

**University Committee on Admissions  
2005/2006 Annual Summary**

**Applications Reviewed**

The admissions committee approved the following admission exceptions for students entering Fall 2006:

Course Substitution/Exception/Waiver	189
Physical Education Exception	65
Tech Prep Course Substitution	11
Total	265

Most of these exceptions were made by the Director of Admissions based on delegated authority from the committee. The committee actually heard, debated and decided on 21 cases. Only 106 of the above accepted students are still active as of 8/1 for Fall 2006. Two exception requests were considered and not approved.

**Major Items and Activities**

- Expanded Review was a frequent topic. Approximately 4,500 (32%) of the freshman applicant pool were considered under the expanded review criteria.
- American Sign Language was approved as a reasonable substitution for high school foreign language, particularly when the student's high school allows ASL to fulfill the high school foreign language requirement.
- The chair briefed the committee on the charge and activities of the newly-formed Enrollment Management Council.
- Minority student recruiting was discussed in relation to the university diversity goals. Additional efforts to recruit admitted students appear to be having a positive effect on the racial makeup of the freshman class: as of August 1, there are 380 African-American students still active and expected to enroll as first-time full-time freshmen for Fall 2006, which is an increase of 9.5% compared with the same date in the prior year.

**Membership**

Terms of membership expired for John Logan (Business) and Susan Courtney (English). Jim Roberts has resigned. Thorne Compton was re-elected to serve as chair for 2006/2007. [It has been reported that David Whiteman (Political Science) has been elected to serve on the committee, and Susan Courtney (English) has been re-appointed, but this is to be confirmed.]

## University Committee on Admissions

### Expanded Review Process and Minority Recruiting: Discussion

In the Admissions Committee the expanded review process (referred to by some as “holistic” admissions) was a topic of discussion at virtually every meeting. Since the Committee had been asked by President Sorenson to support such a process a year ago there was a continuing concern that the Committee have a clear idea how such a program was working and how well it was meeting its goals. It was the understanding of the Committee that the rationale for the system was a belief that the University was seeking to raise its national profile, which seemed to mean continuing to raise the minimum SAT score required for admission. There was concern that this would mean a decrease in the number of minority students accepted and a loss of the kind of diversity many believe had strengthened the University in the forty-four years since we ceased being a legally segregated institution.

The Supreme Court decision over the University of Michigan’s admissions process seemed to mean that universities could no longer structure their admissions policies to insure diversity. While the University of South Carolina situation is quite different than the University of Michigan because of our long history of purposeful and structural discrimination, it was clear that the decision would have some impact on our processes and we needed to plan some changes. The expanded review system seemed most likely to give applicants of all kinds additional opportunities to demonstrate their qualifications for admission.

Because it seemed far too costly in time and money a decision was made by the Admissions Office to apply the expanded review only in questionable cases rather than for all applicants. Those students who would very clearly be admissible under the old criteria would be admitted without expanded review and those who were far below the old criteria were simply to be inadmissible. Those students who were questionable for one reason or another would have an expanded review.

For many, if not most, faculty expanded review was appealing for reasons beyond diversity. While high SAT scores seem very appealing to those outside the university as markers of quality, most faculty are somewhat cynical about their reliability. Most faculty have taught many students with very high SAT scores who were poor students and most have taught students with very marginal SAT scores who were truly outstanding. Most faculty believe that there are a large number of variables that determine the quality of students and that the SAT is not the most important by any means. While the predicted GPA based on high school GPA, rank in class etc has always been very important, unfortunately the public focus on the SAT has created a sense of entitlement among many students who have high scores and a sense of hopelessness among those who do not score well on the test on a particular day. The decisions that have been made in recent years to segregate students by SAT score/predicted GPA in housing, for the purpose of special privileges, etc has exacerbated this situation.

After reviewing the March 14<sup>th</sup> report from the Admissions Office of the progress of expanded review, the Committee was guardedly optimistic, but still quite concerned about whether the system was having much impact on admissions and especially whether it might begin to address the concerns that prompted it.

