

**Admissions and Placement Policies in Two Illinois Universities
Phase I Case Study; 1997**

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INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides an overview of two case studies of Illinois universities conducted in 1997 by Dr. Michael Kirst, Dawn Spivey (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Illinois State University), and Frances Contreras (Stanford University). The Illinois case study is part of a six state case study conducted for the Bridge Project: Strengthening K-16 Transition Policies at Stanford University. These cases of Illinois State University and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign provide rich detail about operational policies concerning admissions and freshman placement. Since 1997 the Illinois K-16 landscape has changed significantly, so these cases are a baseline to measure new developments. We do include some 1999 data to give the reader a sense of emerging developments in improving articulation between secondary education and the two universities. This introduction provides context and perspective for reading the 1997 case and introducing policy implications. A major belief underlying this work is that academic preparation in secondary school is a key determinant to university success. The Bridge Project contends that improved admissions and placement policies can enhance secondary school student preparation and graduation from universities. Future research objectives are to use the information from the case to analyze signals, academic standards, and incentives conveyed by university admissions and placement policies to prospective students, parents, and secondary schools.

State Policy Coordination

In 1997, Illinois was typical of states in which there is little significant policy or discussion mechanism to integrate and continuously coordinate higher and secondary school education policy. There was no policy mechanism or institutional structure to align K-16 standards, K-12 state assessments, including admissions and placement exams. Moreover,

Illinois K-16 policymaking was extremely fragmented because each public campus established its own admission and placement policies. However, since 1997 the Illinois Partnership launched by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Intergenerational Initiative has changed the education policy arena in Illinois to promote a P-16 focus. Policy changes have taken place in 2000 and 2001. For example, the Intergenerational Initiative is a promising collaboration among universities, community colleges, K-12 entities, and community organizations. The Initiative is a Higher Education Cooperation Act partnership funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. A team of staff and policymakers have been working from all levels of Illinois education to better align policies. According to Dr. Jane Angelis, of the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and Intergenerational Initiative member, “There is extraordinary potential to relate the curriculum of high school and college students to preschool needs and community action.” (October 2000). The Initiative represents a commitment by all levels of public education in Illinois to ensure educational success throughout the academic pipeline. In June 2000, the Illinois State Board of Education approved a contract with ACT to give each high school junior an ACT college entrance exam as part of a Prairie State Achievement Exam.

Until 1995 there were overall post-secondary systems that included four different public university governing boards with responsibility for 12 public universities.¹ In 1995, this systems approach was abolished because of very effective opposition from universities that wanted more independence. Illinois is a historically strong local control political culture that resists centralized state control of education policy or procedures. Consequently, each university created a governing board and hired contract lobbyists to represent its interests in Springfield, but there is a coordinating body – the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

¹ Data on this governance section from Richard Richardson, Jr., State Structures for the Governance of Higher Education: Illinois Case (San Jose, CA:CA Higher Ed Policy Center, 1997). The Legislature probably doesn't want an Illinois Board of Higher Education that is too strong. The first time IBHE tried to exercise influence by recommending a higher level of admissions requirements, they were reversed, partly because of resistance from the K-12 sector about cost. Maitland, a senior state senator, put the board's requirements into statute with a delayed implementation date. The statute also added more flexibility in meeting the requirements than IBHE wanted (quoted from Richardson, op. cit., p. 15).

The last IBHE intervention in admission policy was its 1988 specification of Carnegie units for admission in specified subjects, but the universities can waive up to three units.² The IBHE has never played a role in freshman placement. This post-secondary policymaking style that is detached from K-12 policies continues today. A 1997 higher education governance study concluded:

The “not-so-veiled resentment” that characterized the reactions of many community college representatives to Illinois Board of Higher Education was mirrored in the comments we heard from K-12 respondents. For instance, we were told that the IBHE ignored the K-12 board in its discussion of admission requirements during the 1980’s, despite the fact that K-12 was involved concurrently in looking at outcomes. We were also told, “There needs to be some way of linking higher education and basic education efforts. With respect to minority student achievement, higher education takes the moral high ground, but efforts at the institutional level in absence of pressures from the state have been pretty meaningless. Nothing much happens.” IBHE’s efforts to assess affordability were described as another “strain on the conversation” because the board never considers the impact on elementary and secondary school costs. Rather, it sends a message to K-12 education. “If you would do a better job of preparing students, our costs would go down.” One respondent concluded, “No matter what happens, seems like the ball rolls downhill.”

Concurrently, IBHE representatives told us that the relationship between higher education and K-12 was becoming more important. The arrival of a new superintendent and the activities of a joint Board of Education and IBHE Education Committee were identified as “promising developments,” From our K-12 respondent’s perspective, however, the Education Committee is “a wonderful idea without authority, a very ineffective group” where meetings exemplify the gulf: “They sit on one side, we sit on the other.” Most of the effective cooperation between schools and universities, we were told, has occurred at the local level.³

In 1997, there was an Illinois Joint Education Committee that has four K-16 Boards involved including the Illinois K-12 State Board of Education and IBHE, but it did not meet publicly, keep minutes or have impact on admission or placement. As one long-time observer noted, “issues of the cross segments of education in Illinois fall through the cracks.” In

² No more than 1 unit from social studies, math, science, and electives may be redistributed to any of the other five categories.

³ Richardson, op cit, p. 16.

describing IBHE experience, Ann Bragg, Associate Director of Academic Affairs, told the Education Commission of the States:

The development and implementation of the Illinois admission policy was a board effort; there was no representation from either higher or secondary education. This lack of participation from other sectors has caused some problems and confusion. For example, the board thought the course requirements with parenthetical statements about what specific subjects were included in each were clear. They turned out to not be as clear as expected.⁴

In 1997 Illinois had a standardized university feedback report to high schools with useful data on the freshman achievement of specific high school graduates at the university. It includes the high school percentile ranks in the graduating class, ACT, and performance in freshman English, math, and natural science. But high schools rarely make this university performance report public, and the universities have not been willing to advocate for its policy release.

Illinois Admissions Policies: 1997

Illinois relies upon a high school class rank index along with ACT scores for admission. Illinois universities are unsure how to interpret high school courses that are competency or interdisciplinary based. So far, the use of portfolios for admission is at the discussion level, and appears from the university perspective to be an overwhelming administrative burden. Admission offices like the University of Illinois received 17,000 applications in 1998⁵, and are unsure how portfolio admissions can be “reliable.”

Class rank is viewed as a more accurate measure than GPA, because of recent grade inflation. But there is no standard state policy for how to compute high school class ranks (like the A-F curriculum requirements used by the University of California System), and some high schools include all courses, while others just use academic courses. The course weighting systems vary enormously among Illinois high schools and K-12 school districts. For example, high weights for AP and honors create applicants with a 7.0 on a 4.0 grade scale. This is not an uncommon practice. For example, Patricia Riordan, the dean of admissions at George Mason

⁴ Esther M. Rodriguez, College Admission Requirements: A New Role for States (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1995), pp. 7-8.

⁵ UIUC now receives over 18,000 freshman applications (2000).

University in Fairfax, Virginia, surveyed approximately 2,200 high school principals on the subject and found:

Some schools don't do any weighting, some weight certain courses, and some only weight classes in senior year. Their policies are all over the gamut. There were a lot of inequities in terms of grades.⁶

Other states like North Carolina have dealt with this issue by standardizing local school procedures. In contrast to many states, North Carolina has a formal calculation process based on 1) academic course levels; 2) grading scales; and 3) the weighting of course grades. The class rank is based on a weighted GPA in which a single (1) quality point or weight is added to passing grades earned in Advanced/Honors/Academically Gifted courses; or (2) quality points are added to passing grades in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.⁷

Confusion about class rank has created a group of special review schools that are often private or public schools from suburban Chicago. These schools claim that their academic standards are so high that their class ranks should be adjusted upward compared to the rest of the state. Consequently, the University of Illinois has designated some schools special review status, but keeps track of their freshman grades. Generally, the University of Illinois will accept the highest class ranks for any student from the five or six methods a high school may use. The complexities of weighting grades adds to the complexities of the admission process; Illinois universities are perplexed on what admission criteria to use for the Illinois Math and Science Academy, a statewide competitive high school that refuses to rank students.

Illinois universities did not use the 1997 statewide K-12 assessment called IGAP for admission—the Illinois Goals Assessment Program. Illinois University officials cite four reasons why they were reluctant to use the IGAP as an admission criterion:

1) They were not involved in formulating IGAP, 2) The state changed the content of IGAP in 1997, and university officials have very little faith that IGAP will be stable, 3) IGAP is not a proven predictor of freshman grades and no studies have been conducted, 4) IGAP ends in the

⁶ Kathleen K. Manzo, "Weighted Grades Pose Dilemmas in Some Schools," *Education Week*, June 17, 1998.

⁷ Summary of Standards for Calculating the Weighted Grade Point Average and Class Rank on North Carolina Public High School Transcripts, Courtesy of the University of North Carolina Office of Planning, Revised 12/94.

10th grade, and 5) Universities are confident that the SAT and ACT will make adjustments that are needed to account for new elementary and secondary academic policies. We did not find any admissions officer who knew much about the content, standards, or format of the IGAP.

ACT/SAT as an Admissions Criterion

The use of the ACT and SAT are justified primarily on their predictive basis for freshman grades. For example, the ACT was used initially used in 1963 when a majority of students flunked out their freshman year from the University of Illinois. Now the vast majority graduate, so the first term is less crucial in long-term academic success. This change in retention, however, has not led to the rethinking of the use or purpose of the ACT and SAT, beyond first term freshman year performance. Better predictors might be cumulative university GPA, graduation rates, or difficulty in satisfying undergraduate core course requirements like math. Neither ACT or SAT I contain a writing sample so writing assessment is left to the placement process. Some Illinois universities use a conversion table for the two tests even though they contain significant differences.⁸ However, longitudinal analyses of freshman grades demonstrates that the ACT or SAT conversion has adequate predictive value for Illinois Admission purposes.

Comparison of Key Facts on Universities in Illinois Cases

Illinois State University (ISU), founded in 1857, ISU was the first public institution of higher education in Illinois. Currently one of twelve public universities in the state, ISU offers 58 undergraduate programs in 157 fields of study. There are five colleges for freshmen to enter: Applied Science and Technology, Arts and Sciences, Business, Education, and Fine Arts. Total enrollment for the 1995-1996 academic year was 19,294. Undergraduates comprise approximately 86% of the student population. The following chart offers a detailed description of ISU.

Illinois State University

⁸ *Newsweek* (Kaplan), How to Get Into College, August 1997, Pg. 76.

Admissions Office
 Campus Box 2200
 Normal, IL 61790-2200
 Phone: (309) 438-2181
 E-mail: msvance@ilstu.edu
 Web Site: <http://www.ilstu.edu/>

Type of School: coed

Student Body: Undergrad: 15,064. Men: 43%. Women: 57%. Minority: 13%. In-state residents: 97%. 25 or over: 12%. Living off-campus: 62%. Men in fraternities: 12%. Women in sororities: 12%.

Finances: In-state tuition: \$2,952. Out-of-state tuition: \$8,856. Fees: \$1,017. Room and board: \$3,840.

Admissions: Required tests: SAT or ACT. Application deadline: none.

Selectivity: Number applied: 10,143. Admitted: 7,948. Enrolled: 2,896. Lowest 25% of freshmen scored below: 20 on ACT. Highest 25% of freshmen scored above: 24 on ACT. Freshmen from top 10% of high school class: 11%. From top 25%: 33%. From top 50%: 77%.

Graduates: Employed within six months of graduation: 84%. Entered grad school within a year of graduation: 20%.

The second case study was conducted on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). Founded in 1867 as a state-supported, land-grant university, UIUC is the largest public university in Illinois. UIUC has more than 150 programs in 9 colleges and institutes. The total undergraduate enrollment in the Fall of 1996 was 26,738. The entering freshman class was approximately 5,700 students. The following table offers a brief profile of UIUC.

University of Illinois/Urbana-Champaign

Admissions Office
 901 W. Illinois
 Urbana, IL 61801
 Phone: (217) 333-0302
 E-mail: undergraduate@admissions.uiuc.edu
 Web Site: <http://www.oar.uiuc.edu>

Type of School: coed.

Student Body: Undergrad: 25,962. Men: 54%. Women: 46%. Minority: 26%. In-state residents: 91%. 25 or over: 7%. Living off-campus: 75%. Men in fraternities: 19%. Women in sororities: 23%.

Finances: In-state tuition: \$3,308. Out-of-state tuition: \$9,924. Fees: \$1,030. Room and board: \$5,078.

Admissions: Required test: SAT or ACT. Application deadline: January 1.

Selectivity: Number applied: 17,250. Admitted: 12,134. Enrolled: 5,946. Average scores of applicants admitted: 608 on SAT Verbal, 640 on SAT Math, 27 on ACT. Freshmen from top 10% of high school class: 51%. From top 25%: 79%. From top 50%: 99%.

Graduates: Employed within six months of graduation: 66%. Entered grad school within a year of graduation: 39%.

The case studies on these two Illinois universities, focused on formal and operational admission policies as they applied to freshmen undergraduates. The cases relied on enrollment data from the two respective universities for the 1996-1997 academic year, particularly Fall data from the universities. Research was conducted by examining published admissions standards, interviewing decision-makers, and obtaining internal guidelines used by the three respective universities. The project's primary goal in reviewing the admissions policies and practices of Illinois State University, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was to analyze the various signals and incentives conveyed to prospective students, parents, and secondary schools. We intend to utilize our findings as a basis for offering recommendations for improvement that may lead to optimal outcomes for the student and universities. It is our belief that by improving the admissions and placement policies and practices may also lead to enhanced preparation of students, and the overall effectiveness of universities in serving their prospective, current, and future constituents.

CASE STUDY OF ADMISSIONS AND FRESHMAN PLACEMENT POLICIES Illinois State University

INTRODUCTION

Illinois State University is one of two universities in Illinois that is part of the larger Bridge Project sponsored by the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement and the Stanford Institute for Higher Education at Stanford University. The project's research and outreach agenda is designed to inform and improve current K-16 policies and practices. The project is funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Dr. Mike Kirst is the principal investigator.

