

Draft Undergraduate Admission Standards for Kansas' Public Universities

June 2010

Background

Kansas' six public universities are part of an extensive postsecondary educational system that also includes one municipal university, 19 community colleges and six technical colleges. Each of these institutions plays a distinctive role in the education of Kansans, and it is imperative that wherever an individual begins his or her postsecondary education, he or she is able to move successfully from one sector to the other. Clear admissions standards for the state's public universities are critical to the system's success, since they send a strong signal regarding the type of preparation needed to succeed in this educational sector.

During the 2009 Legislative session the Kansas Board of Regents was given authority to establish undergraduate admission standards for state universities. Upon receiving this authority, the Board convened a working group consisting of state university Chief Academic Officers and Admissions Directors to assist in development of a set of undergraduate admission standards for the six public universities. The attached draft undergraduate admission standards and precollege curriculum were developed based on the recommendations of this group and review of undergraduate admission standards in states comparable to Kansas. The next step in this process is to review the proposed standards with key stakeholders.

The philosophy behind these proposed standards is straightforward. Those who enroll in the state's public universities should be prepared ready to succeed at whatever point they enter the system, and admissions requirements provide a concrete guide to the kind of preparation required if a student expects to succeed at the postsecondary level.

These proposed new undergraduate admission standards for the state's six public universities are designed to ensure that those Kansans who enroll in our universities have been provided a foundation that gives them the opportunity to succeed at the postsecondary level. They are by no means intended to limit the opportunity for Kansans to enroll in the state's six public universities. On the contrary, to ensure workforce and other state needs are met the number of high school graduates going directly to college must be increased and reflect the demographic make-up of the state.

While it is critically important to have robust participation in the postsecondary system, that participation loses much of its value when students fail to make timely progress toward their degree or do not complete their program of study. Currently, too many students enroll in Kansas' public universities but are required to take remedial courses, which negatively affects their educational success.

National studies indicate 25% of high school graduates who first attended a 4-year college or university completed at least one remedial course at that institution, and only 27% of students enrolled in remedial courses go on to attain an undergraduate degree.

One of the major components of the proposed undergraduate admission standards is the requirement that freshmen applicants complete a 17 unit precollege curriculum, including a mathematics course in their final year of high school, with a 2.0 GPA. Research demonstrates that completion of a structured, high quality high school curriculum is a strong predictor of college success for students from all backgrounds.

In addition, studies show that requiring mathematics in the final year of high school further improves a student's chance of succeeding at the postsecondary level. According to ACT, 60% of students who took 4 years of math met the ACT math college readiness benchmark compared to just 13% of students who took 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry).

The precollege curriculum is designed to provide high schools with the flexibility needed to develop a curriculum consistent with their local needs, faculty strengths and other educational resources. As noted above, the goal is to provide the best possible foundation for the greatest number of Kansans to enroll in--and graduate from--the state's six public universities.

Admissions standards alone are not sufficient to ensure success in postsecondary education. The Kansas Board of Regents is also committed to ensuring that the state's public universities reflect the state's demographic makeup. Policies and actions will be necessary to ensure both access to higher education and the ability to succeed once the individual is enrolled. Again, clear admissions standards should help individuals to understand what is required for success in postsecondary education, be it in a technical college, community college, or baccalaureate institution.

Draft Model Compared to Current Admission Standards*

(Proposed changes highlighted in yellow)

Freshman

	<i>Proposed Freshman Model</i>	<i>Current Freshman Standards</i>
Accredited High School Graduates	Resident & Nonresident Freshman under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hours (2.0 GPA required on all transfer hours)	Resident & Nonresident Freshman under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hours
	1. Accredited high school diploma AND 2a. 21 ACT/980 SAT OR 2b. Top 1/3 of class AND 3. Complete precollege curriculum with 2.0 GPA	1. Accredited high school diploma AND 2a. 21 ACT/980 SAT OR 2b. Top 1/3 of class OR 2c. Complete precollege curriculum with 2.0 GPA
GED Graduates	Resident Freshman under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hours (2.0 GPA required on all transfer hours)	Resident Freshman under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hours
	1. GED with 2550 points AND 2. 21 ACT/980 SAT	GED with 2550 points
Homeschooled Students	Resident & Nonresident Homeschooled Students under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hrs (2.0 GPA required on all transfer hours)	Resident & Nonresident Homeschooled Students under 21 with fewer than 24 transfer credit hrs
	1. Unaccredited high school diploma AND 2. 21 ACT/980 SAT AND 3. Demonstrate completion of coursework equivalent to the precollege curriculum	1. Unaccredited high school diploma AND 2. 21 ACT/980 SAT

