

The Tomás Rivera
POLICY INSTITUTE

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**CHANGES IN UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ADMISSIONS POLICIES STILL FAIL TO
INCREASE DIVERSITY AT CAMPUSES**

Aggregated Campus Acceptance Rates Fall 23 Percentage Points For African American and Latino Students

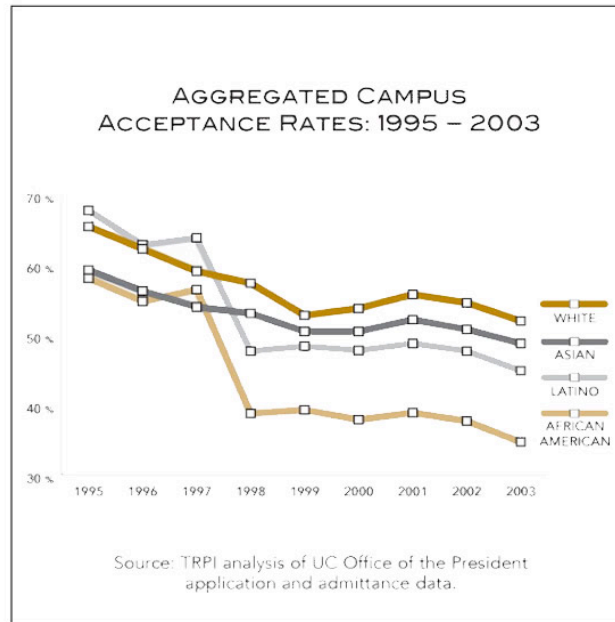
October 26, 2004, Los Angeles, CA – The fifth annual report by the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) on minority admissions at the University of California (UC) shows that African American and Latino students have experienced a decrease in acceptance rates. This, in spite of the repeal of Resolution SP-1 – the UC policy that eliminated the consideration of race, ethnicity and gender in admissions.

The study, *The Reality of Race-Neutral Admissions at the University of California: Turning the Tide or Turning Them Away*, examines annual applications, admissions, and minority representation at the University of California for Latino and African American first-time freshman students between 1995 and 2003.

The report found that the aggregated campus acceptance rates have fallen sharply – 23 percentage points – for underrepresented minorities in nine academic years. For Latinos, the rate fell from 68% in 1995, during affirmative action, to 49% in 2001, the last academic year of SP-1, and further still to 45% in 2003, the second academic year of Comprehensive Review. Similarly, African American students have seen their acceptance rate fall during that same time period: from 58% in 1995, to 39% in 2001, to 35% in 2003.

The nine-year longitudinal research approach allows an assessment of the impact of SP-1 as well as its repeal in May 2001 and the subsequent implementation of the Comprehensive Review admissions policy. Under this new admissions policy, which went into effect for the fall of 2002, application evaluations are assessed on a student's record of accomplishments, talents, and in the context of opportunities and challenges they may have faced.

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The study finds that despite the UC’s attempt to enroll a student body that represents the state’s diversity, two years of Comprehensive Review has not increased representation of incoming Latino and African American students into the UC system.

“Gains in admissions are often reported in whole numbers,” said Harry Pachon, Ph.D., president of the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute. “This misses the fact that a larger number of minority students are applying to UC campuses and are being rejected at higher rates.”

The report points out that even if the raw number of Latino and Black students admitted for admissions is increasing, these students are a decreasing percentage of the overall freshman student body. As a result, representation for Latino and African American students continues to decrease, in particular at the most sought after and selective of the UC campuses.

“Higher education is a not a privilege, but a right. Without it, it becomes increasingly difficult to find a competitive job, raise a family or own a home. Much worse, higher education that is not equally applied or equally attained will not allow us to pass the torch of freedom from one generation to the next,” said California State Senator Richard Alarcón (D-Sun Valley).

The impact of race-neutral admissions is most profound when examining admissions at the flagship campuses of the UC system, UC Berkeley and UCLA:

- The repeal of affirmative action had an immediate and dramatic impact on African American admissions. In 1997, during affirmative action, the acceptance rate for African American students was 49.6% at UC Berkeley and it decreased to 23.6% in 1998; at UCLA, it dropped from 38.4% in 1997 to 20.3% in 1998.
- In 1997, the acceptance rate for Latino students at UC Berkeley was 45.4% and it decreased to 20.8% in 1998; at UCLA it dropped from 40.8% in 1997 to 24.5% in 1998.
- Since the repeal of SP-1, African American admittances at UC Berkeley dropped from 323 students in 2001 to 302 in 2003, despite a 21% increase in applications. And at UCLA, Black freshman admittances went from 326 in 2001 to 277 in 2003, despite a 25% increase in applications.
- Since the repeal of SP-1, Latino admittances at UC Berkeley increased from 995 students in 2001 to 1,011 in 2003, a mere 16-seats despite a 20% increase in applications. And at UCLA, Latino students increased from 1,256 in 2001 to 1,306 in 2003, 50 additional seats despite a 26% increase in applications.

The University of California is a world-class system of higher education, publicly supported by California taxpayers in an increasingly ethnically diverse state. In order for the UC to maintain its established standing among California policymakers and opinion leaders, the following actions are recommended by the TRPI report:

- The University of California should conduct independent evaluations on a campus-by-campus basis of outreach programs and efforts to increase student diversity. These evaluations should include a thorough assessment of the contributing factors that may underline the disproportionate number of Latino and African American student applicants being turned away each year and identify potential solutions that could be enacted early in the process, ideally during the high school years.
- Since present funding has not proven adequate for current diversity outreach, the California State Legislature should consider significant increases and continuous funding for UC outreach programs.

- Understanding that racial and ethnic identifiers cannot be considered in admission decisions as a result of Proposition 209, the California ballot initiative that eliminated racial, ethnic, and gender considerations in admissions and hiring, the UC system should take into account how the admission rates at each of the eight institutions reflects the socio-economic characteristics of the applicants' residential communities. Beyond being economically disadvantaged at the individual student level, the proposed socio-demographic analysis would identify how the acceptance rates at each UC campus may disproportionately hinder a particular geographic location in the enrollment composition of the admitted class.

- Extrapolations of present and future student diversity among UC campuses should be undertaken to assess the potential of perceived stratification of UC campuses among racial/ethnic lines.

Founded in 1985, the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute advances critical, insightful thinking on key issues affecting Latino communities through objective, policy-relevant research, and its implications, for the betterment of the nation. The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute is an affiliated research unit of the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California.

To learn more about the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute or to read the full report, go to <http://www.trpi.org>.