

Despite competition, minority admissions on the rise

UCSB becoming more diverse

Allison Patrick, 17, of San Luis Obispo, has been admitted to UCSB. Touring campus with prospective students, she calls the school not too big and not too small.



LEN WOOD / NEWS-PRESS

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More minorities are being admitted to UCSB as the campus becomes increasingly competitive, according to fall freshman admission numbers released Tuesday.

Despite a larger pool of applicants for the same number of openings, the percentage of students from underrepresented ethnic groups has grown in the past three years, at UCSB and throughout the UC system.

At UCSB, the number of applicants has doubled since 1994

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Diversity a priority for UC schools

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to 14,882. The school accepted less than half the students who applied, the lowest rate in its history, according to officials.

"Many of us are commenting that the caliber of students showing up in our classrooms is getting better. We can accelerate our classes a bit and we spend less time on remedial work," said Richard Watts, chairman of the UCSB division of the Academic Senate and a chemistry professor.

The UC system has kept up with minority population growth. The eight campuses also have inched closer to the diversity they had before affirmative-action admissions policies that took the race of applicants into account were abolished starting in 1998.

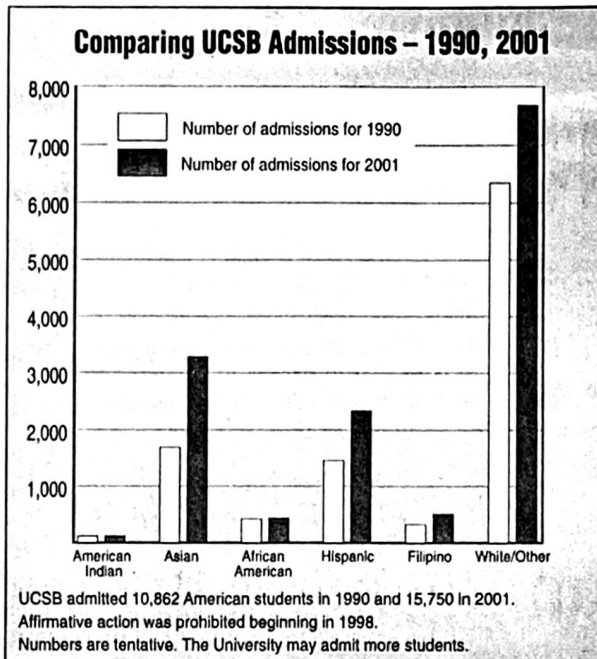
For example, 20.5 percent of students accepted at UCSB are from one of the underrepresented ethnic groups: African American, American Indian and Chicano/Latino. That's about 1 percent below the number of underrepresented minorities accepted the year before affirmative action ended.

The number has grown by about 1 percent a year.

All campuses combined admitted about the same percentage of minorities as UCSB. Some individual campuses were higher and some lower.

Santa Barbara has many attractions, and admissions officials can guess at why the campus is becoming more popular and competitive: There's the beach. There's the low number of students who commute. Then there are the scientists on campus who have won three Nobel Prizes in the past three years: one in 1998 and two in 2000.

Allison Patrick, a 17-year-old from San Luis Obispo admitted to UCSB, also is considering UC Davis. The beach is a big draw for many students, she said. But there are other considerations.



SOURCE: UCSB

TOM DEWALT / NEWS-PRESS

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UCSB chemistry professor

"I heard it was a really nice place to go. It's not too big, but it's not too small," she said. "It's not a very far drive if I want to go home, and the weather's nice. I don't like being cold."

Less competitive campuses can attract more minorities. UC Riverside, among the least competitive in the UC system, has increased the percent of underrepresented students admitted since affirmative action was abolished to 27 percent, the highest of all the campuses.

The system also is implementing a program that offers admission to all students in the top 4 percent of their classes who meet UC requirements.

The new tactic is aimed at students at underperforming schools, including minorities.

The key for campuses these days is "excellence and diversity." Once qualified students are admitted in March, the University of California reveals the statistics of the classes and the race of individual applicants. Administrators, professors and students then join a push to recruit the accepted minorities to Santa Barbara.

"This kind of goes to the heart of the debate, whether or not you believe that diversity is itself a valuable education," said Carl Gutierrez-Jones, acting director for the Center for Chicano Studies at UCSB. "Without diversity efforts you end up with a segregated society. For the health of the state, I would think that people would want to pursue this."

A "phoneathon" next week will put faculty and students in touch with the school's most desirable applicants, including scholarship recipients and minorities, and try to convince them to choose Santa Barbara.

It is one of many tactics schools employ to bring a diverse student body to campuses without affirmative action.

"They eliminated one of the means to achieving this goal, but the goal remains," said Bill Villa, special assistant to the chancellor for admissions, who worked at the university for 23 years.

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