

**Academic Senate Admissions Committee
One Year Intensive Admissions Policy Review**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Academic Senate Admissions Committee

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Executive Summary

On September 16, 2009, the Admissions Task Force of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign submitted a Report to Chancellor Richard Herman responding to a charge letter received by the task force on August 18, 2009. This report, among other things created an admissions “firewall” which prohibited third parties (including but not limited to University Trustees, government officials, and university employees) from having improper and unauthorized contact or communications with Admissions staff members or other employees with admissions responsibilities regarding any applicant file. The policies and practices proposed by the Report and endorsed by the Chancellor were employed during the academic year 2009-2010 to enroll applicants to the undergraduate freshman class and to the various graduate and professional programs for the academic year 2010-2011.

The Report called for a One-Year Intensive Admissions Policy Review by the Academic Senate Admissions Committee. The Admissions Task Force Report offered a broad outline of areas of concern that should be examined in this Intensive Admissions Policy Review:

- Admissions criteria used by different programs
- Publicity of the admissions processes
- Admissions decision statistics for undergraduate and graduate/professional programs
- Appeals and resulting decisions
- Complaints about admissions
- Admissions training and education processes regarding policies and the Ethical Code of Practice
- Entries to the Third-Party Inquiry Log

Our committee did not re-review existing admissions processes, but rather focused on the above areas of concern and assessing compliance with the policies and processes set forth in the recent admissions reforms efforts.

It is the view of the Academic Senate Admissions Committee that the university and campus admissions policies and practices either implemented or reinforced during the 2009-2010 admissions cycle, in addition to subsequent efforts to inform the external public and train internal faculty and staff as to those policies, have been extremely effective in eliminating the improper influences on admission decisions that were widely publicized in the summer of 2009. Evidence for this conclusion includes the following:

- Various training and educational activities regarding the admissions process were undertaken during October 2009 and early Spring 2010, prior to the 2009-2010 admissions cycle. These activities included a mass communication to all faculty, academic professionals and civil service staff and specific training sessions for admissions officials and staff in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and admissions staff in the graduate and professional colleges and departments.
- University admissions policies and practices and the criteria used for admissions decisions are clearly delineated and easily accessible by the general public on various university and college websites.

- Committee review of available admission statistics for undergraduate, graduate and professional students admitted in the Fall of 2010 did not reveal any areas of concern or evidence of trends regarding bias or improper admissions decisions.
- There were no instances reported of external complaints regarding the admissions process other than those that were ordinary reactions to admissions denial decisions.
- Examination of the admissions decisions appeals process and successful appeals for admission did not reveal any irregularities, improper or unreasonable appeals decisions, or evidence of undue influence on the appeals admissions decision for any applicant.
- Most importantly, and as an objective measure of the success of the admissions “firewall” in preventing improper influence by third party individuals on admissions decisions, entries to the “Third Party Inquiry Log” were limited to a total of 15 reported instances of individuals attempting to inappropriately communicate with Admissions officials or staff regarding a specific applicant. Admissions officials have expressed their confidence in the accuracy of this log and have indicated that prior to establishment of the admissions “firewall”, third party inquiries to admissions officials or staff annually numbered “in the hundreds”. It should be noted that the admissions committee reviewed the admissions records and success of the applicants represented by these inquiries and did not find any indication that these inquiries had a beneficial effect on applicant success; admittance rate for these applicants was similar to the overall success rate for the Fall 2010 admitted freshman class.

As a result of this review of the 2009-2010 admissions process, the Academic Senate Admissions Committee would make the following recommendations:

- As a prominent part of their orientation, all incoming campus administrators, faculty, academic professionals and civil service staff should be informed of university policies regarding permitted and improper communications with campus admissions officials and staff. All of these individuals should be provided copies of the documents entitled “Ethical Code of Practice” regarding the admissions policies and processes and the “Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign”. In addition, all incoming admissions officials and staff (campus or departmental) should be provided specific training and education regarding permitted communications, including procedures specific to the Third Party Inquiry Log; existing staff should be provided periodic re-training.
- Although there are no indications for concern, to show due diligence and oversight, during the 2010-2011 academic year the admissions committee should review the existing Committee on the Admission of Student Athletes (CASA) admissions process and published guidelines to ensure the process is adhering to those guidelines.
- The committee did note that the admission acceptance and enrolled “yield” as a percentage of undergraduate students offered admissions has been steadily declining since 2006. This trend is of great concern to the committee. While reasons for this decline may be varied, the committee feels this issue needs to be actively examined and addressed by university administration.

- As also recommended by the Admissions Task Force, the Senate Admissions Committee should perform an annual compliance review of campus admissions policies and practices. While the Task Force recommended the review occur in the spring of each academic year, we would suggest an annual Fall review so that admissions data can be reviewed shortly after the completion of each admissions cycle and prior to admissions decisions for the next entering class. This would permit identified issues to be addressed and hopefully remedied prior to upcoming admissions decisions. This annual review would be less intensive than the 2010 one-year review, but it should still be thorough and comprehensive and would ensure short-term and long-term compliance with established admissions policies and practices. The Senate Admissions Committee would file this annual report with the Academic Senate, the Provost's Office, and the Chancellor's Office.

As part of this annual review process:

1. Academic units shall be required to submit any changes in their admissions practices to the Senate Committee on Admissions.
2. On a yearly and ongoing basis, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions will track and assess demographic relationships regarding successful applicant appeals following initial admissions denial decisions. During each yearly Fall term, those data and assessments should be provided on an informational basis to the Senate Admissions Committee, which may choose to make further assessments if they deem it necessary and appropriate.
3. During each yearly Fall term, the Senate Admissions Committee, in conjunction with the Associate Provost for Enrollment Management and the undergraduate, graduate and professional Directors of Admissions, shall review the Third Party Inquiry Logs and the admissions outcome of applicants mentioned in those logs to ensure no improper admissions advantage is being conferred.

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