Founded in 1857, Illinois State University (ISU) was the first public institution of higher education in Illinois. Currently one of twelve public universities in the state, ISU is largely

comprised of Illinois residents. The largest percent of the student population is from the Chicago area (approximately 41 percent), and approximately 33 percent of the students are from central Illinois. In the fall of 1998, Illinois State University reported 20, 394 students enrolled.

According to the university's Office of Planning, Policy Studies and Information Systems, in a report focusing on the Fall 1985 through the Fall 1998, 53 percent of the new freshman graduate within 6 years. Of these graduates, 55 percent graduate in 4 years, 38 percent in five years, and 7 percent graduate in six years.⁹

Illinois State University prides itself on a strong sense of community. ISU labels itself as a "residential" university with the majority of the student body coming directly from high school. Furthermore, "Illinois State University believes residence hall living is an important part of the educational experience."¹⁰ Thus, many undergraduates are encouraged to live on campus. The school occupies 850 acres and is classified as a "barrier-free campus."¹¹ And the ISU campus is dominated by high rise dormitories arising from the flat prairie.

METHODOLOGY

This case study focused on formal and operational admission policies as they applied to freshman undergraduates. The research also addressed policies regarding placement examination and remediation. Policies for transfer and graduate students were not considered. The university defines a beginning freshman as "a person who has never registered at any college or university."¹² Research was conducted by examining published admission standards and guidelines, interviewing university decision-makers, and obtaining written documentation on policies from the university and the state of Illinois Board of Higher Education. The study does not involve private postsecondary education institutions.

⁹ Illinois State University Office of planning, Policy Studies and information System website: www.ppis.ilstu.edu/facts/1999/.

¹⁰ Information Guide, p.15.

¹¹ Petersons Register of Higher Education, 1997. p. 268.

¹² Illinois State University Undergraduate Catalog 1997-1998 (hereinafter "Catalog"), p 9.

This paper is divided into five sections. Part I provides a background of recent state political initiatives that may be influencing the admissions processes and procedures. Part II provides an overview of key factors for admission to the university, basic policy development, and the general admissions process. Part III details the process and policies of ISU placement examination and remediation. Part IV describes the financial aid process at ISU. Finally, Part V offers conclusions and areas for further considerations.

ILLINOIS STATE POLITICAL CONTEXT

Before analyzing the specific Illinois State University policies, we provide an overview of the state context in which ISU operates. The state of Illinois, under the guidance and leadership of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, has launched an aggressive attempt to enroll more Illinois State residents into college. This campaign, combined with increased efforts to significantly raise high school graduation rates, is anticipated to increase the number of undergraduate students in the 21st century. Thus, the state of Illinois Board of Higher Education has been rethinking the goals and priorities of higher education in Illinois.

The state of Illinois has accordingly and continues to launch a targeted campaign to ensure the educational attainment of Illinois residents. The following outlines the goals that serve as a “starting point” proposed by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education:

- Increase the educational attainment of Illinois citizens
- Extend access to higher education
- Assure that college is affordable
- Enhance access and success for members of underrepresented groups
- Improve the quality of Education
- Enhance responsiveness to students, employers, communities, and the state
- Strengthen school-college partnerships
- Improve productivity

According to the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, these are goals common for higher education in the U.S., but are new areas of focus for universities in Illinois:

“Many of these goals are familiar and, indeed, they represent the fundamental goals of higher education everywhere. Yet they introduce new specific goals about educational attainment, responsiveness, and K-12 partnerships. The task ahead is to refine, revise and further define these goals in light of the challenges and opportunities that the future will bring: technology, electronic commerce, globalization, and the changing needs and characteristics of our Illinois population.”¹³

The state has placed an increasing emphasis on creating a citizenry that is educated and highly skilled to sustain the state of Illinois in the 21st century. Thus, a major goal in addition to the above themes, is to strengthen school-college partnerships. In fact, the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education stated: “The Illinois higher education will work to strengthen partnerships with elementary and secondary education at the state and local levels.”¹⁴ In addition to this statewide emphasis on P-16 partnerships, the Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) has been developed to provide research support to the Joint Educational Committee (JEC) in order to assist Illinois in making informed decisions on educational policy issues. The two functions of IERC is to 1) Establish a research clearinghouse to assist in providing policy makers with analytical research; and 2) Establish a P-16 network to analyze and communicate effective P-16 practices and partnerships. Under this system, IERC develops a network of support for P-16 collaborative efforts and policy formulation.

In addition, to these goals, collaborations have recently worked to provide a mechanism for students transferring among Illinois Universities. In 1998 for example, as a response to the concern for student academic preparation, IBHE launched the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a voluntary cooperative effort among more than 100 Illinois colleges and universities and co-sponsored by the Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, State Board of Education and the Transfer Coordinators of Illinois Colleges and Universities. The IAI is designed to facilitate transfer from one college to another to ensure that the student completes their baccalaureate degree.

¹³ “Education for the 21st Century: A Citizens Agenda for Illinois Higher Education.” Report from the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, July 7, 1998.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The Board of Higher Education believes that such partnerships will help to alleviate the need for remediation. The Board asserts, “The need for remedial courses is a symptom of the need to ensure better prepared students.”¹⁵ The IBHE believes that the state must address the root causes of poor academic preparation and underperformance in order to eliminate the need for remediation. The Illinois Board of Higher Education explains: “Illinois colleges and universities share a joint responsibility with the state’s elementary and secondary schools to improve the performance and success of students at all levels of education.”¹⁶ Although the universities often fail to discuss the existence of remediation, the Illinois Board of Higher Education is now acknowledging that it does exist, and through K-16 partnerships, remediation can be eliminated. The illustration below illustrates the scope and percentage of remediation in Illinois, as reported and estimated by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education. We believe that these numbers underestimate remediation in Illinois based on our cases in other states and national trends.

Scope of Remedial Instruction in Illinois				
	Community Colleges		Public Universities	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Number of Credit Hours Devoted to remedial instruction % of all credit hours	461,917	9.1%	54,575	1.4%
Number of Students needing Remedial instruction % of all undergraduates	82,938	14.1%	11,278	6.9%

Source: IBHE, The Scope and effectiveness of Remedial/Developmental Education, September 1997. In “Education for the 21st Century: A Citizen’s Agenda for Illinois Higher Education.” State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, July 7, 1998.

Remediation

The issue of remediation is becoming increasingly relevant as Illinois public universities attempt to raise enrollment levels in the 21st century. The chart below illustrates the number of students enrolled in remedial courses at Illinois public universities in 1996.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 10

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

University Students Enrolled in Remedial/Development Courses 1996

University	Number of Students taking remedial courses	Total Undergraduate Students	Percent
Chicago State	1,940	8,265	23.5%
University of Illinois at Chicago	2,839	18,249	15.6
Northeastern Illinois	1,084	9,226	11.7
Southern Illinois at Edwardsville	1,113	10,266	10.8
Easter Illinois	695	11,164	6.2
Southern Illinois at Carbondale	1,247	22,165	5.6
Western Illinois	603	11,607	5.2
Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	795	29,904	2.7
Northern Illinois	461	17,793	2.6
Illinois State	411	18,584	2.2
Governors State	90	4,326	2.1
University of Illinois at Springfield	0	2,840	0.0
Total	11,278	164,389	6.9%

Note: Unduplicated headcount of students in remedial/development courses, reported by the institution. The chart utilizes total undergraduate students, as reported by the University on the IPEDS, Institutional Characteristics Survey.

Source: State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, September, 1997.

From the above chart, it is clear that Illinois public universities have low percentages of students enrolled in remedial courses. However, the degree to which universities acknowledge remedial course enrollment remains unclear. For example, ISU has algebra courses listed in their catalogue as well as other high school equivalent courses such as the introduction to trigonometry. In fact, what constitutes “remedial” remains largely up to the public institution of higher education.

In addition to the goals outlined in the July 1998 report by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, a follow up report in February 1999 builds upon the concepts introduced by the “Education for the 21st Century” initiative by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. E board outlines the following goals in the report, “The Illinois Commitment” for the public universities within the state of Illinois:

1. Higher education will help Illinois business and industry sustain strong economic growth.
2. Higher education will join elementary and secondary education to improve teaching and learning at all levels.
3. No Illinois citizens will be denied an opportunity for a college education because of financial need.
4. Illinois will increase the number of diversity of citizens completing training and education programs.
5. Illinois colleges and universities will hold students to even higher expectations for learning and will be accountable for the quality
6. Illinois colleges and universities will continually improve productivity, cost-effectiveness, and accountability.

The “Illinois Commitment distinguishes three distinct areas for improvement: 1) Partnerships, 2) Opportunities, and 3) Excellence. The charts below detail a continuation of the goals determined by the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education:

State of Illinois Board of Higher Education

The Illinois Commitment: Partnerships, Opportunities and Excellence

The Illinois Commitment: Partnership	
Goal 1 Economic Growth Higher education will help Illinois business and industry sustain strong economic growth.	Goal 2 Teaching and Learning Higher education will join elementary and secondary education to improve teaching and learning at all levels.

Actions	
Update instruction, curricula, and assessment on the basis of regular surveys of employers about what graduates need to know and need to be able to do.	Provide high school students access to high quality college-preparatory, Tech-Prep and AP courses and dual enrollment opportunities
Expand opportunities for work-based learning and clinical experience.	Jointly develop measures of student achievement that are useful to students, parents, schools, colleges, and universities.
Expand business-university partnerships to pursue promising areas of research in technology and other fields.	Collaboratively raise standards for the initial preparation and continuing professional development of classroom teachers.
Streamline program development and approval processes at campus and state levels to encourage innovation and risk-taking.	Expand and support programs that foster higher educational aspirations and achievement among minority students.
Adjust the capacity of occupational and professional programs to keep the supply of graduates in balance with employment demand.	Increase student and teacher access to learning resources through high quality; high-speed Internet connections and other technologies.
Expand opportunities to advance knowledge in a broad range of fields through basic and applied research conducted by institutions with strong research missions.	
Results and Accountability	
Annually increase the number of businesses and industries directly served by colleges and universities through education and training programs, public service, and research.	Annually increase the number of high school students who complete the courses needed to prepare for college and for work, who complete Tech-Prep and AP courses, and who participate in dual enrollment programs.
Annually increase the number of graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to meet new or emerging occupational demand.	Annually reduce the number and percent of recent high school graduates who need remedial courses at colleges and universities.
By 2004, all occupational and professional programs will demonstrate through assessment that graduates possess the knowledge and skills necessary for success in the workplace.	Annually increase the number of new teachers and improve the qualifications and skills they bring to the teaching profession.
	Annually increase the number of Master Teachers in Illinois, increasing to 500 by 2002.

Source: State of Illinois Board of Higher Education. "The Illinois Commitment: Partnerships, Opportunities, and Excellence." February 2, 1999.

The state of Illinois Board of Higher Education is focused on raising the standards and quality of Illinois public universities, and to strengthening the pipeline from K-16 to higher education. However, Illinois State University, in their most current literature and public efforts, are just beginning to implement the goals defined by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. For example, the research does not suggest significant increases in ISU outreach to local schools to encourage application and attendance. Thus, if “partnerships, opportunities, and excellence” are

to occur, the Board of Higher Education may need to provide more guidance and support for universities like ISU to transform these ambitious goals into tangible strategies.

STATE K-12 ASSESSMENT POLICY

The Illinois State Board of Education (IBSE) adopted the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) in 1997 to develop achievement goals for Illinois students at different stages in the educational process. In Illinois, the ISAT was first given to students in March of the school year at the time this case study was conducted. As of September 2000, the Prairie State Achievement Exam is being given in high school instead of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test.

IGAP is administered to students in the 4th, 7th, and 11th grades. There is also a 10th grade IGAP test in reading, and math. IGAP is based on the 1985 goals and standards set by the Illinois Board of Education. This is different from the ISAT, which was based on 1998 standards and include specific grade standards for content knowledge. Illinois has moved to more specific standards rather than the 1985 goals. IGAP stopped at 10th grade for reading and math. Where the ISAT was administered up to 11th grade and could be considered as a factor in university admissions. In addition, neither IGAP or ISAT were integrated in university admissions placement as of 1999. The most recent legislation, passed in 1999, eliminated the ISAT at grades 10 and 11 and established the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) as the only mandated statewide academic assessment beyond grade 8. (Illinois State Board of Education, September 2000).

The Prairie State Achievement Examination is administered to students in the 11th grade. The Prairie State Achievement Exam will:

- Begin in school year 2000-2001 for all eligible 11th grade students;
- Be the one testing system for high school students-the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) will no longer be given at grade 10 or 11;
- Test reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social science and be aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards; and
- Be administered as late as practicable during the second semester of grade 11 but in no event before March 1.

The Prairie State Achievement Examination has two purposes: 1) to measure students' progress toward meeting the Illinois Learning Standards for school accountability; and 2) to recognize the achievement of individual students who receive a Prairie State Achievement Award for excellent performance.

The potential for utilizing the Prairie State Achievement Examination exists and may in fact be a useful placement tool. The Governor of Illinois has initiated a joint education committee for K-16, but not much has happened in regards to formulating and systemizing a logical assessment process.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR ADMISSIONS

1. Governance and Policymaking

The Board of Trustees is the official governing body of the university. January 3, 1996 marked the inaugural meeting of the newly formed board. "The University operates on the principle of shared governance. The Academic Senate acts in legislative and advisory roles with regard to University policies concerning faculty and students, academic programs and planning, and university concerns."¹⁷ The Academic Senate is a 50-member body of elected representatives, which include 27 faculty members, 19 students, three Vice Presidents, and the President of the University.

Internal policies of the Office of Admissions are determined by Director Adams. All admissions policies are evaluated every year, although they are not necessarily changed every year. Procedures might be changed, rather than actual policy. Any changes are initiated through the Provost in conjunction with the Director. The formal process follows a process in the following order:

- 1) The Academic Standards Committee (a subcommittee of the Academic Senate),
- 2) The Academic Affairs Committee (another subcommittee),
- 3) Finally, the Academic Senate reviews the admissions policies.

¹⁷ Fact Book, p. 3.