**An institution may seek Board approval to implement other standards that are in keeping with its mission.*

	<i>Proposed Freshman Model (continued)</i>	<i>Current Freshman Standards (continued)</i>
21 Years of Age and Older, Residents	KS residents 21 and over less than 24 transfer credit hrs (2.0 GPA required on all transfer hours) 1. Accredited high school diploma OR 2. GED with 2550 points	KS residents 21 and over less than 24 transfer credit hrs 1. Accredited high school diploma OR 2. GED with 2550 points

21 Years of Age and Older, Nonresidents	less than 24 transfer credit hrs (2.0 GPA required on all transfer hours) 1. Accredited high school diploma OR 2. GED with 2550 points	No such category currently exists.
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Freshman Exception Window	Resident Freshman Exception Window 15%	Resident Freshman Exception Window 10%
	create Nonresident Freshman Exception Window - 50 students or 15%, whichever is greater; delete conditional admit category	Conditional Admit Category for nonresidents: 50 students or 10%, whichever is greater

Transfer

	<i>Proposed Transfer Model</i>	<i>Current Transfer Standards</i>
Transfer	Resident & Nonresident Transfer 24 or more transfer credit hours Earn 2.0 GPA on all transfer hours	Resident & Nonresident Transfer 24 or more transfer credit hours Earn 2.0 GPA on all transfer hours
Transfer Exception Window	Resident Transfer Exception Window 15% Nonresident Transfer Exception Window 15%	Resident Transfer Exception Window 10% Nonresident Transfer Exception Window 10%

International

	<i>Proposed International Model</i>	<i>Current International Standards</i>
International Freshman International Transfer	Institutions will verify students have equivalent preparation as US applicants. Institutions will verify students have equivalent preparation as US applicants.	See nonresident freshman. See nonresident transfer.

Precollege Curriculum

	<i>Proposed Model 17 units</i>	<i>Current Requirements 13 units</i>
English	4 units English/Language Arts Literature/Reading Composition AP English courses Speech (limited to ½ unit)	4 units English/Language Arts Literature/Reading Composition AP English courses
Math	4 units* consisting of: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Probability & Statistics, Trigonometry, Calculus, Precalculus, AP math courses, IB HL math courses, any math course with Algebra II as a prerequisite * one unit must be taken in the year the student graduates. For those students who have taken four math courses prior to their final year, the final course need not be an approved precollege curriculum math course.	3 units consisting of: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Probability & Statistics, Trigonometry, Calculus, Precalculus, AP math courses, IB HL math courses, any math course with Algebra II as a prerequisite
Natural Science	3 units consisting of: biology, advanced biology, earth-space science, principles of technology, chemistry, physics (chemistry or physics required)	3 units consisting of: biology, advanced biology, earth-space science, principles of technology, chemistry, physics (chemistry or physics required)
Social Science	3 units consisting of: 1 unit US History 1/2 unit World Geography, World History or International Relations 1/2 unit US Government 1/2 unit Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, or Current Social Issues 1/2 unit Civics	3 units consisting of: 1 unit US History 1/2 unit World Geography, World History or International Relations 1/2 unit US Government 1/2 unit Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, or Current Social issues 1/2 unit from one of the Social Science areas above
Electives	3 units chosen from: English, math, natural science, social science, foreign languages, personal finance, speech/debate/forensics, journalism, computer/information systems, fine arts	None Required

Appendix

Rationale for Changes to Current Undergraduate Admission Standards

Proposed Changes 1-3:

1. Requiring freshmen applicants under the age of 21 who have graduated from an accredited high school to complete the precollege curriculum with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 as a condition for admission.
2. Requiring freshmen applicants under the age of 21 who have graduated from an unaccredited high school (homeschooled students) to have completed coursework equivalent to the precollege curriculum.
3. Increasing the precollege curriculum from 13 to 17 hours by: (1) adding three electives chosen from math, English, natural science, social science, foreign languages, computer/information systems, personal finance, debate/forensics and fine arts; (2) requiring ½ unit of Civics; and (3) adding one math unit taken in the year the student graduates. For those students who have taken four math courses prior to their final year, the final course need not be an approved precollege curriculum math course.

