59.7         | 56.5            | 44.8              | 44.8            | 56.7               | 50.0                | 52.1          |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)             | 38.9              | 23.9         | 21.7            | 13.8              | 10.3            | 30.3               | 27.8                | 23.5          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

#### Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by School Performance

For the UC Davis requirements, students in the high-performing schools knew the most about the curricular requirements while students in the middle-performing schools knew the least (see Table 6-20). There were no significant differences in knowledge between school performance levels for the specific UCD requirements for math and English. Interestingly, for the CSUS requirements, students at low-performing schools were much more likely than those at high- or middle-performing schools to know three or more of the course requirements, while students at middle performing schools knew the least. While less than half of the students in high-performing schools could correctly name at least three of the six course requirements at CSUS, these students were the most knowledgeable of the 4-year English requirement.

**Table 6-20***Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by School Performance (11th graders only)*

| Course Requirement      | School Performance |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                         | Hi-Perf<br>(n=70)  | Mid-Perf<br>(n=69) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=98) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| UC Davis                |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 94.3               | 91.4               | 88.8              | .501               | .590   | .197  |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 55.7               | 50.7               | 46.9              | .559               | .633   | .265  |
| % Know 3 or of 6        | 66.7               | 47.8               | 54.1              | .024               | .421   | .102  |
| CSU Sacramento          |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 90.0               | 72.5               | 78.6              | .010               | .327   | .066  |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 47.1               | 59.4               | 49.0              | .149               | .184   | .816  |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 62.5               | 53.6               | 65.3              | .289               | .133   | .709  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Looking specifically at knowledge of the math requirements by school performance, Table 6-21 shows that students in low-performing schools were more likely than students in middle-performing schools to underestimate the required number of years of math for UC Davis and CSU Sacramento. However, students in middle-performing schools were slightly more likely than students in low-performing schools to overestimate this requirement.

**Table 6-21***Knowledge of Math Requirements by School Performance (11th graders only)*

| Knowledge of Math<br>Course Requirement | School Performance |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|   | Hi-Perf<br>(n=71)  | Mid-Perf<br>(n=69) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=94) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| UC Davis                                |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs)               | 8.5                | 1.4                | 10.6              | .111               | .026   | .591  |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)                      | 56.3               | 50.7               | 48.9              | .569               | .633   | .269  |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)                | 35.2               | 47.8               | 40.4              | .131               | .344   | .501  |
| CSU Sacramento                          |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs)               | 29.2               | 8.7                | 31.6              | .004               | .001   | .713  |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)                      | 47.2               | 59.4               | 50.5              | .149               | .184   | .822  |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)                | 23.6               | 31.9               | 17.9              | .248               | .038   | .389  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Academic Track

Academic track and knowledge of curricular requirements were directly related: dual-honors students displayed the most knowledge, while non-honors students displayed the least (see Table 6-22). However, statistically significant differences among tracks were evident only for overall knowledge of CSUS requirements.

Looking at the math requirements, for CSU Sacramento, dual-honors students were twice as likely than non-honors student to underestimate and one-third as likely to overestimate (Table 6-23).

**Table 6-22***Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Academic Track (11th graders only)*

| Course Requirement      | Academic Track  |                    |                  | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                         | Non-H<br>(n=73) | Single-H<br>(n=73) | Dual-H<br>(n=73) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| UC Davis                |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 90.4            | 93.1               | 94.5             | .566               | .717      | .350     |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 43.6            | 48.6               | 57.5             | .567               | .285      | .099     |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 50.0            | 55.6               | 62.2             | .501               | .423      | .138     |
| CSU Sacramento          |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 84.9            | 76.4               | 83.6             | .186               | .267      | .831     |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 46.6            | 51.4               | 57.5             | .565               | .461      | .188     |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 47.3            | 63.9               | 71.6             | .038               | .332      | .002     |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

**Table 6-23***Knowledge of Math Requirements by Academic Track (11th graders only)*

| Course Requirement        | Academic Track  |                    |                  | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                           | Non-H<br>(n=73) | Single-H<br>(n=73) | Dual-H<br>(n=73) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| UC Davis                  |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs) | 6.9             | 8.5                | 6.7              | .720               | .720      | 1.000    |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)        | 44.4            | 49.3               | 58.3             | .567               | .285      | .099     |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)  | 48.6            | 42.3               | 34.7             | .391               | .331      | .066     |
| CSU Sacramento            |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| % Underestimate (< 3 yrs) | 16.7            | 22.5               | 31.5             | .387               | .224      | .037     |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)        | 47.2            | 52.1               | 57.5             | .565               | .461      | .188     |
| % Overestimate (> 3 yrs)  | 36.1            | 25.4               | 11.0             | .096               | .037      | .000     |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Key Agent

We found few instances in which talking to a key agent specifically about college admissions made a significant difference in students' knowledge of curricular requirements. The data in Table 6-24 suggest that students who talked to teachers at least once about college admission requirements were 67 percent more likely than those who did not talk to teachers to know the CSUS math requirement.

**Table 6-24***Knowledge of Curricular Requirements by Use of Key Agent (11th graders only)*

| Course Requirement      | Percent Who Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
|-------------------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
|                         | Parent  |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |              | College Rep   |               |
|                         | Yes<br>(n=220)                                  | No<br>(n=18) | Yes<br>(n=203) | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=183) | No<br>(n=55) | Yes<br>(n=93) | No<br>(n=144) |
| UC Davis                |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 91.4  | 88.9         | 90.6           | 94.4         | 91.3           | 90.9         | 90.3          | 92.4          |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 49.1  | 66.7         | 50.2           | 52.8         | 49.2           | 56.4         | 45.2          | 54.2          |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 55.0  | 66.7         | 55.2           | 61.1         | 56.8           | 54.5         | 54.8          | 56.9          |
| CSU Sacramento          |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % Know English (=4 yrs) | 80.9  | 72.2         | 79.8           | 83.3         | 81.4           | 76.4         | 79.6          | 81.3          |
| % Know math (=3 yrs)    | 51.8  | 50.0         | 54.7           | 33.3*        | 48.6           | 61.8         | 47.3          | 54.9          |
| % Know 3 or more of 6   | 62.3  | 50.0         | 61.6           | 58.3         | 62.8           | 54.5         | 66.7          | 57.6          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Significant differences use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

Table 6-25, which further breaks down the math knowledge, shows that students who spoke to teachers were less likely to underestimate the number of years required for math. Talking with counselors did not make much difference for student knowledge. We found two unexpected differences, however. Students who had spoken to a high school counselor were twice as likely to underestimate the number of years of math required for CSU Sacramento, and students who had spoken to a college representative (e. g. college admissions recruiter) were three times more likely to underestimate the number of years of math required for UC Davis.

**Table 6-25***Knowledge of Math Requirements by Use of Key Agent (11th graders only)*

| Knowledge of Math<br>Course Requirement | Percent Who Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
|---|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
|   | Parent  |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |              | College Rep   |               |
|   | Yes<br>(n=220)                                  | No<br>(n=18) | Yes<br>(n=203) | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=183) | No<br>(n=55) | Yes<br>(n=93) | No<br>(n=144) |
| UC Davis                                |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % Underestimate (<3 yrs)                | 7.0   | 11.1         | 6.5            | 11.4         | 8.4            | 3.6          | 13.0          | 3.5*          |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)                      | 49.1  | 66.7         | 50.2           | 52.8         | 49.2           | 56.4         | 45.2          | 54.2          |
| % Overestimate (>3 yrs)                 | 42.8  | 22.2         | 42.2           | 34.3         | 41.0           | 40.0         | 41.3          | 41.1          |
| CSU Sacramento                          |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % Underestimate (<3 yrs)                | 22.6  | 38.9         | 21.5           | 38.9*        | 27.8           | 12.7*        | 27.5          | 21.5          |
| % Correct (=3 yrs)                      | 51.8  | 50.0         | 54.7           | 33.3*        | 48.6           | 61.8         | 47.3          | 54.9          |
| % Overestimate (>3 yrs)                 | 24.9  | 11.1         | 23.0           | 27.8         | 22.8           | 25.5         | 24.2          | 23.8          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Significant differences use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

In sum, students knew more about Sac State's requirements than UC Davis'. Based on their responses survey and focus group responses, students in honors courses

displayed more specific knowledge than students who were in college preparatory courses. Furthermore, students in the high-performing schools were the most knowledgeable about UC Davis' requirements, while students in the low-performing schools were the most knowledgeable of CSU Sacramento's requirements. Overall, students indicated the greatest understanding of the English requirements and much less understanding of the mathematics requirements.

### Student Knowledge of University Placement Exams

Our survey asked students to identify in which subject areas CSUS and UCD tests students for placements. The question read in the following way: "In what subjects does CSU Sacramento and UCD test new students to place them in college-level courses." Students were able to mark any number of the following five subjects: English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language, and visual and performing arts. The correct answer is that both universities conduct placement tests in math and in English only. UCD administers the Subject A exam for English placement and the Mathematics Development Testing Program (MDTP). CSUS administers the Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) test and the English Placement Test (EPT).

#### Knowledge of Placement Exams by Grade

When counting the students who had indicated that each university required an English or math placement exam irrespective of their answers for the other 3 subjects, knowledge of the exams appears extremely high. The over-90 percent figures, however, are a result of students assuming that colleges require placement tests in all subjects. The number of students who knew the policies accurately – that exams are required only for math and English – is actually quite low. Less than one in five (17%) students knew the UCD placement policy at that level, and less than a third knew the CSUS policy. Eleventh graders were more than twice as likely as ninth graders to know that math and English were the only two subjects tested at either state university.