This process reflects the only and limited involvement that faculty play in the admissions process. Once policies are approved, the policy changes are written into the Catalog. This is a lengthy process, with a number of reviewers. Approved changes must be fully written by January to make it into the Catalog for the following year.

2. Current Policy

The current policies are a product of the complete revision in admission policy that ISU has undergone in the last ten years. The current “quartile policy” was initiated out of the Office of Admissions. The university now has more flexibility with regard to its admissions policies. With increasing applicants, the university is able to raise or lower admissions standards as it sees fit.

ISU has not dropped recently in average class ranks or ACT scores. For Fall 1997, ISU received approximately 12,200 freshmen applications, admitted approximately 8,900 freshmen, and enrolled approximately 3,200 of those students. Currently, the university minimum guidelines are the competitive minimums as well. That may change as demand increases. Director Adams feels that the competitive level is rising. He has witnessed an increase in applicants from top half or top quarter of high school classes. Adams feels that as this trend continues, not all qualified students that apply to Illinois State University will be admitted. This will increase competition and the selection process for admission.

3. Former Policy

Admission policies prior to 1997, gave particular priority considerations to students that possessed “lesser” credentials. 1992-93 found ISU in an enrollment reduction mode. At the time, the university was underfunded and overenrolled. The university President struck a deal with the state legislature: if ISU reduced enrollment by 3,000 students over five years, beginning in 1990, ISU could maintain the same level of funding from the legislature. Thus, ISU could secure more money for fewer students. This plan fell through, however. Public perception created a great problem. Illinois citizens viewed ISU as not wanting students. As a result, within three years,

enrollment dropped by 5,000 students. The university needed to increase student enrollment to secure funds from tuition. By 1997, the university recovered from that enrollment deficit, and by 1999 is at a point where they may become more selective.

4. Anticipated Changes to Policy

Due to a rapid increase in applicants over the past few years the upcoming years may contain interesting changes in student applicants as well as proposed alterations in ISU to consider for the admissions process. Director Adams hopes that it will be viewed positively becoming more selective and will combat the frustrating perception of ISU as a “left-over” institution.

Director Adams perceives a change in the pattern of admissions in state institutions. In his opinion, institutions now have higher percentages of admits, and lower standards. He noted that ISU did the same when it was necessary to fill seats. However, institutions must remain aware of retention rates. He perceives the drop in admission standards as problematic for all Illinois public universities.

Another anticipated issue that Illinois State University may have to deal with is the careful treatment of the affirmative action issue, particularly since the Hopwood decision in Texas, which prohibits the use of race in university admissions decisions. The “special consideration” programs may be subject to greater scrutiny in the near future.

II. GENERAL ADMISSION POLICY FOR ISU

A. PROCESS

The admissions process at Illinois State University is a centralized process originating from the Office of Admissions. Entering students may apply to the University in one of the academic programs or as a general student. Unlike the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, all ISU applicants are processed by the Office of Admissions and are not routed

through individual colleges. In addition, there is one application form and no application fee. Students have until May to submit applications for Fall admission.

Beginning students may apply for admission in the fall, spring or summer sessions. Admissions did not close until up to the beginning of classes. That situation is the beginning to change. The deadline for ISU applications was May 1 for the Fall 1997. As anticipated, admissions closed earlier as the university became more selective.¹⁸ The deadline for the Fall 1999 has changed to April 1. Illinois State University has and continues to work to become a more selective institution, and seeks to increasingly attract high performing students. The administration anticipates that this may affect deadlines, making early deadlines a more common feature of the admissions process.

General Admissions Information

Academic Term/Category	Applications First Accepted	Application Deadline	Supporting Documents Deadline
Fall 1999 Freshman	September 1	April 1	May 1
Spring 1999 or 2000 All categories	June 1	December 1	Prior to first day of class
Summer 1999 Freshman	September 1	April 1	May 1

Note: Students are encouraged to submit an application for admission as soon as possible. University enrollment patterns may make it necessary to stop accepting applications sooner than the above projected deadlines. The fall 1998 application deadline for freshman was March 2 and for transfers students May 1. It may not be possible to admit all qualifies applicants.

Source: Illinois State University Website, www.ilstu.edu, 1999.

As applications arrive at the Illinois State University Admissions Office, they are processed on a rolling basis. Like the University of Illinois, the ISU Office of Admissions receives applicants with different academic backgrounds. For example, Illinois State University receives applications from students that clearly surpass published admission standards, applicants who clearly fall below standards, and a “grey zone” of applicants. The Admissions

¹⁸ See description of selectivity in this paper, Section I, D, 2.

Committee concentrates their efforts on making decisions for those students that fall in the grey zone. The other admissions decisions appear to be straightforward admits or declines.

B. KEY FACTORS- University minimum requirements¹⁹

The course catalog outlines the minimum standards for admission. If an applicant meets these standards, he/she will be admitted, regardless of other factors. In addition, the university's website outlines all admissions criteria for admission, special considerations, and deadlines.²⁰

A combination of standardized test scores and class rank are at the heart of the admissions guidelines. Completion of course requirements and performance in high school courses also play a significant role for students in the admissions process. The university prefaces its discussion on course requirements with the following statement to prospective students, as illustrated on their website:

“Prospective applicants are encouraged to pursue as rigorous and challenging a college preparatory program as is available to them. However, the minimum high school preparation required for admission is an earned diploma from an accredited high school, or a school recognized by the State Superintendent of Education, with successful completion of these course specific requirements.”

The following subsections detail the high school preparation sought by Illinois State University in determining qualification of a student for admission.

1. High School Preparation

Freshman applicants to Illinois State University are required to adhere to the following: “Successful completion of the course-specific admission requirements as approved by the

¹⁹ Catalog, pp. 9-10.

²⁰ Illinois State University Website: www.ilstu.edu/depts/admissions/freshreq.htm.

Academic Senate of Illinois State University, in accordance with the minimum standards established by the Illinois Board of Higher Education and modified by Public Act 86-0954.²¹

High School Course Requirements for Admission to ISU

- 4 years of English, with emphasis on written and oral communication and literature
- 3 years of college preparatory mathematics, including algebra I & II and geometry
- 2 years of social studies, with emphasis on history and government
- 2 years of laboratory science, primarily from biology, chemistry and physics
- 2 years of one foreign language or 2 years of fine arts, primarily from art, music, theater, and dance
- 2 years of electives, including coursework in any two of the four categories above (excluding English), and/or courses in vocational education and fundamentals of computing.

Admissions Director Adams becomes more directly involved with the decisions of his staff in cases that require consideration or exceptions in the course requirements. Otherwise, the admissions staff has clear guidelines to base their admissions decisions. “In the event that an applicant has a deficiency in the course-specific requirements, the University will consider college course work as alternative evidence for the mastery of knowledge and skills in the area of deficiency. According to the Admissions Director, no deficiencies are allowed in the areas of English and mathematics, and only one deficiency (total) in the other subject areas.”²² Students who have limited deficiencies in their high school course record may be eligible for provisional admission.²³ This admissions status once again, must be determined by the Admissions Director and his staff.

2. Combination Chart

Illinois State University uses a combination of factors in determining admission. These include, but are not limited to high school percentile rank, and ACT or SAT scores. The

²¹ Catalog, p. 10.

²² Catalog, p. 10.

²³ See Appendix D.

guidelines have not changed since 1997. Categories of class rank quartiles and admission test denote clear admission guidelines:

75 th – 99 th percentile	Eligible with any test score
50 th – 74 th percentile	17 or above ACT or 830 or above SAT
25 th – 49 th percentile	23 or above ACT or 1050 or above SAT

The chart illustrates that the top 25% are eligible for admission. This may be affected as ISU does in fact attempt to become a more selective university. Based on the stated admissions requirements, ISU cannot be categorized as extremely competitive. Rather, they provide accessible standards for most students seeking admission to Illinois State University. Thus, as Illinois State University works to become more selective, they will need to assess their admissions criteria (in regards to setting higher thresholds) in addition to the quality of academic programs offered to students.

3. Class Rank

Illinois State University uses the high school percentile rank as it is computed by individual high schools. Applicants who rank in the top half of their high school graduating class and have an ACT composite score of 18 or higher (SAT equivalent score) are given the highest admission priority. Like the problems noted in research of UIUC, this creates issues regarding normalization, grade inflation, etc. Among entering ISU students, 74 percent are in the top half of their class.²⁴ As discussed in the introduction to the Illinois case study, the computation of class rank varies by high school district, regions and individual (private) schools. For example, the Illinois Math and Science Academy refuses to rank students. While other school districts weight their grades because they consider themselves more competitive than other public schools.

²⁴ Info Guide, p. 2.

This adds to the complexity of using class rank as an admissions criterion, because the basis for calculating class rank varies greatly by schools and districts.

C. OTHER ADMISSION FACTORS

The key factors listed above “are the **minimum** requirements for admission to the University. Prospective applicants to Illinois State University are advised to pursue a rigorous college preparatory program while in high school, including course work beyond the minimum in fields they may be considering for advanced study in a university. For example, students who think they may want to study science, industrial technology, or mathematics, among other fields, should take additional courses in mathematics and laboratory science in high school.”²⁵

Applicants who are on the borderline, or in the “grey zone,” will reviewed by the Admission Committee. This committee is composed of admissions staff and headed by the Associate Director. The Director of Admissions, Steve Adams, would like to involve faculty in this committee, but no faculty is involved at present. The committee meets once a week. In looking at prospective students, the Committee reviews all materials, including background statements and letters of recommendations, and completely evaluates transcripts. The Admissions Director reviews all admission decisions and has final authority, but the committee is largely responsible for making the decisions. Director Adams becomes more directly involved in the cases where exceptions are made.

Furthermore, as competitive levels rise,²⁶ ISU may not be able to immediately admit every student who satisfies the guidelines of the chart. Qualified students at the bottom of the pile may also undergo additional review. The recruitment materials give notice of this caveat. “It is the policy of Illinois State University to admit the best qualified applicants. Applications of all students are carefully reviewed. As stated previously, since admission into many programs is competitive, it may not be possible to admit all qualified applicants...”²⁷

²⁵ Catalog, p. 10.

²⁶ See description of competitive levels in this paper, Section I, D, 2.

²⁷ Catalog, p.10.

Additionally, although the admission process is centralized and admission guidelines, for the most part, are standardized, supplemental criteria may be employed with respect to different areas of proposed study. “Certain areas of study may be subject to higher admission qualifications when more students apply to that area than may be admitted or when it is determined that certain disciplines must become more selective. Each fall the University announces the majors for which admission is extraordinarily selective and the supplemental admission criteria for admission to those majors. Announcements are distributed to high school and community college counselors.”²⁸ Appendix E is an example of such supplemental criteria.

Finally, the committee has the most flexibility in evaluating applicants from the upper two-thirds of the graduating class. “Students whose high school percentile rank and admission test scores do not place them in one of the categories as stated above [quartile categories] may have their applications undergo a special individual review. Specifically, those who meet all course specific requirements, rank in the 33rd-49th percentile, and possess ACT composite scores of 20, 21, or 22 (or equivalent SAT scores) may be considered for admission. Factors in this review will include, but are not limited to, the following: choice of academic major, pattern of performance in high school core courses, background statement written by the student and letter(s) of recommendation.”²⁹ Director Adams indicated that the committee would also evaluate the type of high school attended³⁰ and grade point average. Again, Adams stressed that performance in the core courses is key, as is the pattern of the student’s performance.

1. Background Statement

Background statements are required in 1999 in addition to the application. (This is a change from 1997 admissions standards). Unlike 1997, the application now mentions the background statement. Recruitment materials continue to advise borderline students to complete background statements. This message leaves the burden on the student to “self select” him or herself as a “borderline” student. The catalog characterizes the background statement as a

²⁸ Info Guide, p. 9.

²⁹ Catalog, p. 10.

³⁰ However, no formal designations of schools as Special Review or EOP are made as at UIUC. Admissions staff are familiar with the sending schools and evaluate them based on their experience with those schools.

component of application for some students: “The background statement is a part of the admission application and should be completed by all applicants who must be afforded special consideration. It must be evident that students offered the opportunity for admission have a strong academic background and show the willingness to seek support services in order to demonstrate the ability to succeed at Illinois State.”³¹ The information guide suggests that a background statement is helpful as competitive levels rise. “Admission can become highly competitive, and in many cases applicants will be individually reviewed in order to determine admissibility.”³²

The background statement is an opportunity for the applicant to share information about him/herself, academic performance, participation in activities outside the classroom, and goals/aspirations.³³ Students are also given the option to express how their admission to Illinois State relates to their future educational/career/personal goals and the role that the student will play on campus, in his/her community.³⁴ The statement may also be used as a forum to explain how certain factors have either enhanced or impeded the student’s ability to maximize academic and intellectual opportunities.³⁵

The message sent to prospective applicants via the application procedures suggest that students who may not have a strong academic record may still qualify for admission. The signals sent also suggest that there are support services available for these students if admitted to Illinois State University. Thus, it is possible that a remediation program or remediation services (in the form of classes) are needed to assist these students in transitioning into college. Such knowledge is only likely to come out in the Background statement. Therefore, the literature sent out to prospective applicants should offer some guidelines of what constitutes a “borderline” student. It may be the case that the Background statement would be a valuable tool for all students to complete to get a sense of the diverse needs of the entering class.

2. Letters of Recommendation

³¹ Catalog, p. 10.

³² Ibid.

³³ ISU undergraduate application online at www.ilstu.edu/dept/admissions.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Letters of recommendation are not required encouraged or mentioned to prospective students in any of ISU's marketing and application materials. However, if an applicant is undergoing individualized review (one that requires special consideration), the committee will evaluate all letters that come in for that student.

3. Residency

The application asks if the student is an Illinois resident or not. However, the Office of Admissions states that residency is not a factor in making admissions decisions. Admissions requirements and standards are the same for residents and non-residents alike.

4. Legacy

The application also asks for information regarding any family members who are current or former ISU students. This information is gathered for scholarship purposes but is not a factor in admissions decisions.³⁶ Thus, the existence of "legacy" admits, as seen in the case of elite and private universities, does not appear to be an issue at Illinois State University.

