

DH 20010429E1

May 25, 2001

SF Chronicle

# Berkeley admissions plan challenged

## UC regents would prefer unified policy

By Tanya Schevitz  
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

A UC Berkeley request to be exempted from a University of California admissions policy is creating concern among administrators and faculty who object to looking at one campus in isolation.

Instead, they said, the Berkeley request probably should be folded into a systemwide review of admissions already under way.

"Berkeley could offer a very useful model, but it could also create a situation where it could pressure other campuses," said Michael Cowan, president of the Academic Senate.

The current two-tiered admissions policy, set in 1995 by the UC regents when they approved their pre-Proposition 209 ban on the use of racial preferences, requires that 50 percent to 75 percent of the students at each campus be

admitted purely on their academic records. UC Berkeley would instead like to evaluate all of its applicants on a comprehensive basis, looking at grades and test scores in the context of socioeconomic background, academic opportunities and intellectual motivation.

But when the regents rescinded the ban on racial and gender preferences last week, they directed the UC faculty senate to review the issue of two-tiered admissions and return with a recommendation by the end of the year.

To other critics, the UC Berkeley proposal — currently being reviewed by the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools, a systemwide faculty committee — looks like an end run around the state ban on affirmative action.

Moving away from an evaluation based on academics will erode admission standards, some faculty members say.

"One can't help but be suspicious at the motivations underlying this move," said UC Berkeley Professor Jack Citrin in an e-mail interview. "There seems to be absolutely no basis to support (the) statement that this move will pro-

---

*"What it will do is to allow whatever biases . . . to have more sway."*

---

JACK CITRIN  
UC Berkeley professor

duce a more talented class. What it will do is to allow whatever biases . . . to have more sway."

But Calvin Moore, chairman of UC Berkeley's undergraduate admissions committee, said those who excel academically will still get in. The change, he said, is not expected to make a dramatic difference in the ethnic makeup of an incoming class.

Evaluating students without looking at their nonacademic accomplishments, he said, is like reading files with one eye covered.

"The academic criteria and the other criteria are interwoven," he said.

UC's other highly selective campus, the University of California at Los Angeles, chooses 59 percent of its class based on academics. Tom Lifka, interim director of admissions at UCLA, said

he wants to understand all the implications of any major change before agreeing to it.

"It is not like you can throw out everything and do what you want," he said. "Those people who think that eliminating this two-tier system is going to have some profound change on (admissions) of underrepresented minorities will be disappointed."

But Cowan said the Berkeley proposal would just move the university closer to the process used by the elite, private schools.

"Nobody asks that question of Yale or Stanford or Harvard," Cowan said.

In another development, the UC system disclosed yesterday that a dual admissions plan has been approved by the faculty.

The proposal, which may be considered by the regents in July, guarantees high school seniors a spot at a specific UC campus if they complete two years at a community college.

It also attracted criticism as a back-door way to admit more minorities.

---

E-mail Tanya Schevitz at  
tschevitz@sfchronicle.com.