**Table 6-26**

*Knowledge of University Placement Exams by Grade*

| Placement Exam                          | Grade          |                 | Total<br>(n=453) | t-test<br>p-value |
|---|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|   | 9th<br>(n=214) | 11th<br>(n=239) |                  |                   |
| <b>UCD</b>                              |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Know English Placement                | 92.5           | 95.4            | 94.0             | .206              |
| % Know Math Placement                   | 93.0           | 94.9            | 94.0             | .389              |
| % Know English and Math (both and only) | 10.3           | 23.6            | 17.3             | .000              |
| <b>CSUS</b>                             |                |                 |                  |                   |
| % Know English Placement                | 93.9           | 95.8            | 94.9             | .376              |
| % Know Math Placement                   | 93.0           | 93.7            | 93.3             | .773              |
| % Know English and Math (both and only) | 16.8           | 39.7            | 28.8             | .000              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Knowledge of Placement Exams by Race

Table 6-27 shows knowledge of placement exams by race. In contrast to African Americans' relative lack of knowledge of curricular requirements mentioned earlier, African American students displayed the greatest knowledge of the placement exam requirements for UCD and were equally knowledgeable compared to students overall of the exams required by CSUS. Chinese Americans were the least knowledgeable about UCD and Southeast Asians were the least knowledgeable about CSUS.

**Table 6-27**

*Knowledge of Required University Placement Exams (English and Math) by Race (11th graders only)*

| English and Math Placement Exam | Race              |              |                 |                   |                 |                    |                     | Total (n=235) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|
|                                 | African-Am (n=19) | White (n=67) | Latino/a (n=23) | Chinese-Am (n=29) | SE Asian (n=29) | Other Asian (n=29) | Multi-racial (n=37) |               |
| % Know for UCD                  | 22.9              | 20.0         | 15.9            | 11.1              | 17.3            | 15.3               | 15.9                | 17.3          |
| % Know for CSUS                 | 29.2              | 29.2         | 27.3            | 31.5              | 21.2            | 33.9               | 30.4                | 29.1          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Knowledge of Placement Exams by School Performance, Academic Track, and Use of Key Agent

Tables 6-28 through 6-30 display the distribution of placement exam knowledge across school performance, track, and use of key agent. In all cases but one, knowledge of the English and math placement exams at the two universities was fairly low and not differentiated by type of school, track, or key agent. Similar to the analyses above, knowledge of the CSUS exams appears greater among students than of the UCD requirements. Surprisingly, students who did not talk to a high school counselor were more likely to know about the English and math placement tests for UC Davis than students who did talk to a high school counselor. This trend was similar for CSU Sacramento, but was not significant.

**Table 6-28**

*Knowledge of University Placement Exams by School Performance (11th graders only)*

| English and Math Placement Exam | School Performance |                 |                | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                                 | Hi-Perf (n=72)     | Mid-Perf (n=69) | Lo-Perf (n=98) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| % Know for UCD                  | 16.7               | 26.1            | 26.5           | .203               | .949   | .143  |
| % Know for CSUS                 | 41.4               | 33.3            | 42.9           | .327               | .213   | .854  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

**Table 6-29***Knowledge of University Placement Exams by Academic Track (11th graders only)*

|                                 | Academic Track  |                    |                  | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                                 | Non-H<br>(n=74) | Single-H<br>(n=72) | Dual-H<br>(n=74) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| English and Math Placement Exam |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| % Know for UCD                  | 20.3            | 20.8               | 25.7             | .966               | .464      | .437     |
| % Know for CSUS                 | 33.8            | 38.9               | 47.3             | .567               | .353      | .131     |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

**Table 6-30***Knowledge of University Placement Exams by Use of Key Agent (11th graders only)*

|                                 | Percent Correct Who Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                 | Parent  |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |              | College Rep   |               |
|                                 | Yes<br>(n=220)  | No<br>(n=18) | Yes<br>(n=203) | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=183) | No<br>(n=55) | Yes<br>(n=93) | No<br>(n=144) |
| English and Math Placement Exam |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| % Know UCD                      | 22.7  | 33.3         | 23.2           | 25.0         | 20.2           | 34.5*        | 18.3          | 27.1          |
| % Know CSUS                     | 38.6  | 50.0         | 38.9           | 39.9         | 37.7           | 47.3         | 38.7          | 40.3          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Significant differences by use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

Although students displayed a low level of specific knowledge of university placement exams, students expressed the desire to know more about these tests and to be better prepared to take these tests. Teachers and administrators expressed their growing concern over issues of university placement and remediation. Students spoke of their schools' preparing them for the subject requirements and SATs needed for gaining admission to college, but not necessarily helping students to succeed once they are in college. As one English 11 Honors student at Applewood expressed:

I think they should prepare us better for the placements tests so that we don't get stuck in basic classes. I think we should have the opportunity to know, not necessarily what's on the test, but have a good idea of it so that we know what to expect.

Students revealed their perceived differences between the content and format of college entrance tests and college placement tests. They correctly noted that the English placement tests were "essay" examinations while the college entrance exams were "multiple choice" and "vocabulary" tests. Students mentioned doing a practice placement test over the internet in which students had the option of taking the UC or the CSU English test. As one honors English student reported, "I think about 99 percent of our class wanted to send it to the UC."

To summarize, less than a third of the students knew that the UC Davis and CSU Sacramento require placement tests in English and math only. Student expressed a great need to know more about, and to be better prepared to pass, these placement tests.

## Knowledge of College Admission Selection Criteria

In our focus groups we asked students about the selection criteria for UC Davis and CSU Sacramento. Students generally stated that UCD was more difficult to get into, that students needed a high GPA, and that extracurricular activities mattered.

In our survey, we asked students to rate the importance of 15 possible criteria for admission to UC Davis and CSU Sacramento. Using a 5-point scale, students rated each criterion as either: "single most important," "very important," "moderately important," "minor importance," or "not considered/not important." In order to evaluate the "accuracy" of these responses, we compared them to the rankings of same criteria provided by the admission directors at the respective institutions.

In the following tables, we examine student knowledge of the criteria rated as either important ("single most important" or "very important") or unimportant ("not considered/not important") by the UCD and CSUS admission offices. Seven of the fifteen criteria were rated as important by the UC Davis official and four criteria were similarly rated by the CSU Sacramento official (criteria listed in Table 6-31). Three criteria were deemed important by both universities: high school grades, SAT-I, and high school courses. Two criteria were equally unimportant for both universities: ability to pay and race. Differences in criteria between the two institutions are notable and reflect the policies described in Sections 3 and 4 of this report. UCD has nearly twice as many criteria listed as very important for admission than does CSUS, a result that mirrors the more complex admission policy at the UC campus. Also, while the SAT-II is a very important criterion for admission to UCD, the test is not even required and consequently, of no importance for CSUS. On the other hand, senior year grades are a prominent factor for admission to CSUS but only a minor factor at UCD.

### Knowledge of Admission Criteria by Grade

Among all students, knowledge of the criteria that might be termed "traditional criteria" was quite high (see Table 6-31). Over 80 to 90 percent of students correctly marked grades, test scores, high school courses, and in the case of UCD, the application essay as important selection criteria. Almost half the students failed to recognize senior year grades as important criterion for CSUS, however. And, similar proportions did not view volunteer work and exceptional talent in a specific area as important for UCD. Knowledge of unimportant criteria was extremely poor. Less than 10 percent of the total sample correctly identified three UCD criteria (high school reputation, ability to pay, and letters of recommendation) and three CSUS criteria (SAT-II, class rank, and ability to pay) as unimportant. In other words, approximately nine out of ten students overestimated the importance of these admission criteria; they placed importance on factors that are not considered in the admissions process. Given the public awareness of efforts to remove race from college admission policies in California, it is not surprising that a sizeable proportion of students (~40%) correctly marked it as unimportant. However, the conjugate result suggests that a majority of students still believe race to be a factor of some importance in admission policy at both public institutions.

Table 6-31 also shows that for both universities, juniors were more likely than freshmen to know that a student's ability to pay for college was not an important admission criterion. On the other hand, freshmen were more likely to know that race was

unimportant. Two additional significant differences were found between freshmen and juniors. First, juniors were slightly more likely than freshmen to know that the application essay was a very important criterion for admission to UCD (87% vs 80%). Conversely, 90 percent of freshmen knew that the SAT-II was an important criterion for admission to UC Davis compared to just 78% of the juniors.

**Table 6-31**  
*Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Grade*

| Admission Criteria                  | Grade          |                 | Total<br>(n=451) | t-test<br>p-value |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                                     | 9th<br>(n=208) | 11th<br>(n=237) |                  |                   |
| <b>% Correct for UC Davis</b>       |                |                 |                  |                   |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                |                 |                  |                   |
| High school grades                  | 92.4           | 92.4            | 92.4             | .994              |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 89.1           | 88.7            | 89.9             | .882              |
| SAT-II                              | 89.6           | 78.6            | 83.8             | .001              |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 85.8           | 82.6            | 84.1             | .340              |
| Application essay                   | 80.2           | 87.0            | 83.8             | .051              |
| Exceptional talent                  | 57.8           | 55.7            | 56.7             | .651              |
| Volunteer work                      | 51.7           | 47.7            | 49.6             | .400              |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                |                 |                  |                   |
| High school's reputation            | 4.8            | 6.4             | 5.6              | .463              |
| Ability to pay                      | 4.7            | 10.6            | 7.8              | .021              |
| Letters of recommendation           | 1.0            | 1.3             | 1.1              | .753              |
| Race                                | 44.8           | 34.9            | 39.6             | .032              |
| <b>% Correct for CSU Sacramento</b> |                |                 |                  |                   |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                |                 |                  |                   |
| High school grades                  | 87.2           | 80.7            | 83.7             | .061              |
| Senior year grades                  | 73.5           | 42.8            | 57.0             | .000              |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 90.0           | 81.5            | 85.5             | .010              |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 86.7           | 77.8            | 81.5             | .007              |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Geographic background               | 27.8           | 24.7            | 26.1             | .464              |
| SAT-II                              | 1.0            | 2.9             | 2.0              | .137              |
| Rank in class                       | 2.4            | 2.9             | 2.7              | .707              |
| Ability to pay                      | 3.8            | 12.2            | 8.3              | .001              |
| Race                                | 44.5           | 35.2            | 39.6             | .043              |

Knowledge of Admission Criteria by Race

Table 6-32 shows knowledge of admissions criteria for juniors only by race. The level and pattern of "correct" responses are similar to those in the previous with a few exception. With respect to UCD criteria, African Americans are the only group in which standardized test scores (SAT-I, SAT-II, ACT) are cited as very important for admission at greater rates than all other criteria. Though the differences appear small, for most other student groups high school grades are seen more often as very important. Among the important criteria, the importance of volunteer work is again most often underestimated, especially among white students. Although the ability to pay for college

is not considered in UCD admission policy, all of the multi-racial 11th graders in our sample claimed some importance on the factor, and even the most "knowledgeable" group, Chinese Americans erroneously cited it as a factor at a rate of over 75 percent. The majority of all racial groups continue to believe that one's race is considered in admission. The previous beneficiaries of affirmative action (African-American and Latino students), however, are among the most likely to maintain that belief. Similar patterns are evident in the data for CSUS. Two additional patterns in the data are unique to CSUS. First, although about 80 percent of all 11th graders understand the importance of high school grades for admission to CSUS, almost one-third of Chinese American and multi-racial students downplay its importance. The knowledge base is worse for senior year grades. Two-thirds of the 11th grade sample underestimated their importance, including almost 80% of African Americans – the largest among all racial groups.