Rationale for 1-3:

Research has shown that only one of five high school graduates who took the ACT is prepared for entry-level college courses in English, math, social science, and science. If students are academically prepared for college fewer dropout and the costs of remediation are reduced. Consequently, more students persist in and graduate from college. One measure of college readiness is completion of a core curriculum in high school. Students who take a core curriculum in high school are:

- less likely to need remediation in English or math when compared to those who do not take a core curriculum.
- more likely to succeed in specific first-year college courses than students who do not take a core curriculum, more likely to attain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 in their first year in college and more likely to return to same institution to complete their second year of college.
- more likely to earn a college degree than those who do not take a core curriculum.

These results are consistent across gender, racial/ethnic and family income groups.

4. Requiring freshmen applicants under the age of 21 seeking admission on the GED criteria to achieve at least a score of 21 on the ACT or 980 on the SAT as a condition for admission.

Rationale:

Under current policy no such requirement exists. Institutions are required to admit GED graduates under the age of 21 if they complete the GED with an overall score of 2550 score and score at least 510 on each GED subtest. Since current admissions standards regard the GED as equivalent to a high school diploma, requiring GED graduates to achieve at least an ACT score of 21 or an SAT score of 980 in addition to the required GED exam scores provides for consistent application of admissions requirements for applicants under the age of 21.

5. Requiring freshmen and “21 and over” applicants to have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 on transfer credit hours.

Rationale:

Under current policy no such requirement exists. Institutions are required to admit freshmen and “21 and over” applicants meeting undergraduate admission requirements even if they have earned less than a 2.0 cumulative GPA on 23 or fewer attempted college credit hours. While these applicants have not, thus far, been academically successful in college, universities should be allowed to review the applications of these students and admit those who demonstrate the potential for success through the freshman exception window.

6. Creating an admission category for nonresident applicants 21 and older with fewer than 24 transfer credit hours. These applicants would be admitted if they have graduated from an accredited high school or completed a GED with 2550 points.

Rationale:

No such category currently exists and its creation would mirror the category for resident freshman 21 and over. Creating this category would allow institutions to admit qualified nonresidents 21 and over who by definition are nontraditional students seeking a college degree.

7. Creating an exception window for nonresident, freshmen students and deleting the conditional admit category.

Rationale:

This changes the name of the conditional admit category to the nonresident, freshmen exception window to provide parallel structures for the naming of the exception windows.

8. Clarifying undergraduate admission standards for international students so that institutions verify international applicants have equivalent preparation as graduates of high schools in the United States.

Rationale:

International students typically are highly prepared to succeed in college but often do not have an ACT testing site located in their home country. Many are not able to submit an ACT score. Secondary schools in other countries often do not teach English language, English literature or United States History as part of the curriculum so these applicants are unable to meet precollege curriculum guidelines. (International students typically learn English at language schools which are not part of the secondary school system.) Institutions will analyze transcripts of international applicants to determine if their preparation is equivalent to United States high school graduates. Those with equivalent preparation will be admitted.

9. Increasing the resident freshman, resident transfer and nonresident transfer exception windows from 10% to 15%. Increasing the nonresident, freshman exception window from 50 students or 10%, whichever is greater, to 75 students or 15%, whichever greater.

Rationale:

Many students possess the desire to succeed in college. For some students this desire may not be completely reflected in their ACT test score, GED test score, high school transcript, and/or prior college record. State universities recognize the potential for success in these students and may help them make their academic goals a reality by admitting them through an exception window. Increasing the exception windows from 10% to 15% ensures state universities have the flexibility needed to admit students whose potential for success is not accurately reflected in their admission's application.