

4. Receive Update on 2017 Board Goal: Qualified Admissions

Summary

In June 2017, the Board received a report from the First Generation Taskforce recommending the Board review the admission criteria for entrance into a state university with a specific focus on precollege curriculum course requirements. The intent was to simplify the undergraduate admission process. The Board adopted the review as an AY 2018 goal and a working group was selected by the state university academic officers to address this Board goal. The group met multiple times and presented recommendations, which the Board adopted at its June 2018 meeting. However, based on a staff recommendation, the Board asked the working group to reconvene to explore additional options to admit otherwise qualified students who may not meet the ACT requirement for admissions. Statewide ACT testing was made available in AY 2019, which was predicted to identify qualified high school students who may not meet the ACT requirement for admission to a state university. (Currently, such students are admitted as exceptions to the minimum admission standards.) The working group convened multiple times through AY 2019 and provided final recommendations to Board staff. Those include the addition of an option for admission based on an applicant's cumulative high school GPA for most state universities. Numerous studies show that high school grades are a strong predictor of undergraduate performance. Because the cumulative GPA is proposed as an admission criterion for five institutions, requiring and tracking certain units for the precollege curriculum is duplicative. Because of this the precollege curriculum is being recommended, but not required as a condition of admission. Staff note that many universities offer a test-optional admission criterion because studies show that doing so increases the number of first-generation, minority, and rural students attending college. Staff recommends approval of the changes. If the changes in admissions requirements are approved, regulatory amendments are required to affect such changes.

Background

In June 2017, the Board received a report from the First Generation Taskforce recommending the Board review the Qualified Admissions criteria for entrance into a state university with a specific focus on precollege curriculum course requirements. The intent was to simplify the undergraduate admission process. The Board adopted the review as an AY 2018 goal and a working group was selected by the state university chief academic officers to address this Board goal. The group included university admissions officers, enrollment management personnel, and diversity and inclusion staff.

Beginning in October 2017, the eight-member working group met multiple times throughout the academic year. Their recommendations to address the Board goal dealt with introducing more flexibility for how applicants met and reported meeting the precollege curriculum requirement, using the overall cumulative GPA listed on the high school transcript instead of calculating the prescribed precollege curriculum GPA, and revising the prescribed precollege curriculum GPA to allow for variation in admission requirements based on institutional mission.

The Board approved these recommendations at its June 2018 meeting, but also asked the working group to reconvene to explore additional options to admit otherwise qualified students who may not meet the ACT requirement for qualified admissions. The working group convened multiple times through the 2019 academic year and provided final recommendations to Board staff. After consultation with the institutions by Board staff, the following recommendations are presented for action. Changes are highlighted in grey.

Current Freshmen Criteria – Under 21 <i>Requirements for Accredited High School Graduate</i>	Proposed Changes <i>Accredited High School Graduate</i>	
ESU, PSU, FHSU, KSU, and WSU	ESU, PSU, FHSU, and WSU	K-State
ACT: 21+ <u>or</u> Rank in top third of class	ACT: 21+ <u>or</u> Cumulative GPA of 2.25	ACT: 21+ <u>or</u> Cumulative GPA of 3.25
Complete Precollege Curriculum with a 2.0 GPA (Resident)/2.5 GPA (Nonresident). Curriculum consists of: -English (4 units) -Math (3 units with ACT benchmark of 22 or 4 units with one taken in senior year), -Natural Science (3 units with one unit in chemistry or physics), -Social Science (3 units) -Electives (3 units) <i>Note: As part of the admission application, students list each high school course taken along with the grade.</i>	Units (but not specific courses) are recommended; units are not required.	Units (but not specific courses) are recommended; units are not required.
2.0 cumulative GPA on any college courses taken while in high school	2.0 cumulative GPA on any college courses taken while in high school	2.0 cumulative GPA on any college courses taken while in high school

Current Freshmen Criteria – Under 21 <i>Requirements for Accredited High School Graduate</i>	Proposed Changes <i>Accredited High School Graduate</i>	
KU	KU	
Cumulative GPA of 3.25 and ACT 21+ <u>or</u> Cumulative GPA of 3.0 and ACT 24+	Cumulative GPA of 3.25 and ACT 21+ <u>or</u> Cumulative GPA of 3.0 and ACT 24+	
Complete the Precollege Curriculum as described above	Units (but not specific courses) are recommended; units are not required.	
2.0 cumulative GPA on any college courses taken while in high school	2.0 cumulative GPA on any college courses taken while in high school	

The primary difference in the current and proposed criteria include the addition of an option for admission based on an applicant’s cumulative high school GPA for five state universities. Because the cumulative GPA is proposed as an admission criterion for these five institutions, requiring and tracking certain units for the precollege curriculum is duplicative leading the precollege curriculum to be recommended, but not required.

Specific differences in the cumulative GPA requirement exist with K-State recommending a cumulative GPA of 3.25 for admission, and the comprehensive and urban serving institutions recommending a 2.25. This difference reflects differences in mission and types of students served.

Many universities offer a test-optional admission criterion because numerous studies show that doing so increases the number of first-generation, minority, and rural students attending college. These same studies show that high school grades are a strong predictor of undergraduate performance. In addition, requiring a test as a condition for admission may exclude otherwise qualified applicants who do not meet the test score requirement.

KU continues with its current admission criteria of a combined requirement of an ACT score and cumulative GPA but is recommending the precollege curriculum become optional for reasons outlined above.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed admission criteria which require regulatory amendments. The proposed changes support the First Generation Taskforce’s goal of removing barriers for first generation students and the Board’s desire to provide additional options to admit otherwise qualified students who may not meet the ACT requirement for qualified admissions. This desire was based on the commitment made by the 2018 Legislature to pay for statewide testing of every high school junior using ACT, Inc. assessments.

The recommendations also achieve the Board’s goal of simplifying the admissions process to help all students by focusing on the cumulative GPA instead of specific high school courses. This shortens the application process because students do not have to list each high school course taken along with the grade. Finally, the recommendations provide the Board an opportunity to respond to feedback received from students during the strategic planning process asking for the college application to be simplified.