**Table 6-32**  
*Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Race (11th graders only)*

| Admission Criteria                  | Race                 |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
|                                     | African-Am<br>(n=19) | White<br>(n=67) | Latino/a<br>(n=23) | Chinese-Am<br>(n=29) | SE Asian<br>(n=29) | Other Asian<br>(n=29) | Multi-racial<br>(n=37) | Total<br>(n=235) |
| <b>% Correct for UC Davis</b>       |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| High school grades                  | 84.2                 | 94.0            | 95.7               | 93.1                 | 96.4               | 89.7                  | 89.2                   | 92.3             |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 94.7                 | 92.5            | 82.6               | 82.8                 | 82.1               | 93.1                  | 86.5                   | 88.5             |
| SAT-II                              | 89.5                 | 81.8            | 81.8               | 72.4                 | 71.4               | 82.8                  | 73.0                   | 78.9             |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 78.9                 | 83.3            | 87.0               | 82.1                 | 77.8               | 86.2                  | 81.1                   | 82.7             |
| Application essay                   | 84.2                 | 80.6            | 91.3               | 93.1                 | 92.9               | 93.1                  | 81.1                   | 86.8             |
| Exceptional talent                  | 68.4                 | 53.0            | 47.8               | 58.6                 | 64.3               | 48.3                  | 54.1                   | 55.8             |
| Volunteer work                      | 50.0                 | 36.4            | 56.5               | 51.7                 | 44.4               | 58.6                  | 54.1                   | 48.1             |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| High school's reputation            | 10.7                 | 4.5             | 8.7                | 0.0                  | 7.4                | 6.9                   | 10.8                   | 6.5              |
| Ability to pay                      | 15.8                 | 9.1             | 8.7                | 24.1                 | 11.1               | 14.3                  | 0.0                    | 10.8             |
| Letters of rec                      | 0.0                  | 0.0             | 0.0                | 3.4                  | 3.4                | 3.4                   | 0.0                    | 1.3              |
| Race                                | 26.3                 | 41.5            | 21.7               | 34.5                 | 29.6               | 41.4                  | 29.7                   | 34.2             |
| <b>% Correct for CSU Sacramento</b> |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| High school grades                  | 78.9                 | 83.6            | 87.0               | 69.0                 | 89.7               | 86.2                  | 69.4                   | 80.8             |
| Senior year grades                  | 21.1                 | 35.8            | 60.9               | 34.5                 | 48.3               | 55.2                  | 44.4                   | 42.3             |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 94.7                 | 77.6            | 78.3               | 72.4                 | 82.8               | 96.6                  | 77.8                   | 81.6             |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 78.9                 | 71.6            | 87.0               | 75.9                 | 72.4               | 85.7                  | 75.0                   | 76.8             |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                      |                 |                    |                      |                    |                       |                        |                  |
| Geographic background               | 15.8                 | 22.4            | 22.7               | 20.7                 | 41.4               | 32.1                  | 17.1                   | 24.2             |
| SAT-II                              | 0.0                  | 4.5             | 0.0                | 3.4                  | 3.4                | 3.4                   | 2.8                    | 3.0              |
| Rank in class                       | 0.0                  | 3.0             | 0.0                | 6.9                  | 6.9                | 3.4                   | 0.0                    | 3.0              |
| Ability to pay                      | 21.1                 | 9.0             | 8.7                | 27.6                 | 13.8               | 10.3                  | 2.8                    | 12.0             |
| Race                                | 26.3                 | 40.0            | 21.7               | 34.5                 | 37.9               | 44.8                  | 25.0                   | 34.5             |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

### Knowledge of Admission Criteria by School Performance

By school performance, we found significant differences in students' knowledge of admissions criteria (see Table 6-33). For UC Davis, students in the low-performing schools were less likely than students in the mid-and high-performing schools to correctly ascertain the importance of the SAT-I and one's high school curriculum. These students were also more likely to underestimate the importance of having an exceptional talent, compared to their peers in high-performing schools. Interestingly, students attending the middle-performing schools were the least likely to overestimate the importance of a high school's academic reputation.

Among the CSUS criteria, only two showed significant differences by school performance. Almost 90% of the students in middle-performing schools correctly estimated the importance of high school curriculum for admission, a figure greater than that among students in high-performing schools. Although the proportion is quite low (~6%), students attending low-performing schools were the most accurate regarding the lack of importance of the SAT-II for admission to CSUS.

**Table 6-33**

*Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by School Performance (11th graders only)*

| Admission Criteria                  | School Performance |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                                     | Hi-Perf<br>(n=70)  | Mid-Perf<br>(n=69) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=97) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| <b>% Correct for UC Davis</b>       |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| High school grades                  | 94.3               | 91.3               | 91.8              | .501               | .919   | .523  |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 92.9               | 92.8               | 82.5              | .985               | .040   | .037  |
| SAT-II                              | 87.1               | 75.0               | 72.0              | .082               | 1.000  | .060  |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 88.4               | 89.7               | 74.0              | .838               | .008   | .015  |
| Application essay                   | 91.4               | 81.2               | 87.6              | .074               | .225   | .474  |
| Exceptional talent                  | 68.6               | 52.9               | 48.5              | .064               | .565   | .010  |
| Volunteer work                      | 51.4               | 46.3               | 46.9              | .549               | .940   | .565  |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| High school's reputation            | 4.3                | 11.8               | 4.2               | .073               | .051   | .975  |
| Ability to pay                      | 12.9               | 7.4                | 11.6              | .286               | .359   | .806  |
| Letters of recommendation           | 1.4                | 0.0                | 2.1               | .321               | .158   | .743  |
| Race                                | 37.7               | 36.2               | 31.6              | .861               | .539   | .422  |
| <b>% Correct for CSU Sacramento</b> |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| High school grades                  | 87.1               | 79.7               | 77.3              | .266               | .700   | .112  |
| Senior year grades                  | 40.0               | 39.1               | 47.4              | .917               | .290   | .342  |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 84.3               | 84.1               | 78.4              | .971               | .352   | .330  |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 70.0               | 87.0               | 75.0              | .018               | .071   | .447  |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                    |                    |                   |                    |        |       |
| Geographic background               | 24.3               | 26.9               | 24.0              | .732               | .678   | .961  |
| SAT-II                              | 1.4                | 0.0                | 6.2               | .618               | .021   | .073  |
| Rank in class                       | 4.3                | 0.0                | 4.1               | .138               | .124   | .952  |
| Ability to pay                      | 11.4               | 8.7                | 14.4              | .595               | .249   | .568  |
| Race                                | 37.7               | 33.3               | 34.6              | .597               | 1.000  | .569  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

### Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Academic Track

The analysis by academic track in Table 6-34 shows striking differences between the knowledge of CSUS criteria among dual-honors and non-honors students. In every "very important" criterion, students in the highest track undervalued the criterion much more than their non-honors counterparts. The most striking difference is students' assessment of the importance of senior year grades. Only one quarter of dual-honors students believe senior grades to be important for admission, compared to about 60% among non-honors students. Conversely, knowledge of UCD admission criteria is distinguished very little by academic track, the only exception being the more accurate understanding of the SAT-II criterion among non-honors students. It is apparent, then, that the significant undervaluing of CSUS admission criteria by dual-honors students is likely due to their low estimation of the university's academic competitiveness. Compared to non-honors students, dual-honors students also better understood that ability to pay was not important for UCD admission and the SAT-II was not important for CSUS admission.