Only about a quarter of the applicants had the opportunity for expanded review under our present system. The Admission's Office's report does not tell us how many people in the expanded review pool were minority students so we do not know whether there was any particular impact on minorities in the program. We are told that at that point a smaller number of African American students were admitted than had been admitted the year before. What is perhaps more important (because the process was not finished at that point) was the fact that the percentage of African Americans as a portion of the total applicants shrank. If that is a trend that continues then simply changing the process of evaluating applicants will not solve the long-term problem.

Evaluating the expanded review program is a long-term process. It appears from this year (at least with the limited data we have been given) that it will not necessarily produce a more diverse student body. Only by studying the success of students in and out of the program over time will we discover whether this system improves the quality of the student body as a whole.

Attachment to Committee on Admissions Report on Expanded Review for Fall 2006

DATE: March 14, 2006

TO: Thorne Compton, Chair  
Faculty Senate Committee on Admissions

FROM: Scott Verzyl  
Director, Undergraduate Admissions

SUBJECT: Report on Expanded Review for Fall 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

As you are aware, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions implemented new, expanded [holistic] review procedures for the Fall 2006 freshman class.

We initially established criteria for expanded review so that approximately 25-30% of the applicant pool would be more carefully screened. A total of 3,813 [revised number: 4500] applicants, 27.7% [revised: 32%] of the applicant pool, fell into the range for expanded review. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions hired temporary processors and expanded the duties of existing staff to allow for the additional time and overhead required to expand the review process. Even so, applicants subjected to expanded review were typically delayed receiving a decision by two to three weeks.

The admissions staff were instructed to evaluate applicants primarily on their academic credentials but also to consider activities, leadership, service, work experience, honors and awards, as well as the ability to overcome obstacles and socio-economic status. Students not selected for admission were reviewed by at least two staff members before the decision was rendered.

Interestingly, even with the increase in the application fee and the addition of several new questions on the application, we experienced an increase in the total number of applicants to the freshman class. Please see the chart below for freshman application comparison data:

		<b><u>2005 (final)</u></b>	<b><u>2006 (as of 3/13)</u></b>	
Applied:	Total	12887	13751	
	White	8806	9552	
	African-American	1795	1825	
Accepted:	Total	8717	8524	
	White	6464	6385	
	African-American	754	689	
You will				notice

from the chart that we have accepted fewer African-American students than the previous year. This is partly due to the fact that we decreased the overall size of the admitted pool by nearly 200 students. However, the decrease was moderated by the implementation of expanded review. If we had used the same formula-driven criteria utilized for the Fall 2005 class, we would have denied 130 students admitted under the expanded review criteria, including 52 African-Americans. Also, please bear in mind that we still have many students yet to admit, many of which we expect to be minority students.

It should be strongly noted, however, that race alone was not the deciding factor in the expanded review process, and in fact a few minorities that would have been admitted using Fall 2005 criteria but that presented weak applications were denied admission under expanded review.

It should also be noted that the SAT average for the admitted class is three points lower than last year's class, which can also be partly attributed to expanded review, as SAT was not the deciding factor and no absolute SAT minimum was established for reviewed students. In fact, over 300 students evaluated in the review process were admitted with less than 1000 on the SAT.

As you are probably aware, Kip Howard, through the Enrollment Management Council, has formed an Enrollment Management Liaison group. We have asked this group to help us convert the students we have admitted, and specifically high-ability and minority students. I am pleased to report that we have offered admission to eight African-American to the South Carolina Honors College, and we have invited 33 African-Americans to join the Capstone Scholars program. We hope our collective yield efforts will convince these students to enroll.

I hope this information answers your questions about the expanded review process. Please keep in mind that we have several yield activities still underway, and the ultimate impact on the freshman class is still yet to be determined. If I can provide any further information, please let me know.