5. ACT/SAT Scores

Among entering ISU students, the mean ACT in 1997 was 22.³⁷ The ACT score represents a composite score. This score is the average of four test scores (in four subject areas) rounded to the nearest whole number.³⁸ The Fall 1998 admissions data illustrates a more competitive, high scoring class, where students that score 20, 21, or 22 on the ACT and rank in the third quarter of their class, are considered for admission on a case-by-case basis. In addition, applicants that have a composite score of 16 or 17 and rank in the top half of their graduating

³⁶ The Director noted that legacy information is a factor at some public institutions, citing the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

³⁷ Info Guide, p. 2.

³⁸ ACT website: www.act.org.

class are considered on a case-by-case basis as well.³⁹ The university has become slightly more selective where the past mean has become a “case-by-case” standard for admission. The following chart describes the meaning of ACT scores for the mean score of 22 at ISU. The statements below describe what students who score in the specified score ranges are likely to know and to be able to do in the four subject areas that comprise the composite score.⁴⁰

ACT Assessment English Test Standards

Scale 20-23

Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity, and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone Clarity, and Economy	Sentence Structure and Formation	Conventions of Usage	Conventions of Punctuation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the main theme or topic of a straightforward piece of writing Eliminate details that clearly violate the focus of the essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a conjunctive adverb or phrase to express a straightforward logical relationship Decide the most logical place to add a sentence in an essay Add a sentence that introduces a simple paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise material to make the writing less clumsy and more concise Use the word or phrase most appropriate in terms of the context and tone of a fairly straightforward essay Determine the clearest and most logical conjunction to link clauses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize and correct marked disturbances of sentence flow and structure (such as misplaced modifiers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the past and past participle forms of irregular but commonly used verbs and identify idiomatically appropriate prepositions in terms of their context Ensure that a verb agrees with its subject when there is some text between the two 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use commas to set off basic parenthetical phrases Delete commas when an incomplete or incorrect reading of the sentence suggests a pause that should be punctuated

ACT Assessment Mathematics Test Standards

³⁹ Illinois State University Website: www.ilstu.edu.

⁴⁰ “What Should Entering Freshmen Know and Be Able to Do?” American Association for Higher Education. Presented at the American Association for Higher Education Conference, June 15, 1999.

Score 20-23

Basic Operations & Applications	Probability Statistics & Data Analysis	Numbers: Concepts & Properties	Algebraic Expressions	Equations & Inequalities	Graphical Representations	Properties of Plane Figures	Measurements
Solve routine two-step or three-step arithmetic problems, such as rate and proportion problems, multistep percent (e.g. tax added and percentage off), and average problems (e.g. computing with negative integers or using a given average)	Translate from one representation of data to another (e.g., a bar graph to a circle graph) Determine the probability of a single event Exhibit knowledge of simple counting techniques	Exhibit knowledge of elementary number concepts including the ordering of decimals, pattern identification, absolute value, primes, and greatest common factor	Manipulate basic algebraic expressions e.g. substitute integers for unknown quantities, add and subtract simple algebraic expressions, multiply two binomials, and perform straightforward word-to-symbol translations	Solve most first degree equations	Comprehend the concept of length on the number line Locate points Exhibit knowledge of vertical and horizontal lines and of their point of intersection Exhibit knowledge of slope	Exhibit knowledge of basic angle properties and special sums of angle measures (e.g. 180 and 360)	Compute the area and perimeter of triangles when the problems are simple Use geometric formulas when all necessary information is given

Assessment Reading Test Standards**Score 20-23**

Main Idea	Significant Details	Sequence of events	Comparative Relationships	Cause-Effect Relationships	Meanings of Words	Generalizations	Author's Voice
Draw simple conclusions using details that support the main idea of more challenging passages	Respond with increasing confidence to factual questions in informational passages Locate important details in un complicated passages	Order simple sequences of events in un complicated literary narratives	Identify comparative relationships between ideas and characters in un complicated texts	Identify clearly stated cause-effect relationships found in un complicated texts	Are beginning to use context clues to define words in un complicated passages	Make simple generalizations about characters in un complicated passages	Make generalizations about the author's attitude toward his or her subject in un complicated passages

Assessment Science Test Reasoning Standards**Score 20-23**

Interpretation of Data	Scientific Investigation	Evaluation of Experiments, Models and Assertions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select data from simple graphs (e.g. line graphs, bar graphs) and diagrams (e.g., carbon cycle, electrical circuits) Identify pertinent data from a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand basic lab procedures Identify the control in an experiment or study 	None.

<p>table with two variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify whether a relationship exists between two variables • Identify an inverse relationship between two variables • Translate both written data and tabular data into graphic form 		
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Illinois State University does not receive many applicants with SAT scores. ACT is used more frequently. Illinois State University uses a conversion chart for the two tests in setting its admission standards. The chart is based on the standards produced by ACT/SAT. ISU then adds its own information based on performance at ISU and adjusts the ACT/SAT chart to create the published ranges. This is done by the Office of Planning, Policy Studies, and Informational Systems (formerly known as the Office of Institutional Research).

One interesting feature in the admissions guidelines reviewed deals with the changes in test scores over a one-year period. The ISU 1996-97 information guide lists the SAT cut-off point at 1070 for the 25th – 49th percentile. The 1997-98 catalog lists the SAT cut point at 1050 for this same quartile. These changes indicate that test score cut-off points were lowered. Since performance on standardized tests is one of two main features used in admissions decisions, ISU appears to be lowering the threshold.

The Admissions Office did not use Illinois Goals and Assessment Program (IGAP) scores in any way for the admissions process. The Director of Admissions noted that IGAP was met with resistance from secondary educators and higher education simply tends not to use it. At the time this case study was conducted the IGAP has been replaced with the ISAT, the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, as of February 1999. And the ISAT was replaced with the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) beginning with the first implementation in April 2001.

In the recent past, the K-12 assessments were ignored by Illinois State University and other universities in Illinois. However, the ISAT was developed by higher ed, Illinois teachers, and district curriculum directors. It is based on the Learning Standards adopted in July 1997, which are the most specific state content standards in Illinois history. The standards were

developed to set uniform, high expectations for student learning.⁴¹ Thus, the ISAT focuses on curriculum content and is aligned with K-12 curriculum standards. The PSAE is similar in its format, but the writing portion has an additional 75 multiple choice questions that improves the coverage of the Illinois Learning Standards.

5. General Equivalency Degree Test

In lieu of the high school diploma, students can submit General Equivalency Degree (GED) test results in lieu of a high school diploma. The GED test results must reflect a composite score of 225. The minimum scores in all subject areas are 40. In addition, the composite score on the ACT must equal at least 23.

6. Special Admission Programs

“The University may admit a limited number of applicants with special characteristics and abilities who show the potential for success in collegiate work but who do not meet all the regular admission requirements.”⁴² Five special admission programs include the **Talent Program**, for applicants who demonstrate an outstanding talent in art, music, theater, or athletics; the **Early Admit Program**, for applicants who can benefit from college-level work prior to graduation from high school on a full-time or part-time (concurrent with high school) basis; the **Veterans’ Program**; the **Adult Learner Program**, for applicants over age 25; and the **Collegiate Opportunities Admission Program (COAP)**. COAP is designed to increase the number of underrepresented students (minorities), by affording them special consideration.

To be eligible for COAP, “Applicant must be new beginning freshmen, have a minimum composite score on the ACT, as specified by the Admissions Office, and exhibit proficiency on diagnostic entrance exams. COAP is offered only in the fall semester. Students who are economically and/or educationally disadvantaged and can benefit from college-level work if

⁴¹ Illinois Board of Education website: www.isbe.state.il.us.

intensive support services are provided are encouraged to apply.”⁴³ If an applicant does not meet admission standards, the Office of Admissions checks whether or not the applicant is a minority or is educationally or economically disadvantaged. The Director conveyed the difficulty in defining educationally disadvantaged, and there is no specific written policy. Such determinations are made on the basis of a compelling background statement. Thus, it is highly likely that students who do not complete the background statement would not be able to communicate their minority or disadvantaged status.

COAP is administered in conjunction with the Academic Enrichment Center (focus on minority students)⁴⁴ and Student Support Services (focus on first-generation college and low-income students).⁴⁵ Admissions decisions for these students are made after diagnostic tests have been taken. Test results are evaluated in addition to the regular application credentials of the student.⁴⁶

III. PLACEMENT EXAMINATIONS & REMEDIATION

A. MATH PLACEMENT PROCESS

All entering freshmen are assessed in the areas of English and Math. Exams are administered during the summer orientation sessions, and are typically a two-day process. The English writing exam is administered during orientation, and the Math placement exam is administered that same afternoon. Both exams are administered the first day of orientation. Dr. Tukey, the Placement Director, was unsure who actually administered the exams, but thought that orientation leaders were involved.

⁴² Catalog, p. 11.

⁴³ Catalog, p. 11.

⁴⁴ See Catalog, p.22.

⁴⁵See Catalog, p. 23.

⁴⁶See description of COAP testing in this paper, Section II, B, 3.

According to an interview with Dr. Dossey from the Math Department, Illinois State University switched from an ACT paper and pencil test specifically designed for ISU student placement.⁴⁷ ISU found it was better to use the nationwide standard college admission ACT and HSCR, rather than an old placement test designed for ISU. The old Illinois-ACT Placement test was too skill-oriented according to the view of administrators and faculty at Illinois State University.⁴⁸ “If students do not accept their placement based on ACT admissions and HSCR, then they may take the ACT Compass Exam.”⁴⁹ The ACT Compass Exam is a placement test commercially sold by ACT. Dossey continued, “if the score is adequate on ACT Compass, the student will be placed in the higher level math course.”

When the Committee decided to change math placement procedures. Dr. Tukey said that the committee simply ran the ideas through the office of Dr. Dillingham, Academic Senate member. The Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences was also involved with the decision, but Dr. Tukey was not aware of formal approval procedures through the Academic Senate.

The new policy holds that students with an ACT Math score of 24 or greater will not be required to take any math placement test. This was based on analyzing students who tested at that level in the past and their subsequent success at ISU. This statistical analysis was conducted through the math department. For students who do need assessment, ISU will move to computer adaptive testing. ISU is using the Compass test, designed by ACT, as its placement test. With this method, students take the exam on a computer, and the questions become progressively harder as the student answers them correctly. Conversely, the questions are adjusted to an easier level if a student struggles.

Academic advising also occurs the first day of orientation (in the afternoon) without test results. Advisors use high school courses and ACT/Compass scores as guidelines. On Day Two of orientation, advisors have test results and advise students in groups according to intended majors. The advisors discuss options with students that discuss options with students that disagree with their placement (determined by the placement exams results).

⁴⁷ Interview with Dr. Dossey June 19, 1998.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The ACT Compass exam, ISU's current math placement exam, seems useful for academic advising because there are a number of options for placing students in math courses. As previously discussed, the exam is needed to assess which courses to recommend to the student. For example, Math 102 is a Pre-Algebra class for students with the most severe needs. Math 104 is a remedial course focusing on Algebra and Trigonometry. Both courses are pre-college, non-credit courses, although they do count toward full-time student status. Advancing from Math 102 and 104 are three general mathematics tracks: applied, theoretical, and computational. The following chart summarizes the cutoffs for students that assist staff I placing students.

ACT COMPASS EXAMINATION MATHEMATICS PLACEMENT CUTOFFS

Course	Compass scores needed for Fall 98 Mathematics Placement Cutoffs
MAT 102	Algebra 1-20
MAT 104	Algebra 21-35 and Pre-Algebra 40-99
MAT 111, 119, 130	Algebra 36-99
MAT 108, 120, 121	Algebra 55-99 and College Algebra 35-99
MAT 144	College Algebra 50-99 and Trigonometry 35-99
MAT 145	College Algebra 55-99 and Trigonometry 40-99

Source: Interview with Dr. Dossey of the Illinois State University Math Department, March 11, 1998.

*Note: See appendix for course listings.

Neither the English nor the math tests are necessarily binding. Math placement results are strong recommendations used primarily by Academic advisors. A student can test additional times. (\$5 administration fee for Compass). Dr. Tukey has not heard of students disputing the English placement. It seems to be more binding in placing students in English classes.

B. LANGUAGE ARTS PLACEMENT

Placement exams do not affect admission decisions, even if a student indicates severe needs in a given area. Placement policies are determined by individual academic departments. The Office of Assessment is a separate office for testing, which scans the exams sheets and makes sure the process is working properly and efficiently. Regarding the English subject area, all students take the same Freshmen composition class. However, some students have a 3-hour

course, while others have a five-hour course because it incorporates built-in tutoring. Both groups of students receive the same credit.

The English placement exam consists of a writing sample given to all students. The topic and grading criteria are devised by the English Department, and all essays are graded by the English Department. There is some interest at ISU in changing the English placement exam. Those I favor of change feel that the writing sample does not provide any new information. Proponents of change also express concern over the validity of the data, feeling that the English department is inconsistent in how it grades from summer to summer, essay to essay, and that some decisions may be made on the number of seats available in each English course. The English Department wants to continue English placement with the writing sample. The department would not like to base English placement solely on ACT scores because there is no writing sample with the ACT. ACT assesses writing by using a multiple choice test format. If any changes are made with regard to English placement procedures, they will be decided in conjunction with the English Department Chair and/or the Dean of Arts and Sciences. No immediate changes are anticipated.

3. COAP

After some students are denied admission, the Office of Admissions pulls the files of the minority students for a closer look at their credentials. Students are invited for testing and interviews. At this point, the students are turned over to Dr. Tukey's office and all final admissions decisions for these students are made by him, working in conjunction with the High Potential Students Office (Academic Enrichment Center). No formal policy for this exists that Dr. Tukey is aware of, other than some caveat that allows special consideration for minority high potential students. All changes must be approved through Dr. Dillingham.

These are three test dates for potential COAP students, one in the fall and two in the spring. One test is given to test English writing proficiency. A version of the writing exam

conducted at freshmen orientation, the COAP writing exam is devised by and scored by the English Department.