**Table 6-34**

*Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Academic Track (11th graders only)*

| Admission criteria                  | Academic Track  |                    |                  | t-tests (p-values) |           |          |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
|                                     | Non-H<br>(n=73) | Single-H<br>(n=72) | Dual-H<br>(n=73) | non-sing           | sing-dual | non-dual |
| <b>% Correct for UC Davis</b>       |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| High school grades                  | 89.0            | 91.5               | 95.9             | .577               | .334      | .126     |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 91.8            | 84.5               | 91.8             | .158               | .158      | 1.000    |
| SAT-II                              | 86.3            | 70.0               | 80.6             | .017               | .121      | .393     |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 87.7            | 82.9               | 84.5             | .421               | .793      | .587     |
| Application essay                   | 87.7            | 85.9               | 87.1             | .758               | .758      | 1.000    |
| Exceptional talent                  | 64.4            | 60.0               | 49.3             | .596               | .197      | .066     |
| Volunteer work                      | 51.4            | 51.4               | 47.2             | .996               | .619      | .620     |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| High school's reputation            | 5.5             | 11.4               | 4.2              | .164               | .091      | .757     |
| Ability to pay                      | 4.1             | 11.3               | 16.9             | .163               | .275      | .013     |
| Letters of recommendation           | 1.4             | 2.9                | 0.0              | .451               | .151      | .486     |
| Race                                | 41.1            | 33.8               | 31.0             | .369               | .722      | .209     |
| <b>% Correct for CSU Sacramento</b> |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| High school grades                  | 87.5            | 79.2               | 74.0             | .210               | .432      | .042     |
| Senior year grades                  | 59.7            | 38.9               | 26.0             | .009               | .105      | .000     |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 93.1            | 81.9               | 72.6             | .076               | .133      | .001     |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 87.5            | 76.4               | 69.4             | .107               | .313      | .009     |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |                 |                    |                  |                    |           |          |
| Geographic background               | 75.0            | 71.4               | 76.4             | .634               | .505      | .847     |
| SAT-II                              | 0.0             | 2.8                | 5.5              | .309               | .321      | .045     |
| Rank in class                       | 2.8             | 1.4                | 5.5              | .638               | .166      | .359     |
| Ability to pay                      | 6.9             | 15.3               | 15.1             | .131               | .970      | .140     |
| Race                                | 40.3            | 36.1               | 31.9             | .610               | .601      | .301     |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

### Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Key Agent

Finally, in our analysis of admission selection criteria knowledge by use of key agent, we found some significant differences. Surprisingly, students who had not spoken to a parent were much more likely to understand that ability to pay did not matter for admission to both universities (see Table 6-35). Those who had not spoken to a parent about admissions were three times more likely to understand this criterion for UCD and more than twice as likely for the CSUS policy. A similar finding was apparent with regard to use of a counselor and the "ability to pay" criterion for UC Davis. "Negative" parent effects were also evident for knowledge of the CSUS policy regarding SAT-I and class rank. There were two expected trends or positive relationships with use of a key agent. Students who had spoken to a teacher or a college representative were more likely to correctly understand the importance of the application essay for UC Davis.

**Table 6-35**

*Knowledge of Admissions Criteria by Use of Key Agent (11th graders only)*

| Institution                         | Percent Correct Who Spoke to Key Agent about Admissions |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
|                                     | Parent  |              | Teacher        |              | Counselor      |              | College Rep   |               |
|                                     | Yes<br>(n=229)  | No<br>(n=18) | Yes<br>(n=202) | No<br>(n=36) | Yes<br>(n=182) | No<br>(n=55) | Yes<br>(n=92) | No<br>(n=144) |
| <b>% Correct for UC Davis</b>       |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| High school grades                  | 92.2  | 94.4         | 93.6           | 86.1         | 92.9           | 90.9         | 89.2          | 94.4          |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 89.0  | 83.3         | 90.1           | 80.6         | 87.4           | 92.7         | 87.1          | 90.2          |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 83.8  | 66.7         | 82.4           | 83.3         | 84.4           | 76.4         | 81.5          | 83.0          |
| Application essay                   | 86.8  | 88.9         | 89.6           | 72.2**       | 86.3           | 90.9         | 92.5          | 83.9*(p=.054) |
| Exceptional talent                  | 55.5  | 55.6         | 55.2           | 58.3         | 55.2           | 56.4         | 52.7          | 57.7          |
| SAT-II                              | 78.8  | 72.2         | 80.0           | 69.4         | 77.2           | 81.8         | 78.3          | 78.9          |
| Volunteer work                      | 47.7  | 44.4         | 47.7           | 47.2         | 49.7           | 41.8         | 51.1          | 46.1          |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| High school's reputation            | 6.5   | 5.6          | 6.5            | 5.6          | 5.0            | 10.9         | 6.5           | 6.3           |
| Ability to pay                      | 8.8   | 33.3**       | 10.6           | 11.1         | 7.3            | 21.8**       | 7.6           | 12.7          |
| Letters of recommendation           | 1.4   | 0.0          | 0.5            | 5.6**        | 0.6            | 3.7          | 0.0           | 2.1           |
| Race                                | 34.7  | 38.9         | 36.2           | 27.8         | 36.3           | 30.9         | 35.9          | 34.5          |
| <b>% Correct for CSU Sacramento</b> |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| <u>Very Important Criteria</u>      |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| High school grades                  | 80.8  | 83.3         | 81.7           | 75.0         | 81.9           | 76.4         | 75.0          | 84.0          |
| Senior year grades                  | 42.0  | 44.4         | 42.6           | 41.7         | 41.2           | 45.5         | 41.3          | 43.1          |
| SAT-I or ACT                        | 79.9  | 100.0*       | 82.7           | 75.0         | 80.8           | 83.6         | 83.7          | 80.6          |
| Student's HS curriculum             | 77.1  | 72.2         | 75.6           | 83.3         | 77.9           | 72.7         | 75.8          | 78.5          |
| <u>Criteria not considered</u>      |   |              |                |              |                |              |               |               |
| Geographic background               | 24.1  | 33.3         | 24.6           | 25.0         | 23.8           | 28.3         | 18.7          | 28.9          |
| SAT-II                              | 2.7   | 5.6          | 3.0            | 2.8          | 3.8            | 0.0          | 3.3           | 2.1           |
| Rank in class                       | 2.3   | 11.1*        | 2.5            | 5.6          | 7.3            | 1.6*         | 3.3           | 2.8           |
| Ability to pay                      | 11.0  | 27.8*        | 12.9           | 8.3          | 10.4           | 18.2         | 12.0          | 12.5          |
| Race                                | 34.9  | 41.2         | 35.0           | 36.1         | 33.7           | 40.7         | 38.0          | 33.8          |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Significant differences by use/non-use of each key agent denoted by \*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05

## Parent Knowledge of Postsecondary Policies

In this final section, we include a brief analysis of parent data. We looked specifically at parent knowledge of tuition costs and curricular requirements at UC Davis and CSU Sacramento. In general, we found no evidence of a relationship between student knowledge and parent knowledge. Parents' estimates of tuition were more accurate than student estimates, while their knowledge of curricular requirements was less accurate.

### Parent Knowledge of Tuition

In terms of mean estimates, parents were much closer to actual tuition costs than were students. Compared to actual annual tuition of approximately \$4,000 (UCD), \$2000 (CSUS), and \$300 (local community college), parents' estimates were still greatly overestimated at about \$16,000, \$11,000, and \$5,000, respectively (see Table 6-36). Unlike the analysis of the student data, there were no significant differences in tuition estimates between parents of 9th graders and parents of 11th graders.

Table 6-36  
*Parent Knowledge of Tuition*

| Institution             | Mean Estimate  |                 |                  | t-test<br>p-value |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                         | 9th<br>(n=172) | 11th<br>(n=156) | Total<br>(n=343) |                   |
| UC Davis                | \$15,942       | \$17,021        | \$16,271         | .860              |
| CSUS                    | \$10,145       | \$11,936        | \$11,006         | .669              |
| Local Community College | \$4,566        | \$5,459         | \$4,907          | .795              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Looking at all parents across SES and school performance categories, we observe the expected patterns clearly. As shown in Table 6-37, parents from higher SES backgrounds are much more on target with estimates of tuition compared to mid- and low-SES parents. Because of large standard deviations in tuition estimates, however, only the mid-SES versus hi-SES differences were statistically significant. The bottom panel of the table indicates that parents of children attending the low-performing school are also most likely to overestimate tuition costs at any of the three public institutions. We also compared the tuition estimates of parents who reported receiving college cost information from their school to parents who had not received such information, but we found no statistical differences. For example, the average tuition estimate for CSUS was \$9616 among parents reporting that they had received cost information, compared to \$11,319 among those reporting the receipt of no information.

Table 6-37

*Parent Knowledge of Tuition by SES and School Performance*

| Institution             | Mean Estimate by SES |                    |                   | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                         | Low-SES<br>(n=44)    | Mid-SES<br>(n=106) | Hi-SES<br>(n=127) | lo-mid             | mid-hi | lo-hi |
| UC Davis                | \$35,050             | \$12,504           | \$9,213           | .222               | .020   | .162  |
| CSUS                    | \$27,880             | \$8,737            | \$5,528           | .208               | .015   | .142  |
| Local Community College | \$17,298             | \$3,047            | \$1,569           | .249               | .090   | .203  |

| Institution             | Mean Estimate by School Performance |                     |                    | t-tests (p-values) |        |       |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|-------|
|                         | Hi-Perf<br>(n=113)                  | Mid-Perf<br>(n=111) | Lo-Perf<br>(n=119) | hi-mid             | mid-lo | hi-lo |
| UC Davis                | \$10,389                            | \$9,830             | \$27,867           | .600               | .028   | .033  |
| CSUS                    | \$6,040                             | \$7,600             | \$19,298           | .082               | .048   | .025  |
| Local Community College | \$1,821                             | \$1,815             | \$11,113           | .986               | .057   | .057  |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data.

Parent Knowledge of Curricular Requirements

Parent knowledge of the curricular requirements for UCD and CSUS was no better, and perhaps a bit weaker, compared to the student responses. The number of parents who knew the requirements exactly – those that knew the required number of years for all six subjects – was exceedingly low. Only 4 out of 433 parents knew all the requirements for UC Davis, and just 5 knew the requirements for CSU Sacramento. Similar to students, the English and foreign language requirements were the two that parents knew the best, but in lower proportions compared to students. For example, nearly 90 percent of the students in our sample correctly reported the four-year English requirement for UCD, compared to just two-thirds of the parents. Also, fewer parents appeared to know the math requirement (see Table 6-38). While few parents knew all of the curricular requirements for either university, 40 percent knew at least three of the UCD requirements and about 43 percent knew at least three of the CSUS requirements. These proportions were slightly higher among the student responses. Unlike the student data, there were no significant differences in knowledge between ninth and eleventh grade parents.

