

# UC sees boost in minority students

Percentages highest since 1998 ban on affirmative action

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For the first time since a ban on affirmative action took effect in 1998, the University of California system has exceeded the percentage of minority admissions posted that year, according to statistics released Thursday.

Like the system as a whole, UCSB has had modest increases in minority admissions every year. But the school fell short of its pre-ban mark, 20.1 percent of total admissions in 1997, compared to 18.8 percent for the fall of 2002.

Although that's an improvement, it's not good enough for Lawayne Williams, a 21-year-old senior from Pasadena and a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, a historically black fraternity. UCSB's increase was 0.1 percent for California students over the previous year.

"We are very underrepresented, and I don't feel it getting any better," he said.

All eight undergraduate campuses combined admitted a class comprising 19.1 percent underrepresented minorities: African-Americans, Latinos and American Indians. The statistics are for California students, who make up nine of 10 admitted freshmen.

The University of California has worked to increase minority enrollment.

This is the first class admitted with comprehensive review of all applicants rather than just borderline cases. Activities, adversity and other factors beyond grades and test scores are considered, even for students with the highest grades and test scores.

Two years ago, the system also started a program called "eligibility in

the local context" that admits the top 4 percent of students at every high school in the state if they have completed required courses. Those students, however, are not guaranteed a place at their first-choice schools, just a spot in the UC system.

Students at schools that have traditionally failed to send students to the UC system are benefitting, according to Lavonne Luquis, a spokeswoman for the Office of the UC President in Oakland.

UCSB has been raising its standards every year because of a growing pool of high school applicants. It turned down just over 1,000 students with a 4.0 grade-point average. (The schools allow students to take extra points for Advanced Placement courses, so a 4.0 isn't necessarily a straight-A average.)

Faculty at UCSB have been noticing an increase in the caliber of students in their classes. The average GPA of admitted students was 3.94 and the average SAT I score was

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"It was almost like a quantum leap this year," said Richard Watts, chairman of the Academic Senate and a chemistry professor. "We had an incredible jump in the quality of students."

He's heard similar comments from his peers and can even quantify the change. He prepares similar tests every year, but students in his honors classes are averaging about 65 percent instead of the 50 percent seen in previous years. Mr. Watts grades on a curve.

Admissions letters were mailed in March, which began a flurry of phone calls from unhappy teens who were rejected. Typically about 1,000 appeal the decision each year, though appeals are discouraged.

The university system also identifies recruitment after students are accepted as a factor that has increased minority enrollment. Even Chancellor Henry Yang takes part in an annual phone-a-thon to call top students, including minorities, and encourage them to attend and "enroll the most diverse class that we possibly can," he said.