A second exam students take is a reading test developed by an outside organization (not Nelson) using standardized norms. If a prospective COAP student scores low on the reading exam, he is placed in a college reading course. This is a pre-admission course conducted informally by the College of Education. The reading exam was administered for the first time in the fall of 1995. Now results from tracking efforts seem to indicate that after one year of college, large numbers of students from the College Reading course are on academic probation or worse. It seems to be a strong indicator of success (or lack thereof) at ISU. When Dr. Tukey learned of these results, half of the students had already been tested this summer, so no changes could be initiated.

The third and final component of diagnostic exams for potential COAP students is an interview with staff to “get to know” the individual students. The staff that makes decisions about which students to admit. Dr. Tukey goes back through reading scores and talks through admission decisions with his staff. He noted that if they are familiar with a high school reputation, they might take that into account, even if it counts against the student.

Approximately 200 students are invited to test and approximately 100 show up for testing. ISU offers of admission are made to approximately 60-70 percent of those students that take the exams. Dr. Tukey feels that ISU may begin to accept fewer students, perhaps due to reading exam results, and rising number of applications. Offers of admission were made to 50-60 percent of students tested this year. Once students are admitted through COAP, they take the math placement exam, but not the English writing sample.

C. POLICY ISSUES

Placement and remediation policy have been altered by ISU in their General Education requirements beginning with the Fall of 1998. In 1997, no math course was required for

graduation from ISU.⁵⁰ Graduation requirements are satisfied with a logic or computer class. However, students entering Fall 1998 will be required to pass a mathematics class for ISU graduation. The new requirements may not change placement standards, but may create a need for more development in math and the types of courses offered.

Dr. Tukey also hopes to make more use of a Math Information Form. This is a self-reported form of factual math information which freshmen complete at orientation. It is not currently used in making placement decisions, but is being incorporated into the database for future analysis. The Math database currently has information about which high school courses database needs to only track the completed certain number of math courses, not necessarily the grade that the student received.

The ACT has a survey component for student self-assessment in math, reading, and writing. Dr. Tukey has looked at this information and found that how a student self-reports id reflected I the level of success earned in those areas at ISU. Weak students who said they were weak performed better in remedial course work. Higher-placed students who said they were weak placed higher, but didn't do as well. Dr. Tukey thinks this is very underutilized information. The self-survey even contains questions regarding whether or not a student feels he needs assistance with study skills, or with major/career decisions. Math placement will continue to be an issue for Illinois State University in serving the needs of entering students. Dr. Tukey hopes to avoid testing during orientation.

Dr. Tukey noted that Dr. Dillingham hopes to use placement exams for diagnostic purposes only. He would like to implement a module system for brush up help in areas, then move the students directly into appropriate courses. This module system seems to be the equivalent of remediation courses. The "appropriate" courses are therefore college level courses. In addition to existing support services, Dr. Tukey would like to have more academic assistance offered near or in the residence halls in the evening.

Dr. Tukey perceives a national shift in the approach toward college placement and remediation. For example, I Virginia, the approach previously was that if students needed

⁵⁰ All students must pass the University Writing Examination before they will be permitted to graduate. See Catalog, p.

remediation, they should first attend a two-year college. Dr. Tukey noted that in Tennessee, students who do not pass developmental courses within a certain time frame are terminated from the university. ISU allows students to repeat remedial courses an unlimited number of times. However, such students are often advised to transfer to a school better able to meet their needs or the students may drop-out on their volition.

IV. FINANCIAL AID

A. PROCESS

Tuition for Illinois State University is assessed on a per semester hour basis through the first 16b hours. For the 1998-1999 academic year, an Illinois resident student enrolled in 30 hours per academic year would adhere to the following cost schedule:

Expensed for the 1998-1999 Academic Year

Illinois Residents

Tuition and fees*	\$4,085
Room and Board (Multiple Occupancy and installment Plan)	\$4,176
Estimated items:	
Books and Supplies	\$620
Transportation	\$240
Miscellaneous**	\$2,070
Average Yearly Budget	\$11,191

Out of State Residents

Tuition and fees*	\$10,160
Room and Board (Multiple Occupancy and installment Plan)	\$4,176
Estimated items:	
Books and Supplies	\$620
Transportation	\$240
Miscellaneous**	\$2,070
Average Yearly Budget	\$17,266

*Tuition and fees shown reflect an annual course load of 30 credit hours for the academic year.

**Miscellaneous is an average estimated average for costs associated with clothing, personal items and recreation.

Source: Illinois State University Website: www.ilstu.edu.

According to the ISU literature, “Nearly 70% of all Illinois State students receive some form of financial aid.”⁵¹ Students apply for financial aid after January 1, and priority consideration is given to students who submit financial aid application materials by March 1.

Financial Aid plays no role in the decision-making process of whom to admit. The Admissions Office makes all admissions decisions independent of the Office of Financial Aid. Once need-blind decisions have been made about which students will receive offers, Admissions then turns over that information to the Office of Financial Aid. Because determining financial aid is a lengthy process, the Office of Financial Aid encourages students to apply for aid even before they know whether or not they are admitted.

Most merit awards are granted outside of the Financial Aid Office. For example, departmental scholarships are awarded by the individual departments. Awards are routed through the Financial Aid Office for processing, but not for any decision-making. Undergraduate Studies also award merit scholarships. A university committee (including faculty) awards all merit Presidential Scholarships, which include Presidential Scholarships, Provost’s Scholarships, Deans’ Scholarships, and Foundation Scholarships.⁵² Departments typically reserve most of their scholarship monies for upperclassmen. Merit-based scholarships for freshmen are largely limited to the Presidential Scholarships.

Illinois State University has various sources of financial aid to assist students with their college education. These include:

- **Grant Scholarships**—largely based on need, achievements or special talents. They are considered a gift and do not require repayment.
- **Loans**—according to ISU, the loans offered to students are typically low interest, unsecured and usually require repayment upon graduation.
- **Employment Aid**—is offered to students in the form of earnings from a part-time job (usually on-campus).

⁵¹ Financial Aid Information Guide 1997-1998.

⁵²For more detailed information on these merit scholarships, See Catalog, p 18 or Info Guide, p. 18.

Similar to all public institutions of higher education, the ISU financial aid office administers funds to students from federal, state; institutional and private sources to ensure access to Illinois State University. Students are required to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be considered for federal funding.

- Federal funding sources include:
- Federal Pell Grant
- Illinois Student Commission Monetary Award
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
- Student-to Student Grant
- Federal Perkins Loan
- Federal Work Study
- Federal Direct Loans, including the Federal Direct Subsidized Loan, the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan, and the Federal Direct PLUS Loan (For parents of dependent students).

In addition to federal funding, Illinois State University administers the following scholarships:

- **Presidential Scholars Program.** This is a 6,000 award for students that are considered gifted and are identified by the University Scholarship Committee on the basis of academic achievement (which includes high school percentile rank, test scores, courses, and leadership experience).⁵³
- **Provost's Scholarship.** This is a \$1,000 annual award that may be renewed for a total of 8 semesters.⁵⁴
- **Dean's Scholarship.** The \$1,000 award granted to students within each of the five undergraduate colleges at Illinois State University. Two Dean's scholarships are awarded annually to first-year students.⁵⁵
- **21st Century Leadership Scholars Program.** This program is designed to award minority students and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. A student must rank within the top 25% of their high school graduating class and have demonstrated leadership.⁵⁶

All of these scholarships are identified in Illinois State University literature, including their website. Thus, students are informed on the available scholarship opportunities at Illinois State University.

B. POLICY

Authority for policy formulation is determined by different offices. For example, office policies for financial aid are determined internally. These include policies regarding verification

⁵³ Illinois State University Website: www.ilstu.edu.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

procedures and packaging parameters. Decisions regarding how resources affected students (i.e., how receipt of a Presidential Scholarship affects other aid) are made at Undergraduate Studies, with the Provost. Similarly, policies regarding athletic scholarships are made by the athletic department, and departmental scholarship policies are determined by individual departments. Each department sets its own deadline, and these deadlines tend to vary. Furthermore, each department has autonomy to determine how strictly or loosely the department will adhere to their own policy. For example, June 1 was the graduate waiver deadline, but financial aid has received only a handful. Thus, they may have to extend the deadline to accommodate late applicants.

Financial Aid internal policy decisions are made primarily by the staff. The Director solicits input from staff in alerting Financial Aid policies. Together, this group constructs policies for Financial Aid. Final award decisions are approved by the Director, who is often involved in the group process. Financial Aid staff has experienced significant staff turnover. Associate Director Bauer has been in the position for one year, and the assistant director is also new. Moreover, one-third of the client representatives have turned over.

A recent policy change was made in the way the Financial Aid Office used the edit process. Based on the profile of the financial aid applicant, federal authorities (for FAFSA) “match” to types of aid. ISU client representatives then verify the matches and send to a document agency for authenticity. While being good stewards of resources, this process slowed down the overall aid process because if a match was “kicked out,” intervention was required. For example, a student who claims to be independent, but who has children and no income will be kicked out and looked at individually. The financial aid staff began to study if the edit process found problems which would otherwise go undetected, or if the process merely forced additional work. It was determined that the numbers and accuracy of verification were similar with or without the edit process. Thus, financial aid staff initiated the process to change policy and eliminate the extra step of edit process.

Another recent change in financial aid was the addition of a new merit-based scholarship this year. The scholarship was only for minority students, but was broadened by granting eligibility to “educationally or economically disadvantaged” students. Some white students have been selected as recipients under the new language. The scholarship committee gets a sense of the applicant’s situation and background in order to make award decisions.

B. POLICY ISSUES

Most of the current or future issues in the area of financial aid will come from the federal level. For example, the Reauthorization of Higher Education made ISU a direct lending school. Issues may revolve around limits or modifications on lending. Only three years old, the new policy has greatly benefited students and ISU does not want to return to the old way. Another issue relates to the federal procedure of granting contracts to the lowest bidder. As bidders change annually, procedures change annually, creating inefficiency and slowing down the entire financial aid process. Yet another issue stemming from federal policy is that the federal system has changed all software to Windows. This creates internal problems at ISU because they must now convert everything to Windows, but their machines can not handle it.

Another future issue will evolve from the federal America Read program. ISU will be granted additional Work Study money for literacy tutors, who will be coordinated by the College of Education. However, Financial Aid is not capable of training Work Study recipients and policy decisions are not made by Financial Aid or Education on this. So, for example, federal policy requires background checks on tutors, but who will pay for this expense since neither Education nor Financial Aid has budgeted for it?

The financial aid issues raised above, in addition to the Illinois Board of Higher Education’s commitment to ensuring access to all students, regardless of their ability to pay, are issues that need to be solved. This would enable Illinois State University to better serve all students and prospective students with guidance, information, and financial support.

CONCLUSION

The formula-based admissions process at Illinois State University is not difficult for prospective students to understand. One notable area is the considerable amount of autonomy of the Admissions Director. Most of the policy decisions are determined by the Director. The input is provided by the Academic Senate and other governing entities, after the policy formation stage.

The placement policies for entering students are changing, and will require further evaluation. ISU will decide how they are going to handle students in lower level courses, and the “modules” necessary to place them in “appropriate” college level courses. The Illinois Board of Higher Education attributes remediation to a lack of academic preparation. Illinois State University hesitates to acknowledge the existence of remedial courses and believes that remediation is a task for the community colleges. If the remediation responsibility is going to be placed on K-16 levels, then Illinois State University and other public universities may consider strategies to improve communication regarding requirements, with particular emphasis on content. In order for the state of Illinois and public universities to implement their “Education for the 21st Century” campaign, K-16 partnerships need to be established as institutional priorities.

Finally, the admissions process at Illinois State University appears to be getting more selective. ISU will need to consider how to remain accessible as competitive levels rise among students. It will be interesting to see how ISU responds to the State of Illinois Board of Higher Education’s “Illinois Commitment,” and whether admissions standards begin to align with state objectives for high school students and the ISAT Test.

A CASE STUDY OF ADMISSIONS AND FRESHMAN PLACEMENT POLICIES University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

INTRODUCTION

The Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research and the Bridge Project at Stanford University, has conducted research on the admissions policies of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). UIUC is one of two public universities researched as a case study on admissions and placement policies in the state of Illinois. The institution, founded in 1867 as a state-supported, land-grant university, is the largest public university in Illinois. More than 150 programs in eight colleges and institutes are available to undergraduates. For the Fall of 1996, UIUC received approximately 17,000 freshmen applications, offered admission to approximately 12,000 of these applicants, and enrolled an entering freshmen class of approximately 5,700 students. In 1996, total undergraduate enrollment for the Fall was approximately 27,000. Since then, enrollment has been steadily increasing. For example, total undergraduate enrollment for the Fall 1998 was 27,475 students.

This research focused on formal and operational admission policies only as they applied to freshmen undergraduates. Policies for transfer and graduate students were not considered. The university defines a beginning freshman applicant as “one (a) who applies for admission while attending high school, regardless of the amount of college credit earned, or (b) who has graduated from high school but completed fewer than 12 semester hours or 18 quarter hours (or the equivalent) of transferable college classroom credit by the desired term of entry.”⁵⁷ The Office of Admissions and Records (OAR) coordinates the admissions process.⁵⁸ However, due to the decentralized nature of the institution, each college develops and implements its own admissions policies with broad discretion.

⁵⁷ 1997 University of Illinois Undergraduate Admissions Information (hereinafter “Application Packet”), p. 3.

⁵⁸ According to Tammie Bouseman, UIUC no longer publishes guidelines for admission. (2/10/2000)

METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted by examining published admissions standards,⁵⁹ interviewing decision-makers at the university and college levels,⁶⁰ reviewing government documents, and obtaining internal guidelines from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.⁶¹ Because applicants clearly exceeding admissions guidelines and applicants clearly falling below the guidelines are admitted or denied without great deliberation, this research focused on any deviations from formal policy and on the “grey zone” applicants: those students on the borderline.

This document describes the admission policies of the general university and of specific colleges. Part I discusses the state of Illinois political context and current efforts to align the K-16 education levels. Part II provides an overview of key umbrella factors for admission to the university, basic policy development, and the general admissions process. Part II also outlines special considerations observed by most colleges in the admissions process. Part III details admissions policies of selected colleges and key factors considered by these individual schools. Section IV describes financial aid at UIUC, as it relates to admissions decisions. Finally, Part V offers conclusions for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign case study.