Table 6-38  
*Parent Knowledge of Curricular Requirements By Grade*

| Course Requirement                    | Percent Among  |                 |                  | t-test<br>p-value |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                                       | 9th<br>(n=215) | 11th<br>(n=218) | Total<br>(n=433) |                   |
| UC Davis                              |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Know English requirement (=4 years)   | 68.8           | 68.8            | 68.8             | .995              |
| Know foreign lang req (=2 years)      | 50.7           | 43.1            | 46.9             | .115              |
| Know soc science req (= 2 years)      | 34.9           | 31.7            | 33.3             | .476              |
| Know lab science req (=2 years)       | 33.5           | 32.6            | 33.0             | .839              |
| Know math requirement (=3 years)      | 31.2           | 25.2            | 28.2             | .171              |
| Know visual/perf arts req (= 0 years) | 7.4            | 7.8             | 7.6              | .889              |
| Know 3 or more of 6 requirements      | 42.8           | 37.6            | 40.2             | .273              |
| CSU Sacramento                        |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Know English requirement (=4 years)   | 60.0           | 61.5            | 60.7             | .755              |
| Know foreign lang req (=2 years)      | 54.9           | 57.3            | 56.1             | .608              |
| Know visual/perf arts req (= 1 year)  | 48.4           | 42.7            | 45.5             | .234              |
| Know math requirement (=3 years)      | 31.2           | 35.8            | 33.5             | .310              |
| Know lab science req (=1 year)        | 14.0           | 10.6            | 12.2             | .282              |
| Know soc science req (= 1 year)       | 7.0            | 9.6             | 8.3              | .317              |
| Know 3 or more of 6                   | 45.6           | 39.9            | 42.7             | .234              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Table 6-39 illustrates the extent to which parents under- or over-estimated curricular requirements. Earlier in this section, we noted that students incorrectly reported math requirements because they tended to over-estimate the number of years required for admission, particularly for UC Davis. Most parents also over-estimated the math requirement for UCD but tended to under-estimate the requirement for CSUS. Given that the math requirement for both universities is three years, parents may be erroneously assuming a higher requirement for the more selective UC campus, while many students assume the maximum number of math courses (4) is required for either school. Levels of parent and student knowledge do not appear to be related. Correlations between the number of requirements guessed correctly by parents and students are also somewhat low ( $r = 0.15$ ,  $p < .01$  for CSUS and  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < .01$  for UCD).

Table 6-39  
*Parent Knowledge of Math Requirements By Grade*

| Knowledge of Math Requirement | Percent Among  |                 |                  | t-test<br>p-value |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|
|                               | 9th<br>(n=215) | 11th<br>(n=218) | Total<br>(n=433) |                   |
| UC Davis                      |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Underestimate (< 3 years)     | 29.3           | 32.6            | 30.9             | .463              |
| Correct (=3 years Math)       | 31.2           | 25.2            | 28.2             | .171              |
| Overestimate (> 3 years)      | 39.5           | 42.2            | 40.9             | .574              |
| CSU Sacramento                |                |                 |                  |                   |
| Underestimate (< 3 years)     | 41.9           | 36.7            | 39.3             | .272              |
| Correct (=3 years Math)       | 31.2           | 35.8            | 33.5             | .310              |
| Overestimate (> 3 years)      | 27.0           | 27.5            | 27.3             | .899              |

Note: Subgroup sample sizes may differ from total due to missing data

Surprisingly, we found no significant differences by school performance and by SES for parent knowledge of three or more curricular requirements for either university by school performance or SES. One additional distinguishing factor surfaced in our analysis, however. Parents who reported receiving course requirement information from their child's school were significantly more likely to know at least three of the CSUS requirements compared to those who said they had not received information (49% vs 34%, respectively,  $p < .01$ ). A similar but smaller difference regarding UCD requirements was also evident but not statistically significant.

## SUMMARY

If level of aspiration can be measured by the selectivity of the institutions in which students show interest, then students from higher SES families, in higher academic tracks, from higher-performing schools, and with higher GPAs displayed higher aspiration. From their responses on our surveys and in our focus groups, students expressed that UC Davis was more difficult to gain admission to than CSU Sacramento and that CSU Sacramento was more difficult to gain admission to than their local community college. More specifically, students expressed that UC Davis had more entrance requirements and that students needed a higher GPA and stronger SAT scores to gain admission to UC Davis.

Our survey measured students' college knowledge on four measures: (1) college costs, (2) college admission curricular requirements, (3) college placement exams, and (4) college selection criteria. In terms of tuition knowledge, although students understood the relative costs of the three types of institutions, they greatly overestimated the costs. Students in low-performing schools were most likely to overestimate grossly the cost of UC Davis and community college and students in the high-performing schools were most likely to fall within the target range.

In terms of the second measure – knowledge of curricular requirements – students knew more about Sac State's requirements than UC Davis's. On our surveys and in our focus groups, students in honors courses displayed more specific knowledge than students in college preparatory courses. Furthermore, students in the high-performing schools were the most knowledgeable about UC Davis's requirements, while students in the low-performing schools were the most knowledgeable of CSU Sacramento's requirements. Finally, students indicated the greatest understanding that four years of English were required and much less understanding of the three-year mathematics requirement. In fact, one-third overestimated the math requirement for CSU and nearly half overestimated the requirement for UC.

In terms of the third measure of college knowledge – knowledge of the English and math placement exams at the two universities – students had a fairly poor understanding of these exams. Their knowledge of university placement exams was not differentiated by type of school, track, SES, or key agent. Less than 30 percent of students knew about Sac State's placement exams and less than 20 percent of student knew about UC Davis's exams. Juniors were more than twice as likely as freshmen to know that math and English were the only two subjects tested at both universities.

Fourth, in terms of knowledge of admission selection criteria, students in the high- and mid-performing schools displayed a greater understanding than students in the low performing schools. Specifically, students in high- and mid-performing schools displayed a greater understanding than students in low-performing schools that high school curriculum and SAT-I scores were important factors for admission. Surprisingly, non-honors students were more likely than dual honors students to understand the importance of high school curriculum and SAT-I scores. We speculate that this disparity was caused by dual honors students dismissing the selectivity of the CSU system and having low aspiration for CSU, and therefore downplaying the importance of the admission requirement. This speculation is substantiated by the fact that honors students expressed in focus groups that it was relatively easy to gain admission to the CSU.

Overall, 60 percent of all students (including 66 percent of 11<sup>th</sup> graders) gave importance to race as a criterion for admission to UC Davis and Sac State. Furthermore, 92 percent of all juniors believed incorrectly that ability to pay for college was a factor in UC Davis' and Sac State's admission selection process. Both institutions' information on financial aid provided detailed advice on how to apply for aid but made no mention of the fact that a student's ability to pay, or his or her simply applying for financial aid, had no bearing on the university's decision to admit that student. In fact, neither institution's admission material stated explicitly that their admission selection procedures were "need blind."

Finally, we compared student knowledge and parent knowledge and found no evidence of a relationship between the two. Parents' estimates of tuition were more accurate than student estimates, however, while their knowledge of curricular requirements was less accurate.

## **SECTION 6 – Part B**

### **A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

In our analysis, we created a measure of school performance in order to understand how college aspiration and college knowledge may differ by this measure. As was expected, our data suggest that school performance is an important factor for college knowledge. Postsecondary aspiration and knowledge of tuition, curricular requirements, placement tests, and admission selection criteria increased with school performance.

Our data also revealed that among the key agents who can influence students' college knowledge, aside from parents, students spoke to their teachers the most, and those who had spoken to a teacher about college admission displayed greater college knowledge. While speaking to a teacher about admission requirements did not seem to make a difference with tuition knowledge or placement exam knowledge, it did seem to be associated with students' level of postsecondary aspiration, knowledge of math requirements for CSUS, and understanding of the importance of UC Davis' application essay. Hence, teachers were important sources of college knowledge for students. As this will explain more fully with student and teacher voices, individual teachers can make a difference in cultivating a collegiate culture that supports college knowledge.

Higher aspiration and better college knowledge can be better understood in light of a school's culture, which is far more complex than the school's academic rating based on standardized board scores, high school curricular offerings, and postsecondary placement. Collegiate culture includes the intangible qualities and sustaining values or ethos of a school that can motivate and advocate for students to attend postsecondary education but can also prevent them from pursuing postsecondary options. Hence, this qualitative section explores further how school culture affects college aspiration and college knowledge.

#### **Collegiate Culture**

A high school's collegiate culture cannot be fully measured via simple, visible, or discrete indices such as standardized test scores, honors and advanced placement courses, and postsecondary placement. Collegiate culture also encompasses the less tangible, more elusive qualities that can best be described through narratives that reveal the sustaining values or ethos of an institution. From our analysis of interviews with students, teachers, counselors, and vice principals and the various school quality indicators (i.e., college placement statistics, standardized board scores, counseling programs and emphasis), a typology for college preparatory culture was developed. This typology ranged from a strong college preparatory culture to a minimalist college preparatory culture to a non-college preparatory culture.

Not surprisingly, the two schools that we categorized as high-performing schools at the onset of the research based solely on standardized board scores were the two schools that displayed stronger collegiate cultures. Furthermore, the two middle-performing schools displayed more of a minimalist college preparatory culture. Finally, while the two low-performing schools displayed some elements of a minimalist college

preparatory culture, they were also challenged by elements that were essentially non-college preparatory.

### Strong Collegiate Culture

In schools with a strong collegiate culture, everyone and everything is geared toward college preparation and the expectation is that virtually all students will continue directly to college (see McDonough, 1997). This culture fosters a high level of expectation for academic achievement such that the conversations around postsecondary options focus more on which college students would attend, not whether they would attend college.

At these schools, counselors and teachers are well attuned to the importance of standardized testing and implement specific strategies for enhancing their students' preparation. It is typical for such schools to require all students to take the PSATs in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and then again in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to enter the National Merit Scholarship competition. Faculty and administrators explicitly and repeatedly encourage students to take achievement tests (SAT IIs) immediately upon completing a subject or class.

