To be received and placed on file:

The Undergraduate Council met 5 times during AY 2007-2008. Admissions Director, M. Campos was invited as a guest to each meeting and provided regular progress reports on applications and admissions to the Fall 2008 freshman class.

1. The Conflict of Interest Statement was adopted for 2007-2008.

2. The Undergraduate Council discussed the Report on Undergraduate Diversity at the January and February meetings. The committee found relevant material in the report on campus climate, but considered the reports on faculty and graduate student diversity to be outside their mandate. Members readily agreed that the Report addressed thoroughly laudable goals that we would all like to reach.

3. Members of the UGC attended the meeting with the WASC Visiting Team to discuss undergraduate recruitment issues and the BOARS eligibility proposal and our Comprehensive Review.

4. At the November 16, 2007 meeting, the members of the Undergraduate Council unanimously carried a motion to endorse the proposed repeal of SR458.

5. Undergraduate Council Response to Review of the Ad Hoc Committee Report on Education Reform – UGC members agree that UCR’s breadth requirements do not present our many fine lower division courses to best advantage. The Ad Hoc Committee report dismisses the current regulated-selection approach and proposes that courses be bundled into theme sets that extend over four years. Students would satisfy the General Education (Gen Ed) requirements by completing one set whose theme combines courses from a broad span of disciplines. UGC found merit in the concept of focused concentrations but remain disappointed and troubled by the sample curricula. UGC recommended that the trial concentrations be rolled out in less haste and that the proposal remain with the ad hoc committee until they can advance a set of sample concentrations that convincingly illustrate the integrity and practicality of their plan.

6. The UGC reviewed a Proposed UC Undergraduate Mission Statement. The current draft articulated the obvious and honorable elements of an undergraduate education. It seems reasonable for the University to have such a document. UGC did not identify any problems that have arisen solely for lack of an undergraduate mission statement. The best mission statement should not only guide our curriculum development and admission practices but could also give incoming students a sense of their responsibilities and what is expected of them.
7. The Undergraduate Council submitted their review of the BOARS Proposal to Reform Freshman Eligibility for admission to the University of California. The changes proposed by BOARS move the identification of the top 12.5% of high-school graduates from the blunt instruments of eligibility to the more discriminating tools of selection.

Currently, the University of California determines which freshman applicants are eligible for admission by a convenient formulaic consideration of quantifiable achievement without regard to the applicant’s circumstances. In the second phase of the admission process, each campus may select from this eligible pool by re-evaluating achievement in the context of the opportunities available to each applicant as revealed by a comprehensive analysis of the whole application. The initial eligibility threshold is adjusted to meet our mandate to draw from the top 12.5% of high school graduates. The comprehensive review allows us to meet our mandate to represent all portions of the State. In essence, the proposed new framework simply moves the identification of the top 12.5% (which task is also mandated to the University) to the comprehensive review of the entire application at the campus level. The best interests of the UCR faculty are served by admitting the most able students.

The proposed changes improve the fairness and intelligence of the admissions process and can allow UCR to better serve the Inland Empire, where educational opportunity and family circumstance too rarely confer any advantage. Because the proposed change could also alter the balance of the intercampus competition for the best applicants, UCR should be concerned about the implementation of the new policy. Of particular concern are the allotment and enforcement of campus enrolment ceilings and the mechanisms for prompt referral of applicants to campuses other than their initial preferences. Finally, any plan to raise admission standards ought to be coupled with plans to improve retention.

8. Undergraduate Council reviewed BOARS’ Revised Proposal for Freshman Eligibility Reform. The Undergraduate Council continues to be in favor of adding the new “Entitled to Review” (ETR) category to freshman admissions. This category will assist UCR’s move to a fully selective admissions process, using Comprehensive Review guidelines established by the Academic Senate. The advantage for students is the fairness of a holistic evaluation of their achievements in the context of opportunity. The advantage to UCR is the chance to better manage the quality of our undergraduate student body by searching among an enlarged pool of applications for predictors of success at our campus. Currently, statewide eligibility is determined by a simplistic formula and the requirement to take a pattern of standardized tests including the SAT subject tests, for which the scores do not enter the formula. The formulaic cut-off is designed and adjusted to achieve a 12.5% eligibility rate systemwide; it does not serve those campuses who need to search intelligently for good students with scores close to the cut-off.

Of course, freshman admission policy needs to strike a balance between improving the academic profile of our admittees and recruiting a large enough student body to maintain the associated revenue stream. We recognize that any policy changes will temporarily reduce the ability of our admissions staff to predict the yield on their recruitment efforts. Numerical models such as those presented by BOARS cannot readily assess changes in application habits. Accordingly, we
recommend that the new policy be introduced with a transitional phase that allows UCR the reap the benefits of the changes without suffering fiscal shocks as a result of short-term unpredictability.

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