I. ILLINOIS STATE POLITICAL CONTEXT

As discussed in the Illinois State University case study, the state of Illinois Board of Higher Education has launched a campaign to raise college attainment levels in the state of Illinois. As of February 1999, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has initiated the Illinois Commitment, which outlines the following goals for higher education for the state of Illinois.

⁵⁹ See Application Packet and Catalog, general admission and college sections.

⁶⁰ See Appendix A.

⁶¹ See Appendices B-I.

The Illinois Commitment

1. Higher education will help Illinois business and industry sustain strong economic growth.
2. Higher education will join elementary and secondary education to improve teaching and learning at all levels.
3. No Illinois citizen will be denied an opportunity for a college education because of financial need.
4. Illinois will increase the number and diversity of citizens completing training and education programs.
5. Illinois colleges and universities will hold students to even higher expectations for learning and will be accountable for the quality of academic programs and the assessment of learning.
6. Illinois colleges and universities will continually improve productivity, cost-effectiveness, and accountability.

Source: State of Illinois Board of Higher Education, "The Illinois Commitment: Partnerships, Opportunities, and Excellence." February 2, 1999.

In addition to these goals, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has developed action plans for achieving the following overarching goals for Illinois higher education in the 21st century:

Goal 1	Economic Growth
Goal 2	Teaching and Learning
Goal 3	Affordability
Goal 4	Access and Diversity
Goal 5	High Expectations and Quality
Goal 6	Productivity and Accountability

With Goal #2, the Teaching and Learning goal, the Illinois Board of Higher Education stresses the idea of partnerships with elementary and secondary education to improve teaching and learning at all levels. "A secondary priority for all education is the preparation of high school students for postsecondary training and education and careers."⁶²

⁶² The Illinois Commitment: Partnerships, Opportunities, and Excellence." State of Illinois Board of Higher Education," February 2, 1999. P. 4.

According to Jan Ignash, Assistant Director of Academic Affairs for the Illinois Board of Higher Education, a P-16 partnership is in process in Illinois. Alignment has emerged as a recent goal for the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Ignash commented,

*A lot of work has been done by the K-12 sector, but there needs to be a concerted effort to get the higher ed. sector to look at the high school standards and see if they meet college entrance standards.*⁶³

IBHE has begun the process of bringing together high school and higher education representatives from around the state to work on aligning high school exit standards with college entry standards. “There was some higher ed. involvement in the development of the standards, but probably not as much as there should have been.”⁶⁴ According to Ignash, all of the three Illinois education agencies including: The Illinois Board of Higher education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Education [K-12], are working on the P-16 partnership to begin to address the inconsistencies with high school standards and college entry standards.

II. GENERAL ADMISSION POLICY FOR UIUC

A. GENERAL PROCESS OF ADMISSION DECISIONS

The first step in the admissions process is the determination of how many students to admit. This is largely budget-driven, though consideration is given to college/departments desires to expand or shrink. With the knowledge of how many spaces are available, applications are then reviewed as they come in, beginning in October. Although students must apply to a particular college, OAR initially screens all applicants. Decisions are based on published guidelines. The admissions staff admits or denies students that clearly exceed or fall below those standards.

⁶³ Email notes from On-line conversation with Jan Ignash, Assistant Director, Academic Affairs, Illinois Board of Higher Education,” November 17, 1998.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

“Grey zone” applicants are deferred for later consideration. Students are informed in the application packet that “applicants with qualification somewhat above or below the guidelines will require a longer period of time for review.”⁶⁵

General Admissions Information

Academic Term/Category	Applications First Accepted	Application Deadline	Supporting Documents Deadline
Fall Semester	October 1	January 1	January 1
Fall Semester/Transfers	February 1	March 15	March 15
Spring Semester/All Applicants	September 25	November 1	November 1

After the January 1 filing deadline, special committees meet to review the grey zone applicants. Each college has a committee, including a dean for the college and admission staff, which considers grey zone applicants for any remaining spaces. Each committee develops its own process of how this is done.⁶⁶ Generally, however, the committee reviews each application using a list of special review guidelines or verbally agreeing on important factors to consider. The admissions decisions, which result from the committee meetings, are typically final, although the Director of OAR officially makes the final determination of admission.

B. KEY FACTORS

General university requirements for freshman admission are set forth in the course catalog: “Admission decisions are based primarily on the following objective criteria: (a) the courses taken in high school and (b) a combination of high school rank in class and admission test score. Anyone approved for admission must have at least a one-in-two (50 percent) chance of achieving a 3.0 (C) average for one or more terms of the first academic year on campus.”⁶⁷ Published materials emphasize that admission to the university is competitive and the “best qualified” will be admitted. Such competitive levels are determined by the individual colleges. Applicants must satisfy the High School Subject Requirements, and completion of a Background

⁶⁵ Application packet, p. 2.

⁶⁶ See individual college descriptions in this paper, Section II.

⁶⁷ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Programs of Study 1995-1997 (hereinafter “Catalog”), p.14.

Statement⁶⁸ is also encouraged. The following chart summarizes the general requirements for admission to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

General Requirements for Admission

Requirement	Description
Age	An Applicant must be at least 15 years of age by the time of desired enrollment.
High School Graduation	An applicant must be a graduate of a regionally accredited high school, a school in Illinois recognized by the state superintendent, or a school elsewhere with a rating equivalent to full recognition; graduates of other secondary schools and nongraduates of secondary schools may be admitted under the provisions used by the UIUC for the GED.
General Educational Development Test (GED)	The achievement of satisfactory scores on the General Educational development Test is acceptable in Lieu of graduation from an accredited high school. This test alone does not fulfill all of the college preparatory subject requirements. A standard score of 40 on each of the five tests and an average standard score of 45 on all five tests are the minimum scores needed to provide the following high school credit: 9 semesters of English and 8 semesters of social studies. To be eligible to take these tests, applicants must be at least 18 years of age or have been out of school for at least one year.
High School Credits	Applicants for admission to all curricula must present a total of at least 15 units of acceptable college preparatory school work. A student who lacks the required high school subjects may satisfy the requirement at either a community college or elsewhere prior to enrollment at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This information must be communicated on the application for admission. One semester in college is the equivalent to two semesters of high school course work. Under extenuating circumstances, a specific subject requirement may be waived for otherwise well qualified applicants. An applicant seeking a waiver of the subject pattern requirement should use the Personal Statement section of the application to state the rationale for requesting such action.

Source: University of Illinois At Urbana-Champaign Website: www.oar.uiuc.edu.

In addition to the general requirements for admission, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign also expects students to adhere to specific subject requirements when determining admission. The following list details the preparatory subject requirements for admission in units (and years) of course work, as outlined by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

⁶⁸ The “Background statement is now called the Personal Statement, (Bouseman, 2/10/2000).

ACCEPTABLE HIGH SCHOOL PREPARTATION

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION	YEARS OF COURSE WORK	EXPLANATORY NOTES
English	This includes studies in language, composition, and literature requiring practice in expository writing in all such work. Course work should emphasize reading, writing, speaking, and listening.	4	
Mathematics	Algebra, geometry, advanced algebra, and trigonometry. Applied business mathematics, pre-algebra, and computer courses are <u>not</u> acceptable. Algebra completed in grade 8 will count as one year of high school algebra.	3 or 3.5	3.5 units of mathematics including trigonometry are required in the following curricula: Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences; Agricultural engineering sciences; Commerce and Business Administration, all curricula; all Engineering curricula; Fine and Applied Arts; Agricultural Studies; Liberal Arts and Sciences; Specialized curricula in biochemistry, chemical engineering, chemistry, geology, and physics.
Social Studies	History and Government. Additional acceptable social studies include anthropology, economics, geography, philosophy, political science, psychology, and sociology.	2	
Laboratory Science	Laboratory courses in biology, chemistry, or physics are preferred. Laboratory courses in astronomy and geology are also acceptable. General science is not acceptable.	2	
One Foreign Language	Two years of any one foreign language (or completion of second level) fulfills the requirement.	2	Fine and applied arts curricula except architectural studies allow the substitution of two units of any combination of art, music, or foreign language.
Flexible Academic Units		2	
TOTAL ACADEMIC UNITS		15 OR 15.5	

Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Website: www.oar.uiuc.edu.

In addition to the subject course requirements, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign outlines the guidelines for accepting college credits earned by students while in high school. The guidelines are listed below.

Guidelines for Accepting College Credits

- A college course taken by a high school student at a high school or college and applied toward the UIUC high school subject pattern requirement will not be awarded college credit at UIUC.
- A college course taken by a high school student with a *high school student population* will not be awarded credit at UIUC.⁶⁹
- A transferable college course taken by a high school student with a *college student population* and not applied toward the UIUC high school subject pattern requirement may be awarded credit at UIUC and the grade may be included in the transfer grade point average.
- College credit can be awarded to high school students by earning an acceptable score on 1) Advanced Placement (AP) program examinations administered nationally each May; 2) the English foreign language placement examinations; or 3) UIUC Departmental Proficiency examinations offered in all University courses normally open to freshmen and sophomores—many of these exams are offered each semester as part of the new student activities.

Applicants to the University of Illinois must apply to a particular college, and often to a particular program. Each college sets forth its own admission standards in the application materials. Colleges may not admit students at a lesser standard than is approved by the university. However, the one-in-two chance of obtaining a C average is a bottom-line campus minimum that all colleges have exceeded for a number of years. Due to the published guidelines, prospective students self-select and the quality of applicants is quite competitive. Furthermore, increasing applications is causing the competitive level for admission to UIUC to rise. As of February 4, 1997, 17,403 applications were received, representing an increase of 5.2 percent. The new freshman target is 5,834, eighty more students than the 1996 target.

1. Selection Index

The heart of the admissions process is the Selection Index (SI). This is a multiple regression equation, computed by Ira Langston of the University Office for Academic Policy Analysis, which uses High School Percentile Rank (HSPR) and ACT composite score to predict what will generate a particular campus grade-point average (GPA). The SI table has HSPR on the

⁶⁹ UIUC [2000] now accepts college courses even with high school population. There has been a significant change in the university policy regarding college courses taken in high school.

vertical axis and enhanced⁷⁰ ACT Composite scores on the horizontal axis. The intercepts represent the GPA that the student with those particular variables is fifty percent likely to earn on campus in the first year. The university changed from a 5.0 to a 4.0 grade point scale in the fall of 1996, but the 1997 SI Table is based on a 5.0 grade point scale. For example, a selection index of 42 signifies that the HSPR/ACT combination predicts a fifty percent likelihood of earning a 4.2. Likewise, the minimum SI acceptable for admission is a 30, reflecting the campus policy that a student must have a fifty percent likelihood of achieving a 3.0 (C) average.

The selection index is only used internally. It is not made public to students, parents, or high school counselors. However, the selection index is based on the two publicized factors: class rank (HSPR) and ACT composite scores. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign considers itself academically selective as detailed in the following chart.

Academic Selectivity at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Credentials of Enrolled 1998 Freshman)					
ACT Scores	SAT Scores		High School Class Rank		
Score	Percent	Score	Percent	Score	Percent
32-36	9%	1400-1600	16%	Top 1%	9%
27-31	49%	1200-1399	49%	Top 10%	49%
23-26	31%	1000-1199	31%		
22 or below	12%	999 or below	5%	Top 50%	99%

Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign website: www.oar.uiuc.edu.

2. Class Rank

UIUC uses class rank as it is calculated by the high school. Thus, no levelers among schools are made. For example, some schools only count academic courses, some add weight for honors courses, etc. One high school counts attendance problems by giving percentage increases

⁷⁰ Special factors may be considered in a student's application. To reflect this numerically, adjustments are made in the SI table. See e.g., Appendices E-F.

to students for good attendance. High school grade-point average is used only when high schools do not rank their students. In those situations, OAR estimates a class rank for students based upon their GPA.

3. ACT/SAT Scores

None of the administrators interviewed perceive any difference between the two standardized tests. UIUC created its own translation table to normalize and compare scores between the two.⁷¹ Furthermore, the highest score is considered for admission, whether it is the higher score between the two different tests once converted, or whether it is the higher score of the same test taken more than once. As seen in the above academic selectivity chart, the average ACT composite score for UIUC entering students in 1998 was 27-31. This is almost two tiers higher than the Illinois State University with an average composite score of 22. The following ACT charts offer examples of the content of student knowledge for scores between 27-31 (Urbana average student score).

ACT Assessment English Test Standards

**Scale 24-27 and 28-32; University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign average 27-31
(Illinois State University average=22)**

Topic Development in Terms of Purpose and Focus	Organization, Unity and Coherence	Word Choice in Terms of Style, Tone, Clarity, and Economy	Sentence Structure and Formation	Conventions of Usage	Conventions of Punctuation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify the focus of a simple essay, applying that knowledge to each paragraph's function and determining if an essay has met a specified goal. •Delete a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use conjunctive adverbs or phrases to create subtle logical connections between sentences •Rearrange the sentences in a fairly uncomplicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Delete a phrase that disrupts the flow of the sentence •Identify and correct sophisticated-sounding language that is inconsistent with the style and tone of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Revise to avoid faulty placement of phrases and coordination and subordination of clauses in sentences with subtle structural problems •Maintain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Form present-perfect verbs by using <i>have</i> rather than <i>of</i> •Ensure that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent when they occur in separate clauses or sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use punctuation to set off complex parenthetical phrases or adverbial phrases •Delete unnecessary commas while recognizing inappropriate uses of colons and semicolons •Use apostrophes to indicate simple possessive nouns

⁷¹ See Application Packet, p. 3.