Typically, counselors at elite college preparatory schools are extremely credible and competent and go to great lengths to provide their students accurate and up-to-date information. They are hired armed with degrees from elite colleges and have developed a broad network of professional contacts. Counselors and teachers at such schools explained that parents were very involved with the college search and preparation process and helped to convey knowledge, attitudes, and expectations about college. Because parents at these schools exert a great amount of pressure on their children to succeed academically, the school counseling efforts are directed at both students and parents. Counselors at elite, college preparatory schools exercise sensitivity to the pressures of admissions and counsel seniors about including "safety schools" on their college list and forming an admissions management strategy that also fosters a healthy rejection management strategy.

Students rely heavily on their teachers for college advice, especially when having to choose among the various offers of admission. Teachers are integrally involved in the college knowledge process, often crafting junior appraisal forms that the college counselors then use to orchestrate the school statement/counselor letters of recommendation for each senior.

Within the schools in our sample that exhibited strong collegiate cultures, teachers and administrators repeatedly described their school as "college preparatory" and often spoke in superlatives, such as "the best math program" and "the highest UC placement." Often, these schools are preoccupied with the rationale, coherence, and integrity of their academic curriculum. The high-performing schools in our sample anticipated state and national assessment and curricular standards changes and developed school-wide benchmarks and assessments to meet these new external demands.

Despite many solid reasons to be proud of the school's academic accomplishments, faculty and administrators are rarely content with being merely good and strive to be much better. As Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot found in *The Good High School* (1983), "goodness" is inextricably linked with self-criticism; while the school recognizes its exemplary qualities, it also points to its vulnerabilities which it hope to

confront directly and worked with over time. Strong college preparatory schools search for ways to improve their student services and college success.

*Three Palms.* As was clearly evident in the décor of Three Palms' main office, which contained elaborate displays of impressive college matriculation statistics, college pennants, and college posters, Three Palms is a school with a strong collegiate culture. The school's SAT-9 and SAT-I averages are well above the district and state averages, and nearly 40 percent of all graduates matriculate directly into 4-year institutions of higher education. Despite the fact that both Bridgeport, the other school in District 2, also offers a wide array of Advanced Placement courses (approximately a dozen AP courses each), Three Palms students earn AP credits at a rate twice that of Bridgeport and twice that of the State's average.

Using teachers' responses to construct goal profile of schools, McLaughlin (1992) defines an "academic high school" as one that has a more homogenous student body in terms of student academic interests, family expectations, and socio-economic status. Such a school is able to devote more attention to "academic excellence" and less attention to "basic skills" than what McLaughlin calls a "typical" high school. Three Palms, a high-performing school in our sample, nicely fits McLaughlin's description of an academic high school.

According to the college counselor, standardized testing preparation is an important facet of his counseling program. This counselor quickly notified all faculty of UC Berkeley's new policy to weigh SAT IIs more heavily than the SAT Is. He urged teachers to advise their students to take the SAT II subject exams as close to the end of a course of study so that students will have the best chance of retaining the subject matter. Teachers were instructed to teach their students how to "bubble-in" a scantron form properly and how to narrow and eliminate choices on a multiple choice exam. Even the honors students at Three Palms worried about the SATs; these students have high grade point averages but feel that strong SATs will make the big difference in university admission and distinguish these students from other applicants with similar grades.

Teachers play an advocacy role at Three Palms through formal advising duties. Each teacher advises a group of students throughout the students' four years. One teacher worried, however, that she was not well trained in college counseling and is not well-versed on the ever-changing policies and procedures for helping students navigate the college matriculation process successfully. She said:

... it's just unbelievably frustrating. It's whether they'll go to college or not, it's a pretty important thing and so I have really huge concerns about the way that that's run. I think I'm more conscientious about it than a lot of teacher and don't blame them because it's really tiring, I mean it takes a lot of time to be able to go through every student's registration form. Takes at least 20 minutes to go through an make sure, "Okay, what has this student failed? What has this student passed? What do they still need for high school and ok, where does that leave them in terms of UC recs.? ...What do they need to do next year?" And it's a big responsibility I'm not really trained to do...

This concern demonstrates the responsibility that teachers have assumed for counseling students for college and the need for more teacher training on college advising. It also demonstrates the self-critical nature of a faculty who does well by its students but strives to do better.

*Bellview.* Bellview High, which is located in an upper middle-class residential neighborhood, is known for its rigorous academic program and high academic achievement. Bellview has consistently earned the highest SAT-9 scores in the district's. Other indicators, such as the school's high UC matriculation, provide sufficient evidence that Bellview merits a "strong collegiate culture" label. In fact, all of the students in the honors 11 English course who participated in a focus group indicated that they would apply to UC Davis.

Bellview administrators and teachers expressed great pride in the "college prep" school. Teachers explained that the school is much more "academically conscious than the rest of the schools in the district," that the community is "well-educated" and "motivate their kids to go to good college(s)," and that the school has "very low grade inflation compared to the state average." Said the counselor: "We have a community which has high aspirations for their children. The students are very motivated." He also said, "Despite all the lack of what appears to be school services, it just seems to work, continues to work and kids make it through." In response to questions about how the three school counselors are able to serve such a large student body, he said, "We stay open on Saturdays, we're open on Easter vacation, we stay late in the evening, we come early in the morning."

At Bellview teachers spoke proudly of the high-achieving student body. At the same time, some spoke of the disproportionately high numbers of low-SES and minority students in the lower-level courses. One teacher expressed her agreement with UC's consideration of abandoning its policy of awarding an extra grade-point for honors and advanced placement courses because she believes the policy adversely impacts underrepresented students. As this teacher explained,

The one thing that I do agree with is that they are taking away the one additional point for honors because if you look at the --to be perfectly honest with you --at the college prep courses, and particularly the higher courses, the APs and the HPs, you don't see very many students of color in there.

By "students of color" this teacher was referring to the African-American and Latino population at Bellview and not the large Asian-American population. This teacher's observation of few African-American and Latino students in honors courses was confirmed by our sample survey; 30 percent of the "non-honors" students and zero percent of the "dual honors" students were of African-American and Latino descent. In contrast, 48 percent of the non-honors and 79 percent of the dual honors students were of Asian descent.

### Minimalist Collegiate Culture

In schools that displayed a minimalist college preparatory culture, counseling efforts were reactive, as counselors responded to student or parent demand for specific counseling but did not proactively promote special advising or discussion programs. All six of the schools in our sample had student-to-counselor ratios of approximately 700-to-1, and counselors at all six schools lamented that they were unable to advise all of their students, let alone guide the efforts of every “college-bound” senior. But the schools that exhibited a minimalist collegiate culture were less aggressive about changing the status quo than the schools that exhibited strong collegiate cultures.

Counselors at minimalist collegiate culture schools spoke of devoting more time to class scheduling and helping students meet the high school graduation requirements than to postsecondary counseling. Counselors spoke of advising students in their classes about registering for high school courses and posting deadlines for college applications and college entrance exams, and financial aid forms. They spoke of providing forms and booklets. Essentially, they spoke as information providers, not as aggressive advocates or college motivators. Unlike the schools with strong collegiate cultures, minimalist schools did not wish to hold their students' hands through the college admissions process; the burden of the college choice decision making process rested on the students. In one minimalist school, the duties of postsecondary advising were divided between the counseling staff and the career center technicians and the lack of collaboration between the two staffs resulted in a few gaps and some confusion as to who was in charge of what aspect of postsecondary affairs.

Students' interest in college and their school's postsecondary matriculation statistics were fairly average among comprehensive California high schools. The college preparatory and honors students at these schools expressed interest in their local public 4-year universities (UC Davis and Sac State) and in their local community college. A few students expressed interest in private 4-year colleges. In recent years a handful of the top students had matriculated at elite east coast colleges, like Harvard and Amherst, but the counselors spoke of these students as being extremely self-motivated and resourceful, implying that the students negotiated their college search without much assistance from their high schools. Unlike schools with strong collegiate cultures that serve the top students well and fully support these students' desire to enter elite colleges and universities, schools with minimalist collegiate cultures cater to the average student who wishes to attend the local colleges and universities.

*Applewood.* The counselor at Applewood diverted many of our questions about testing and college placement to the career center, yet the career center technician divulged that she was "not in AP loop" enough to fully communicate to college representatives the strength of the school's curriculum and that she was not involved in the senior survey enough to know where Applewood students matriculated after high school. The vice principal at Applewood spoke of a specific goal set by the district's school board that by the year 2000, 50 percent of their students should be “CSU ready,” and 35 percent should be “UC ready,” with “ready” meaning that students will have completed all of the curriculum requirements for university admission. This administrator worried that the school had not established a working relationship with CSUS and UCD to achieve better UC and CSU matriculation rates. She mentioned that

there was no connection between the AP teacher and the colleges and wished that colleges would give the school more information on what colleges look for in students.

Students at Applewood mentioned that some of their English teachers helped them inside and outside of class to write their college essays. Overall, however, the students complained that the school's attention had not been on college preparation. These students felt that the push for adopting a year-round schedule and a disruptive teacher strike negatively affected students, "especially the ones who want to go to colleges," as one student articulated. Another student spoke of the school's inability to fully prepare students for college:

I think they should prepare us better for the placement tests so that we don't get stuck in basic classes. I think we should have the opportunity to know, not necessarily what's on the test, but have a good idea of it so that we know what to expect.

At Applewood, students wanted their school to take a more proactive role in helping them to prepare for college success and the college admission process. They spoke of wanting better preparation for what they perceived as the highly consequential SAT exams. However, the minimalist collegiate culture did not support these expectations.

*Haverhill.* Within the same focus group, some students at Haverhill expressed that teachers do not care about preparing students for college, while others stated that some teachers encourage them to attend. One Haverhill teacher expressed that the school doesn't "wholly support" students' dreams. Several teachers worried that counseling did not start soon enough and that there were not enough counselors. As one honors English teacher said:

I think up at the counseling office you don't find enough counselors, I think you don't find enough time for counselors to come into our classrooms and talk to my kids about what they should be doing. Instead I am doing it.