<p>sentence that disturbs the development of the paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Add a sentence to introduce or summarize the essay and to accomplish a fairly straightforward and limited purpose •Identify focus and purpose of involved essay, applying that knowledge to determine the rhetorical effect of a new or existing sentence, and need to add or delete supporting or irrelevant material •Add a sentence to accomplish a subtle purpose such as emphasis and to express meaning through connotation 	<p>paragraph</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Provide a transition between paragraphs when the essay is fairly straightforward •Make sophisticated distinction concerning the logical use of conjunctive adverbs or phrases •Rearrange sentences in a complex paragraph •Add a sentence to introduce or conclude a fairly complex paragraph 	<p>essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify and correct pronouns that have vague referents •Correct redundant material that exists in separate clauses or sentences •Correct vague, wordy, or clumsy writing containing sophisticated language 	<p>consistent verb tense and pronoun person in compound sentences or between sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use sentence-combining techniques, effectively avoiding problematic comma splices, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, especially in sentences containing compound subjects or verbs •Maintain a consistent and logical use of verb tense and pronoun person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avoid the pitfalls of hypercorrection, correctly using reflexive pronouns, the possessive pronouns <i>its</i> and <i>your</i>, and the relative pronoun <i>who</i> rather than <i>whom</i> •Ensure that a verb agrees with its subject in complex situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use commas to set off a nonessential/nonrestrictive appositive or clause •Deal with multiple punctuation problems (e.g. compound sentences containing unnecessary commas and phrases that may or may not be parenthetical) •Use an apostrophe to show possession, especially with irregular plural nouns •Use a semicolon to indicate a relationship between closely related independent clauses
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ACT Assessment Mathematics Test Standards

Basic Operations & Applications	Probability, Statistics & Data Analysis	Numbers: Concepts & Properties	Algebraic Expressions	Equations & Inequalities	Graphical Representations	Properties of Plane Figures	Measurement	Trigonometric Functions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Solve multistep arithmetic problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Manipulate data •Use Venn diagrams in counting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Work problems involving positive integer exponents, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Factor simple quadratics (e.g., the difference of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Solve real-world problems using first-degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify the graph of a linear inequality on the number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use properties of isosceles triangles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Compute areas and circumference of circles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Identify a particular trigonometric function when

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve word problems containing several rates, proportions, or percentages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compute straightforward probabilities for common situations • Interpret and use information from tables and graphs including graphs in the coordinate plane • Apply counting techniques • Apply the definition of probability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order fractions, numerical factors, square roots, and cube roots • Determine when an expression is undefined • Square numbers and expressions • Exhibit knowledge of the complex number i • Apply the rules of exponents and number properties—often in a new context—to solve problems that involve even/odd numbers, positive/negative integers, and prime factorizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squares and perfect square trinomials) Add subtract, and multiply polynomials • Write expressions with a single variable for common pre-algebra settings (e.g., rate and distance problems and problems that can be solved by using proportions) • Manipulate expressions • Write expressions for common algebra settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve first-degree inequalities that do not require reversing the inequality sign • Identify zeros or roots of simple quadratic equations • Write equations and inequalities with a single variable for common pre-algebra settings Manipulate equations • Write equations and inequalities for common algebra settings • Solve absolute value and quadratic equations • Solve linear inequalities that require reversing sign • Find solutions to systems of linear equations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> line • Determine the slope of a line from points or equations • Match linear graphs with their equations • Find the midpoint of a line segment Graph the solution set of linear inequalities on the number line • Use the distance formula • Use properties of parallel and perpendicular lines to determine an equation of a line or coordinates of a point • Recognize special characteristics of parabolas and circles from their equations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize Pythagorean triples • Use several angle properties to find an unknown angle measure • Apply properties of 30/60/90 degree and congruent triangles • Use Pythagorean theorem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compute areas of rectangles and triangles • Compute perimeter of simple composite geometric figures • Use relationships involving area, perimeter, and volume of geometric figures to compute another measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lengths of a triangle are given • Apply basic trigonometric ratios to solve right triangle problems
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4. Course Pattern Requirements

The university requires a minimum total of 15 or 15.5 approved academic units (full-year courses) for admission. Required subjects are four years of English, three years of Mathematics (or 3.5 in certain programs), two years of Social Studies, two years of Laboratory Sciences, two years of a single foreign language, and two years from any of the five subject areas. Descriptions

of acceptable courses are published in the application materials and in the course catalog.⁷² Formal policy allows for waivers in extenuating, limited circumstances.⁷³

5. Background Statement

Previously, the Background Statement was an optional part of the application, but the wording has recently been changed to emphasize its importance in admissions decisions. The 1997 application simply instructs students to “[c]omplete the Background Statement” as part of the application. Suggested types of information to include are: “interest/experience in your intended major; Advanced Placement or honors-level classes in high school; state or national recognition for talent, creative ability, leadership, or academic achievement; an ethnic or cultural background or an age group that will add diversity to this campus; extenuating circumstances that significantly affected an otherwise exceptionally good academic record, any other information you feel would complete your application profile.”⁷⁴

C. GENERAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Generally, colleges have a great deal of discretion in determining the admission policy for their particular college and need not go through formal channels for approval. For those decisions which require formal approval, it is typical for the initial consideration of the policy to be done by the “A&A Deans,” a group of thirty to forty associate and assistant deans responsible for academic and admission policy. From there, it moves to the Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions. Standing positions on the Senate Committee include the Director of OAR (and the Associate Director of Admissions often sits in), a representative from the A&A Deans, and a representative from the University Office for Academic Policy Analysis. From the Committee, the proposal is submitted for faculty action. Depending on the nature of the policy, the Board of

⁷² See Catalog, p. 13, or Application Packet, p. 3.

⁷³ Operational policies waiving course requirements are discussed in this paper, section I (D)(2).

⁷⁴ Application Packet, p. 6 of application.

Trustees may then be asked for their seal of approval, usually forthcoming once the faculty has approved the new measure. Once a policy is approved, OAR has two years to publicize it before it is implemented. For example, many inconsistencies existed in how colleges determined college credit for work done in high school. Once a standard policy was adopted for all colleges, OAR publicized it to secondary schools for two years prior to implementation.

The colleges maintain a strong commitment to their published admissions guidelines and competitive levels. The guidelines are based on admissions decisions from the previous year. As a result of publishing competitive levels up-front, students self-select and the university receives predominantly well-qualified applications. This benefits UIUC because it generates less work for admissions and college staff. Additionally, it is fair to students who are not faced with as much guesswork as to their chances of admission. However, the value of advertising accurate cut-off scores carries the cost in lower national rankings because of appearing to be less competitive for admission. Because of up-front competitive guidelines and resulting self-selection, UIUC has a higher ratio of admits to applicants than many other institutions. Other universities seem more selective because they have lower yield percentages.

UIUC is a selective, competitive institution in Illinois. University decision-makers have difficulty imagining tightening competitive standards any further. Recognizing that a state school is primarily to serve Illinois taxpayers, they have to defend such selectivity to the legislature as the pool of applicants rises. Several people noted that tightening standards would be at the political peril of the university because UIUC already disappoints Illinois families with students who are strong candidates but are not admitted.

D. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Letters of Recommendation

None of the colleges solicit letters of recommendation, but all colleges consider letters that may come in for borderline applicants. Strong letters may be the reason a student advances to the committee review stage. Committees emphasize that they can distinguish between levels of

sincerity in the letters. While some are merely perfunctory, others express an earnest heartfelt belief that the student deserves strong consideration. Most colleges stated that letters of recommendation rarely turn a case, though they are more influential if written by a teacher, counselor or someone familiar with the student's academic work, or if the letter confirms something a student wrote in the Background Statement.

2. Course Pattern Requirement Exceptions

The foreign language requirement is the one most typically waived. Engineering considers waiver of language pattern requirements if the student has high ACT scores. Other colleges may waive language requirements if English is not the student's first language, if the student attended a small school that didn't offer foreign languages, or if course selection was limited and the student had to choose between a foreign language course and an advanced mathematics course, for example. Committees consider the total college preparatory units, the classes the student took in the Senior year, and the reason given for requesting a waiver.

3. Residency

Although colleges do not formally consider the residency of applicants, the issue clearly has financial implications. For example, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) stated that they have been looking at residency a lot lately because they want to increase LAS funds (through non-resident tuition) in order to enable offers of admission to more Illinois students. The College of Business Administration (CBA) stated that no priority was given with regard to residency. Admissions staff associated with CBA stated that trying to build enrollment of non-residents was a campus goal, but CBA was not inclined to do so and looked carefully at out-of-state high schools. The College of Engineering (ENG) stated that it noticed if an applicant was a resident or not, but did not take residency into account in the admission decision.

4. Special Admits

Approximately ten percent of the offers of admission are made to “special admits.” This figure applies at the college and university level. Special admits must still have the minimum qualifications, though they are admitted just under the competitive line. For example, some special admit spots may go to student athletes who have been considered by the Committee on Admissions of Student Athletes (CASA). Another example is General Assembly Scholarship recipients who, though awarded a tuition scholarship by the state legislature, do not meet competitive guidelines for the university. Each member of the Illinois General Assembly may award one to four scholarships each year to high school graduates residing in the nominating legislator’s district. Special admits also include late applicants who surpass the competitive guidelines. The President’s Award Program (PAP) is a scholarship program for high-achieving minority students in the upper half of their high school class and a 24+ ACT composites score. PAP students are also specially admitted if they meet the PAP standards but are not at the competitive level for admission. Additionally, minority students who meet the campus minimum and have special background statements may also fall within this category.

5. Educational Opportunities Program (EOP)

Administered by the Office of Minority Student Affairs, EOP “is designed to provide opportunities for a college education to students who have historically been excluded from post-secondary education.” Admission to the program is limited to Illinois residents. EOP applicants must satisfy the high school subject pattern requirements and the HSPR/ACT combination for EOP. Applicants through EOP may be admitted in all colleges. LAS additionally admit 100 EOP students most at risk to special Summer Bridge and Transition programs.⁷⁵

6. EOP High Schools

⁷⁵ See Catalog, p. 33.

Some high schools are specially designated as EOP High Schools. These are only Illinois schools and the key in this determination is socioeconomic status of the school population. Thus, any student from an EOP school receives special consideration, regardless of ethnicity. Typical EOP high schools include inner-city Chicago and East St. Louis schools. No explicit, written guidelines for EOP high school students exist. Rather, the cases are referred to the Dean of the appropriate college for consideration. OAR staff stated that the bottom line EOP special review student must be in the upper half of his class, have English and Math ACT scores of 18 or higher, have a selection index of 30 or higher (which predicts a “C” average on campus), and submit verification of ethnicity.

7. Special Review High Schools

Some high schools are designated as Special Review High Schools to compensate for class ranks, which may not demonstrate the caliber of student due to the abundance of high-achieving students at that school. Most strong schools have an ACT average of 22. The mean ACT score at Special Review High Schools is over 26, often around 29-30. These schools typically have admission requirements rather than open enrollment, and large percentages of the high school graduates pursue post-secondary education. One OAR administrator expressed an opinion of the need to re-evaluate these schools in light of existing grade inflation. For example, in determining which schools qualify as Special Review, UIUC could ask what percentage of students have a B average or higher, or what percentage of students are in the top half of the class. One Special Review High School had thirteen students tied for the highest in their class. However, instead of designating the next student in line as number fourteen, the student was ranked as number two.

8. Placement Tests

Placement tests are administered after the student is admitted to the university. Tests are given in Language, Chemistry, Math and Composition. Placement tests differ from the ACT/SAT in that they are not aptitude tests, but test actual, specific knowledge in subject areas.

The university cannot place students in math courses below College Algebra. If a student tests lower than that, they may need to take a math course at a community college or they may be able to participate in a transition program.

9. Spring Option

UIUC only accepts applications for fall enrollment and does not have an entering spring class of freshmen. However, some applicants who are not offered fall admission may receive an alternative offer for spring enrollment. May 1 is the national deadline for students to notify universities of their decisions to accept or refuse an offer of admission. After such notification and review of fall enrollment figures, the university may move some Spring Option students to fall enrollment if space is available. However, this rarely happens with LAS, for example, and students should not rely on such a possibility. The Spring Option assists colleges in making offers without going over target by providing a buffer zone. For example, CBA made forty offers of Spring Option, all from the grey zone. Typically, fifty percent accept the Spring Option, and only fifty percent of those will actually come to campus. Thus, the typical yield for Spring Option is twenty-five percent. Such a low yield enables colleges to make alternative offers to more students instead of issuing denials.

II. ADMISSION POLICIES FOR INDIVIDUAL COLLEGES

All UIUC colleges follow the general university admissions standards outlined in the previous sections. However, high demand for admission has driven competitive standards higher in all colleges than the university's minimum requirement. The decentralized system permits college discretion and allows for differences among the colleges based on different processes, special review factors, and levels of competition. Even within a single college, competitive levels vary depending on which curricular program a student applies to and the number of admit offers available for that program for a specific academic year.

Freshmen applicants may select from programs in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), the College of Applied Life Studies (ALS), the Institute of Aviation, the College of Commerce and Business Administration (CBA), the College of Education (EDUC), the College of Engineering (ENG), the College of Fine and Applied Arts (FAA), and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS). This section focuses, in alphabetical order, on the four highest enrollment colleges, ACES, CBA, ENG, and LAS, and details how each administers its admissions process and the operational policies as they may differ from the procedures and policies outlined above. The published competitive guidelines are contained in each college's section in the Application Packet and Catalog. For specific cut-off points for admission, see Appendices C-D.⁷⁶

A. COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES (ACES)

1. General Process

Of the four colleges examined, ACES seems to have a “hands-on” approach in the initial stages of the admissions process. ACES receive the admissions profile, background statement and anything else in a student's file from the Office of Admissions. College staff members review incoming applicants on a weekly basis and sort them into four categories: recommend admit, recommend deny, recommend defer, and recommend pending (incomplete application). Early in the process (November), no applicant is denied, only admitted or deferred.

2. Special Admission Committee

After the January 1 application deadline passes, a committee blocks off a day to consider the deferrals. The committee typically consists of the four assistant deans. In this process, the committee looks first at any comments made by an initial reviewer. If demand is high and an applicant was deferred to deny, the committee probably will not give it any closer scrutiny. The

⁷⁶ The attached internal memoranda are for background research purposes only and are not to be included in any publication.

Committee filters the applications several times, discussing each. Each committee member marks either a plus or a minus to determine if the student should be offered admission. If a tie among the four deans results, they discuss it again until they reach a majority decision.

Critical in the committee evaluation is the Background Statement and Professional Interest Statement (PIS). The PIS is a questionnaire developed by the college but not made public to students, parents, counselors or anyone outside of the college admission staff. The PIS is mailed to “grey zone” students who have a very limited amount of time in which to complete and return the form. The essence of the PIS is to establish a student’s career goals and relation to the program for which the student has applied.⁷⁷ The deans examine the applicant’s commitment to the applied-for program. Scores in particular areas are also important. For example, an Animal Science applicant who hopes to go into veterinary medicine needs a strong science record.

The college operates under the land-grant philosophy and may pull students from rural communities. For example, special consideration is given to a student who is last in a class of ten. Using the standard SI system, which factors class rank, that student would not be admitted even with a 28 ACT, unless he was looked at carefully.

3. Competitive Levels

The total college quota is broken down into curricular quotas, so applicants compete within the same curricular pool. For example, Human Development and Family Studies applicants do not compete for the same spots as Agricultural Engineering applicants. In the published application guidelines for ACES,⁷⁸ Line A applicants will be clear admits, in any college. Line B designates the competitive minimum and the point at which the Professional Interest Statement becomes influential. ACES has raised Line B in the last two years as competition has increased and the level of admitted students increases. ACES yields

⁷⁷ Though never explicitly stated, it seems this may be to determine the sincerity of the applicant’s interest in the college. ACES is not as competitive as other colleges and some students may apply simply as an entry to the university itself.

⁷⁸ Application Packet, p. 5 .

approximately sixty-four to sixty-seven percent of its offers for admission (compared to fifty percent in most other colleges).

B. COLLEGE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (CBA)

1. General Process

CBA accepts applications through January 1. OAR accepts and denies the clear cases on a rolling basis, previews background statements and identifies the most compelling. After the application deadline, admissions staff review the grey zone of approximately 300 applicants and reduces it to approximately 150 to bring to the committee involving the college deans.

2. Special Admission Committee

The Committee is comprised of five to six people and includes two assistant deans, an assistant director of admissions that works primarily with CBA, an international admissions administrator, and another admissions staff person. The applicants are ranked by selection index, ACT composite score, ACT Math score, and math grades. The committee also reads all background statements. The committee goes through the list and discusses each student, case by case, starting with international grey zone students. The group then considers domestic applicants, beginning with high selection index students. Finally, the group considers minority students that did not meet the ACT of 20 or more, or if they had a special background statement, or demonstrated unusual grade improvement. The key factor in these deliberations is the academic background, particularly looking for strength in Math.

3. Competitive Levels

The competitive level increased this year, and the trend is more competitive. Three years ago, CBA received 1,666 applications. Last year, CBA received 1,750 applicants. This year it increased to 1,975 applicants for the same number of spots. The published line is fairly accurate

and CBA seldom admits above the line. This year, CBA admitted at one below the published line. Competition is all the same at the Freshman level because CBA admits in one large pool and does not separate into curricular categories and quotas. CBA yields approximately fifty percent of its offers for admission.

4. Miscellaneous

In addition to Spring Option offers, CBA may make alternative offers to admit in LAS if the student is qualified and LAS has space available.

C. COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING (ENG)

1. General Process

OAR processes incoming applications in the fall and distributes lists to the Engineering department which compare applicants from the previous year to current applicants with regard to demand and quality in each of the curricular areas or cells.⁷⁹ When applications reach a critical mass (approximately October), ENG has a fairly clear picture of the applicant pool, even though it has received only forty percent of the total applications at that time. OAR then starts to admit from the top of pool and deny those that clearly do not meet requirements. These decisions are based upon the published guidelines, which the school of Engineering refers to as the “Superstar” line. If the college of Engineering receives the application early and the student exceeds that line, it will be a clear admit. OAR updates the college of Engineering weekly to keep the college informed and alert it when it may be close to over-enrolling. For example, by November, Computer Science was close to target. A committee then reviews the remaining grey zone applicants.

2. Special Admission Committee

⁷⁹ Historically, applicants applied to one of three or four cells, or curricular areas. The current number of cells is ten.

The Committee which considers the grey zone applicants consists of Assistant Dean Carl Larson, the Director of OAR, and others OAR staff that has been involved with ENG applicants. The Committee meeting usually takes a full day and is a discussion-oriented process. Applicants are ranked and the committee reviews each, starting at the top. The applicants are bundled by cell, by selection index and by date of application. As the committee sorts through the applications, the members continuously ask, "Is this consistent?" They filter through the applications several times. Once the quotas are full, they start offering alternatives.

Factors considered by the committee depend on which programs are critical that year and what the numbers are. The factors, numbers, problems and alternatives vary with each application process. Key factors considered by the committee include the timing of the application (the earlier, the better) and the area of interest. The committee's ability to make special considerations is limited because of the competition. It does recognize differences in class rank, so the committee may examine the school profile, geography, or class size. The committee also considers the Background Statement. An influential one describes any special experiences or family situations. Given the high quality of most applicants, it is not persuasive to the committee that a student was good at math, science, and involved in some activities.

3. Competitive Levels

The college is very competitive, and the self-selection by students is evident. ENG makes offers to approximately 2,000 of 3,000 applicants. The minimum admissions requirements are determined by demand and reflected in the published guidelines. The competitive line increased from last year, and the college still saw an increase in applications. Engineering recognizes high enrollment departments and low enrollment departments. High enrollment departments are the critical areas that have a high demand and resulting higher levels of competition: Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Computer Engineering. Demand within the college varies over time. For example, interest in civil engineering increases with federal administrations that emphasize the environment. ENG yields approximately fifty percent now,

as compared to sixty-five percent ten years ago. The difference is attributed to an increase in out-of-state admits, which have a lower acceptance rate.

4. Miscellaneous

a. Alternative Offers

Engineering is the most competitive college on the UIUC campus. Yet it remains firm in its commitment to the published competitive guidelines. Every applicant who meets the competitive level will have some type of offer. These secondary offers have a lower acceptance rate which enable ENG to offer more alternatives instead of issuing denials. If a student meets the competitive level for a particular Engineering program, but is still not admitted, he may be offered one of a number of alternatives.

For example, he may be offered the opportunity to begin in another Engineering department that has less demand. This is viable for the college to offer because if the student has met the competitive level for the high enrollment department, he has necessarily exceeded the competitive level in the other pools. Once enrolled, students cannot change their majors right away, but the first year Engineering curriculum is virtually the same for all programs. GPA will be critical when the student seeks an on-campus transfer to a different, more competitive, department.

Another option is for the student to enter as an LAS general curriculum student. Again, the student will exceed LAS competitive levels since he has already satisfied the competitive level for ENG. As an LAS general student, he can take the Engineering program and transfer colleges later if he meets the on-campus transfer requirements. LAS does not save seats for ENG applicants, so timing is a factor with this option. If LAS is full, ENG cannot offer this alternative.

b. Special Cases

Computer Science is treated a bit differently than other programs. Computer Science is highly competitive and offered by the College of Engineering. Math Computer Science is a similar but separate program, offered by LAS. To maintain consistency of competitive levels for

these programs, when ENG closes admissions for Computer Science, LAS closes at that same competitive level.

ENG also offers joint degree programs with ACES or LAS. All colleges recommend that the student enters in the more competitive college in order to keep all options open. Thus, the student must meet Engineering requirements. Very few students enter at the freshmen level with the intent of enrolling in the joint degree program.

D. COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES (LAS)

1. General Process

LAS is the largest college on the UIUC campus, receiving almost half of all freshmen applications. All applications are initially processed by the OAR. LAS works with OAR in advance to determine guidelines for admission, but eighty to eighty-five percent of the admissions decisions are made without consulting LAS. These decisions are with regard to students that exceed or clearly fall below published competitive levels. Before denying any student, Admissions staff members refer to the college guidelines.⁸⁰ If they are unsure of any applicant, they simply hold it for review with the larger group. Initially, LAS only considers three pools of applicants: Chemical Engineering (higher standards), Life Sciences (higher standards) and everyone else. Due to increased competition, they may also separate Math and Computer Science in the initial phase next year. Admissions staff make numerical evaluations, using the guideline sheet, and may admit students after some adjustments. Statistics are published every week to inform LAS and Admissions staff how many spots remain in each cell.

2. Special Admission Committee

The remaining fifteen to twenty percent of applicants are grey zone applicants, considered in a committee meeting. Tammie Bouseman, Assistant Director of Admissions, is the Chair of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Special Admission Committee, and she coordinates the review with approximately five assistants. The grey zone students are comparably qualified, and

⁸⁰ See Appendix F.

the committee considers the date of application, the strength of their academic preparation (i.e., rank, test scores, subjects, honors courses, Advanced Placement), and extenuating circumstances described in the background statement (i.e., ill parent, work to support family, moved several times). The format of the meeting is that each admissions officer presents his or her special cases to the Dean for his reaction. If there is disagreement, the group discusses it.

Students apply to and are considered for separate curricular areas, or cells, within LAS. Some special scenarios exist. For example, Biological Sciences includes Pre-Med general students. Finance/Econ are not administered by LAS, so the admissions decision depends on which college the student applies to. LAS will admit Finance students at the same level as CBA (which is a higher selection index), but admits Econ students at the LAS level.

3. Competitive Levels

Chemical Engineering is the most competitive program in LAS, followed by Biology and the Life Sciences. LAS also admits large numbers to its general curriculum (undecided) program, which uses guidelines for the college as a whole. An applicant for Pre-Med/Undecided is considered using higher Biology standards, rather than the general undecided standards. Although this is not publicized, prospective students learn of this type of scenario and may “work the system.” So, for example, a Pre-Med/Undecided student realizes she faces tough admissions standards, so she just applies as a general undecided student, without declaring her Pre-Med interest, and is evaluated at a lower competitive level. Students are allowed to change program tracks as early as summer before entering college unless the program is restricted. If restricted, the student must meet on-campus transfer requirements for that program. Transfers also have lower priority for registration purposes.

Applications increase every year and the competitive level is rising. Application to LAS for fall 1997 was made by 8,489 students, and LAS offered admission to 6,643, anticipating a yield of fifty percent. Students are doing even better, as indicated by the Selection Index. The SI increased to a 39 this year from a 38 last year. This year, LAS admitted below the competitive level because they had projected a higher line than what was actually needed. Life Science

applicants were admitted at published guidelines, but all other programs admitted at one below. This year, the published guidelines were a 39 and LAS initially denied below a 34.

III. FINANCIAL AID

Tuition at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is comparable to the Illinois State University. According to the Office of Admissions, students must adhere to the following cost schedule:

Expenses for the 1998-1999 Academic Year (Tuition change from 1997)

Expense	Illinois Residents	Non-Residents	Other Non-Residents
Tuition* and fees	\$4,554	\$11,370	\$10,430
Room and Board (14 meals per week)	\$4,962	\$4,962	\$4,962
Books and Supplies	\$670	\$670	\$670
Total Estimated Expenses	\$10,186	\$17,002	\$16,062

*Add \$576 for Engineering; \$500 for Chemistry/Life Science curricula; \$200 (Freshman or Sophomore) and \$400 (junior or senior) for all curricula in Architecture, Music, and Art.

Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Website: www.oar.uiuc.edu.

Financial Aid plays no role in the decision-making process of whom to admit. OAR and the Colleges make all admissions decisions independent of the Office of Financial Aid. Once decisions have been made about which students will receive offers, OAR then turns over that information to the Office of Financial Aid. Because determining financial aid is a lengthy process, the Office of Financial Aid encourages students to apply for aid even before they know whether or not they are admitted. However, Financial Aid checks to make sure a student is officially admitted to the University before they respond to anyone about financial aid.

The largest grant programs available to UIUC students are the Pell and State Grants. The Pell Grant is formula-driven, based on family income, size of family, and cost of education, and provides approximately \$9 million for 7,500 students. The State Grant is the Illinois Student Assistance Commission Monetary Award Program (ISAC MAP) Grant, which is twice as valuable. It is also formula-driven and provides approximately \$18 million for 5,500 students.

In-state tuition for the 1996-97 school year is \$4,150. For the 1998-1999 academic year, this amount has slightly risen to \$4,554. Tuition for out-of-state students is approximately three times that amount. The Director of Financial Aid described the role of the office as determining appropriate educational expenses, and emphasized that the focus is on the “need of students, not need of institution.” The Office focuses on Award Equity Packaging, which seeks to assure that students can finance their education between family resources and assistance, \$5,000 out of \$12,000 budget. For example, if parents provide \$5,000, the student would not receive aid. If the parent provides \$0, the student would be eligible for Pell and State grants. Thus, campus aid recipients are the ones in the middle.

The Office of Financial Aid recognizes some special categories of students. For PAP students⁸¹ with need, the award is \$3,000 in addition to the regular financial aid package. If they do not demonstrate need, the award is \$1,000 each of the first two years. The Office of Financial Aid also gives special consideration to students admitted through the Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) in that the Office does not hold those students to the priority deadline, but accepts their applications up to the beginning of school. The rationale is that many EOP students are first-generation college students without much help in the process.

Very little university merit-based aid is available for freshmen. Some money is provided for non-resident recruitment through the Admissions Office: \$400,000 for non-Illinois students; \$280,000 of which is strictly merit, based on test scores and class rank. Most other awards are from non-university sources (i.e., National Merit scholarships, General Assembly scholarships, State Merit Recognition, Elks Club, etc.).

All colleges have some money available for scholarships. Most colleges use the funds for returning students and not as a recruitment tool. Colleges make independent decisions about how to spend the money. ENG, ACES, and CBA give the most scholarships. LAS has little money in proportion to the number of students in the college. For example, ACES recognizes up to sixty freshmen in the upper 10% of their class, or freshmen with an ACT score of 27 or higher, as J.B. Turner Freshmen Scholars. Engineering scholarships are awarded on the basis of good

⁸¹ See discussion in this paper of Special Admits, section I (D)(4).

grades and need. Most Engineering money is not awarded to freshmen, though several departments have their own freshmen merit scholarships.

V. CONCLUSION

The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign maintains a unique admissions selection process based on the discretionary role of individual schools and colleges within the university. In addition, the university has been able to balance the goals of the university in remaining a highly selective yet accessible university. The discretion provided to university colleges and departments has resulted in the admission of top student applicants.