The vice principal, who had been at the school for several decades, chronicled of the school's dwindling counseling resources: "At one time we had six counselors, and once, in the golden ages, we had eight. Now we have two really working with academics." One teacher spoke of how the sole counselor for seniors basically "catches" the 585 seniors. However, this teacher lauded the counselor's effort to offer workshops on completing college applications and financial aid forms.

One Haverhill student complained, "If you're in the top 10 of the class, he'll [senior counselor] help you with college, but other than that, you're on your own." Said another student, "They're focusing on what's happening when you're in high school, and once you're in college you're on your own." Haverhill's counselor of seniors justified the minimal attention given to students by arguing that the school encourages students to be "a little bit more industrious and self-sufficient" than other schools. Lamenting the minimal efforts to comply with SB 813 funding regulations to provide counseling to 10<sup>th</sup> graders and their families, this counselor said, "I think we're just meeting the legalities." Students articulated that in an ideal world of college counseling, all students would be

assigned to a counselor who gives students good advice and ensures that students register for the required standardized tests.

### Non-collegiate Culture

At schools with non-collegiate cultures, teachers and administrators spoke of “minimal expectations,” “low teacher morale,” “student attendance problems,” “and low student performance.” These problems have forced these schools to worry more about maintaining discipline, keeping students in high school, and merely helping students to graduate from high school instead of helping them to pursue postsecondary opportunities.

Like the teachers at the higher-performing schools with strong collegiate cultures, teachers in the lower-performing schools with non-collegiate cultures schools displayed self-criticism. However, this criticism was of a different sort. The lower-performing schools were less secure and less certain of their goals and teachers spoke of persistent complaints, nagging disappointments of chaos and disintegration, and hopelessness in their ability to improve their situation. More “finger pointing” happened at these schools, as teachers, counselors, and administrators directed their complaints outwards at “the system” instead of on the school itself. Teachers battling the educational malaise at the low-performing schools placed blame on the bureaucratic, inconsistent administration, on apathetic families, and on the faulty standardized testing system.

Students at the schools that displayed a non-collegiate culture were relatively unsophisticated about negotiating the college admission process. Local colleges and universities were very common among those who matriculated directly into postsecondary education but the CSU and UC were not as common. Students spoke with less specificity when communicating their knowledge of the admission and placement requirements and they expressed more doubt about their chances of attending the UC and CSU than the students in the minimalist and strong collegiate culture schools. According to the counselors at the schools that exhibited non-collegiate cultures, out-of state colleges were not as popular and it was a rare student who applied to an Ivy League college or small liberal arts college. At Center City High School, for example, the college counselor expressed her frustration that the few students who were UC eligible were often reluctant to go away to college:

Because it comes down to economics. For our kids, we have such a, you know, lower socioeconomic base, really... I have kids that qualify now that don't go. They choose to stay closer to home because they need to stay with their families to help, either economically support or just because the emotional support is there.

*Center City.* Among the six schools in our sample, Center City is the only school that can be easily described as a school with a non-collegiate culture. In contrast to Bellview, Center City High School has been one of District 3’s lowest performing high schools. Center City High could aptly be described as an “assimilating high school,” which McLaughlin (1992) defines as one that experiences significant shifts in goals associated with rapid change in the character of the student body. As McLaughlin explains, the challenge for such a school involves decisions about the fit, or lack of fit, between existing curricula and policies and the changing student body. At Center City,

for example, teachers lamented the highly transient student population. The vice principal shared a statistic that one-third of the students were failing algebra. The college counselor complained, "We call ourselves the college preparatory school but we have less time to college and postsecondary counseling and paraprofessional than any other school in our district."

This counselor lamented her students' low college board scores, which she felt limited their chances of gaining admission to a highly selective university. "Do you know how many kids at our school are 1100 or higher?" Not even five," she explained. This counselor expressed frustration about her uninvolved parent body; she cited poor attendance at college nights, financial aid assistance workshops. She also complained that students did not process the information they were provided. The English 11H teacher stated that only two students in English 12H passed the college English placement exam that was sponsored by the local community college.

The vice principal said that Center City is a low performing school with a "transient" student population, both sources of frustration for the administration and teachers. Regarding the pressures of standardized testing, this vice principal said:

I think teachers here are a little frustrated with the fact that so much weight is being placed on the standardized test right now, but it is something that we have to live with and we make some attempt to do that. We had a series of Monday classes that was especially set aside where teachers could go over test taking skills with students, particularly, there was a section on math and a section on reading, ideas about how you might take a test so that you would do better, in math, going over some concepts and things like that. I don't think that we really got to the point where we spent a lot of time...

One teacher described the school's resources as "dismal," noting that the school textbooks as "dinosaurs." Another teacher spoke of a scandal in which a school counselor allegedly engaged in dishonest behavior (helping students to cheat on standardized exams).

In the focus groups Center City students were quick to describe their school as "ghetto," meaning "run down, not smart kids, not bright, immature, bad teachers." But some students admitted that these were misperceptions. One teacher described the student culture as a place where "...it's not cool to express enthusiasm about your school. A lot of times they feel defeated." Another teacher said that the students feel like "prisoners," referring to the closed-campus and the newly-installed barbed-wire fence that prevents students from re-entering the parking lot. As one student commented, "Nobody carries the Center City jacket," a phrase that carries connotations of disassociation and possibly shame.

When students were asked if they would go to a teacher for college advice, the students in the college preparatory class merely laughed and the honors students said that they simply did not discuss college with their teachers. The honors students estimated that a competitive applicant for UC Davis would have to have at least a 3.7 gpa and a 1250 SAT I. However, when asked if students at Center City had achieved these

numbers, students were reluctant to respond. “A few do. One or two. One or two got in,” explained one student in a solemn and somewhat discouraged tone.

*Bridgeport.* As in most typologies, the categories used are often too few or narrow to fairly capture each entity. Bridgeport High School was an anomaly in our sample because it straddles two collegiate culture categories. On the one hand, because Bridgeport had the lowest SAT-9 scores among the five comprehensive high schools in its district, Bridgeport should merit a “low-performing” rating. On the other hand, Bridgeport had experienced a certain level of success in postsecondary placement that resembled middle-performing schools.

One Bridgeport teacher, who had studied the founding of Bridgeport and Three Palms for her doctoral dissertation, explained that while the racial diversity of the two schools was similar, the socioeconomic diversity was very different. “Our kids are poorer... first generation,” explained one of her Bridgeport teaching colleagues. Another teacher explained that the consequences of being first generation college and poorer is that families are more reluctant to send their kids away to college.

One student at Bridgeport spoke of attending an informational session at Sac State on his own, and discovered that this was the best way to get accurate information on college admission. He stated, “And a lot of times our counselors don’t tell us the right things. They tell us what we should get for certain colleges but not necessarily the college we want.” Like the students at Applewood and Haverhill, the students at Bridgeport complained that the only time they had contact with a school counselor was when they needed to change their course schedule or to register for classes. Furthermore, students spoke of a counseling manual to which counselors and students refer each time students register for classes. These manuals list the high school graduation requirements as well as the UC and CSU entrance requirements.

The honors students in our Bridgeport focus groups expressed serious worry about standardized testing. One student’s defensive comments revealed that even students understand the politics and the importance of his school’s standardized test scores: “Our SATs are a lot lower than everyone else’s because they encourage everybody to take the SATs so ours are a lot lower than everybody else.” Teachers at Bridgeport acknowledged that while the school does not have the highest test scores in the district and does not send as many students directly to the 4-year colleges as Three Palms, the school places more kids in college (i.e., has the highest postsecondary rates).

### **The Roles Of Teachers In Providing College Knowledge: Four Typologies**

As outlined earlier in the methodology section, we interviewed four teachers at each of the six schools. This sample contained equal representation of English teachers from high- medium- and low-performing schools, of juniors and freshmen classes, and of honors and college-preparatory classes. Since most of the teachers in our sample were chosen by their vice principal or a counselor, these teachers were most likely exemplary teachers. Hence, the data may be skewed toward teachers who were positive about their work, involved with their students, and knowledgeable about the internal workings of the

schools. In this section, we discuss characteristics of the possible roles teachers play in the transmission of college knowledge, as illustrated by our conversations with teachers.

As shown in Section 6, students speak with teachers about college admissions at a high rate (85% among 11th graders). In fact, they are more likely to have a discussion about college admissions with a teacher than with a counselor. From our conversations with teachers, we were able to develop a set of typologies that describe the different roles teachers may take in terms of how they provide students with information and guidance for making the transition to college. The four typologies differ in the degree to which teachers are active and engaged with students in college counseling and preparation.

### Teacher as Teacher

This typology represents a role lying on one extreme of a continuum of counseling behavior. In this case, the teacher presumes no responsibility for college counseling whatsoever, relegating all guidance and provision of information to school administrators, school counselors and parents. Teachers who do not take a role in providing college counseling may choose so because they feel unqualified or that the responsibility is beyond the realm of teaching. None of the teachers in this study described his or her roles in this manner. One teacher, however, did acknowledge the issue of expertise and qualifications, saying that providing college guidance is "a tremendous responsibility and I don't think that that responsibility is really best placed in the hands of teachers... It's a big responsibility I'm not really trained to do."

### Teacher as Minimalist Counselor

Many more teachers described their role in providing information and guidance in ways that were relatively reactive to student demands. Like those who fit the Teacher as Teacher typology, the Teachers as Minimalist Counselor may also feel that counseling is not in their job description or that they possess the training or time to counsel students. Their efforts to help students make successful transitions to college, therefore, are typically in the form of providing a minimal amount of information about admissions requirements, college experiences, or specific institutions in response to direct inquiries. One teacher from a low-performing school (Bridgeport) described the information and assistance he provides in this way:

I'll give them my background and talk a little about college and then I do have juniors and seniors this year who have come back to me for letters and they ask me about the different schools and "Where do you think I should go?" So I talk with them somewhat.

A teacher from the other low-performing school echoed this role during her interview: "A lot of kids will ask for advice or want suggestions or letters of recommendation. I do a lot of letters of recommendation for kids. That's basically all I do."

Teachers who are minimalist counselors not only relied on students to raise questions about college, but they also relied on other school structures to do the job of preparing students for gaining admission to college. The school structures might be a

college guidance office, visits from college representatives or outreach counselors arranged by the school, or even the curriculum. Another Bridgeport teacher captured this passive reliance when describing her familiarity with the UCD and CSUS admission requirements:

I know something about them, but our college, our career counselors have been really good about coming in and keeping the kids abreast of what they need. All of our kids graduated pretty much with the requirements, so it's not something I think we think about much because we know if they graduate they're going to have what they need to get in.

"Minimalist" teachers may provide additional information to students in the absence of an inquiry or request. In these instances, however, the teacher acts simply as a carrier or transporter of information provided to her by another agent. The teacher is reactive to the request to pass along information; there is no initiative to collect information on his or her own. Another teacher told us how he dutifully passes along information that he is asked to announce:

Well, one way [we communicate college information] is through our daily announcements that we have. In fact, I rattle off twice a week, different scholarships going out, different people who are going to be in our career center. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem like it goes much further than that, and a lot of times during a daily reading of that, students can turn off and not listen...And that seems to be the only thing that we do at this point that I see, that I'm in touch with, to talk about career-wise, school-wise, anything.

This last quote came from an interview with another teacher from one of the low-performing schools, Center City. Among the informants for this study, teachers from the low-performing schools more often fit the profile of teacher as a minimalist counselor. As described in the preceding section, the low-performing schools were challenged by minimal expectations and low student performance, low teacher morale, and student attendance and discipline problems. Such school cultures forced teachers to worry more about maintaining discipline, keeping students in high school, and helping students to graduate from high school than to prepare for college. They differ from teachers in the next typology, Teacher as Advocate, in that they are generally reactive transmitters of guidance and information, seldom initiate the discussion of college in class, and rarely seek college information on their own.

### Teacher as Advocate

The majority of teachers we interviewed at the mid- and high-performing schools independently incorporated college admissions planning into their classroom curricula, took it upon themselves to learn more about colleges and admission processes, and actively counseled students about their postsecondary futures. Such teachers exemplify a college counseling role we call "teacher as advocate." The proactive attitude held by "advocate" teachers was perhaps their most striking characteristic. As a teacher from

Three Palms told us, "I talk about that kind of stuff regularly in class. I look for any chance, any opportunity I have to talk about college."

Different from the minimalists above, the teacher as advocate was much more specific about the kinds of information discussed with to their students. Instead of merely limiting their discussions to personal college experiences and basic college entrance requirements, these teachers discussed the differences between specific postsecondary institution types, college-level academic expectations and study habits, how to write application essays (English teachers), and the content of admissions and placement tests. They even offered direct instructions for negotiating the college search process ("See, now I tell them as juniors, 'This summer, you've GOT to start going to campuses, because a campus has a feel.'").

Like the minimalists, some advocates recognized gaps in their knowledge of postsecondary admissions and placement policies and procedures. Advocates, however, obtained information about college from many sources, taking advantage of newspaper articles, self-purchased college guidebooks, websites, the expertise of fellow teachers and the guidance counselor, and even their own children's college search information and test preparation materials. Their usage of these materials tended to be active as well. Instead of simply leaving written materials in a pile in the back of the classroom, teachers wove the resources into their classroom activities, becoming counselor as well as teacher. When we asked a middle-performing teacher (Haverhill) to describe her conversations about college with students, she responded with a list of activities:

I bring in my books. I have big books of all of the colleges. We talk about how to look at that book, how to go through them, how to find them on the website. We talk about SAT scores. I start pretty early in the year teaching vocab straight from the books. Cal (Berkeley) does a prep SAT course which my son took. So I took his whole package and I teach it to the juniors. That is a bunch of vocab and analogies and ways to look at some of the different questions. So I talk about the SATs, I talk about their GPAs, I talk about the books that they can look at and then I just talk to them about what kind of college would they be happy at.

Furthermore, advocates have a good sense of what other information they need to know to prepare their students for the transition to college. For example, many of the more proactive teachers knew the content and format of many standardized tests, such as the SAT math and verbal sections, the UC Subject A exam, various AP exams, and the STAR tests. They also recognized, however, that they required more knowledge and felt a bit uncomfortable about their lack training in counseling. Specifically, many teachers wished to have more knowledge about the nature of college-level work at UCD or CSUS:

I would like to know exactly when I [sic] tell my students, you know, "You're going to have to do this and this in your basic English class." I'm going partly on what I perceive to be the case, when in fact I would love to see a course syllabus for a basic English class. Is there literature involved? Is it strictly reading of non-fiction pieces and essays? Do they work from a book modeling other writing? (Haverhill teacher)

In many cases, special programs within or in partnership with a school can assist or allow teachers to become advocates. At Three Palms, teachers play an advocacy role through formal advising duties. All teachers are required to follow a set of students throughout their four years at the school, and are expected to advise these students about high school and college admission requirements and standardized testing. Haverhill High had a Transition to College (T2C) program, an outgrowth of the Area 3 writing project through Davis, which is a counterpart of the Bay Area Writing Project out of Berkeley. To participate in the program teachers must attend a summer school session, in which they are provided admission, placement, and college-level writing information that they can transmit to their students. As described by one teacher,

The focus of the program has been to prepare students for college writing, analytical writing, and for college reading. The T2C English class is a perfect opportunity to give students information about colleges and to incorporate guest speakers on postsecondary education.

Several of the schools in our sample were served by College Horizons. College Horizons attempts to deliver a comprehensive college advising curriculum to juniors and seniors through classroom visits. The program assembles representatives from CSUS, UC Davis, and local community colleges to make five sets of classroom visits -- two in the spring of the junior year and three in the fall of the senior year. According to the Sacramento Area Director of College Horizons the current and past principals at Bellview have all been very supportive of the program and were "very politically astute about welcoming College Horizons." The director also explained how the program works with English teachers directly, whom she found to be incredibly supportive. As she explained:

They are so supportive that I can call them at home, I can call them in the English department office... We surveyed the seniors' plans after high school, they will, teachers will conscientiously follow up and do, they want to serve the program. So I have the support of the school but not really so much because of the administration, I have it more because of the teachers. I have NO support from the counselors. None.

Whether in conjunction with special programs or school policies, advocate teachers in our study seek out college knowledge and deliberately incorporate its transmission into their interactions with students and the classroom curriculum. Their duties as teachers are not superseded by counseling activities, however, as most teachers understand that knowledge and information are also available from counselors and the family.

#### Teacher as Counselor

The fourth typology is the role in which teachers counsel students first and teach second. Taken to the extreme, teachers may abandon their duties as teachers to take on a counseling role exclusively. Like the Teacher as Teacher typology, none of our informant teachers fit this profile. College guidance was something that many of the teachers valued and engaged in, but this responsibility was never fully encompassing of their duties or interactions with students. A couple of teachers, however, found the

counseling aspect of their jobs so important that they pursued opportunities to increase that role. One teacher is working directly with her university colleagues to improve the working knowledge of content, instruction, standards, and student performance in English at both the university and high school sectors. Another has submitted a proposal to her principal to grant her a free period so she can work directly with the juniors on college counseling. Still another collaborated with the local community college in developing an English placement exam, which allowed teachers from the high school and the college instructors to articulate and align their expectations. These individual efforts were not widespread among teachers and did not consume their duties as teachers.

### Conclusion

As these typologies are only "idealized" types created for their heuristic value, we are not surprised by the absence of teachers who have either a practically nonexistent role in providing college knowledge or an exclusive counseling role. Regardless of the actual role that the teachers in this study have in providing college guidance, all cared about the postsecondary futures of their students. Advocates and minimalists provided what knowledge and guidance they possessed or felt was within their realm of responsibility and training as teachers.

In this section, we likely are downplaying the influence of school culture on a teacher's attitudes and behaviors. As we learned in the previous section, school culture appears to play a role in encouraging, socializing, and even mandating teachers to serve as college advocates; in high- and middle-performing schools, we did not find "minimalists." The pressure to be an advocate generally did not appear to exist in the low-performing schools, with the exception of a few teachers at Bridgeport High School, who took pride in their postsecondary placement.

### **Policy recommendations:**

In the interest of preparing students better for college, three key components exist: (1) disseminating college information and motivating students, (2) developing students academically, and (3) building collaborative administrative links.

First, increasing college knowledge requires informing students better of curricular requirements, college selection criteria (e.g., that UC Berkeley weighs the SAT-II more heavily than the SAT-I), college placement tests, and college costs for all target colleges and universities among each high school's seniors. In doing so, all students should have access to disseminators of college information. Important sources of information not only include parents and counselors, but perhaps more importantly, teachers. Second, developing students academically means increasing eligibility by ensuring that students complete successfully a college preparatory curriculum and are well-prepared for standardized testing for admission and placement. Such efforts would also help to decrease remediation and increase graduation rates in college. Finally, building collaborative administrative links between K-12 and higher education requires that all

sectors cooperate to align curricula and assessments that would promote higher levels of student success.

In working toward the establishing these components, we offer these policy recommendations:

1. Include among the duties and responsibilities of teachers of college-prep students, the dissemination of current college policies, procedures, and general facts.
2. Encourage colleges of education to require college knowledge and counseling course requirements for the completion of secondary teaching credentials.
3. Encourage school districts to implement professional development programs for principals and teachers that focus on college knowledge to ensure that school personnel have up-to-date information on admission's criteria for California's public university systems.
4. Create district-university partnerships to ensure a smoother academic trajectory from high school to college as part of the means to align K-12 and higher education assessments and reduce remediation in college.

**Add to references:**

Lightfoot, S. L. (1983). *Good high school: Portraits of character and culture*. New York: Basic Books.

McDonough, P. (1997). *Choosing colleges: How social class and schools structure opportunity*. State University of NY Press.

McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts. In J. W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin (Eds.) *Cultures and contexts of teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.