

# University of California Campus Strategies for Undergraduate Enrollment Limits

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UC Merced's most recently reported four-year graduation rate is 38% and several internal and external constituencies believe that rate to be too low. This paper considers the hypothetical impact of adopting a sister UC campus policy as one responsive alternative strategy.

UC Merced's current policy requires completion within nine semesters and asserts the expectation that students will pass an average of 15 units per semester. Assuming that the expected 15 unit average is advice, not a requirement, then the combination of a limit beyond four years and unenforced semester by semester credit hours enrollment standards might contribute to a lower graduation rate. Perhaps something would be gained by adopting components of sister campus policies.

The methodology used in this report applied UC campus policies to UC Merced freshman cohorts for 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 and identified the number and graduation rate of UC Merced students that would have met each policy. The results of applying various policy standards to student behavior when the policies were not in effect or enforced should be used cautiously. The assumption that student behavior is malleable to the extent that most students will meet whatever standard is communicated and enforced is questionable. It is even possible that an enforced standard that is too rigorous could actually lower the graduation rate. (The malleability of enrollment behavior is a researchable question.) At best, the results illustrate relative impact and support discussion.

Application of the sister campus policies resulted in two clusters (see Figure 1). The first cluster was comprised of UCD, UCSC and UCI. The other cluster was comprised of UCSB, UCLA, UCB (Liberal Arts and Science), and UCR. Two UCM data points were added. Both imposed a nine semester limit. UCM1 also imposed a 15 SCH per semester average. UCM2 imposed only the nine semester limit. UCM1 fell into the first cluster with UCSB, UCLA, UCB (Liberal Arts and Science), and UCR. UCM2 clustered with UCI, UCD and UCSC. One observation is clear and as expected. Policies that fewer students met yielded higher graduation rates.

## **The UCD, UCSC, UCI Cluster from UCM's Perspective**

UCD was described as 12 or more units each semester and an average each academic year of at least 13.

UCSC required at least 24 units per academic year and a cumulative average per term for each semester of at least 9 units.

UCI required minimum units per term and the required number increased from freshman to senior year. UCI also required declaration of major before junior status.

### **UCSB, UCLA, UCB-LS, UCR Cluster from UCM's Perspective**

UCSB required 36 units (24 semester units) for each three consecutive quarter terms (two semesters).

UCLA required a minimum of 13 units each quarter (about 9 semester units) and has a series of checkpoints: end of second quarter, end of first quarter sophomore year, end of sophomore year, end of winter quarter junior year, end of first quarter senior year, end of senior year.

UCB-Letters and Science required at least 13 units each semester and that cumulative units at least equal the number of semesters minus one times 15. Therefore, a first semester cumulative minimum would be 13, the semesters minus one times 15 would begin to apply in the second semester and yield a cumulative total of at least 15, third semester units at least 30, etc.

UCR required completion of 37 units per year (25 semester units) and declaration of major before junior status.

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### **Conclusion**

The application of sister campus policies to UC Merced freshman records produced several interesting results.

- The result was two clusters, one substantially more rigorous.
- The relationship between actual four-year graduation rate at the sister campus and the modeled rate using sister campus policies was generally consistent but there were three notable exceptions. UC Berkeley and UC Irvine had substantially higher four-year graduation rates than resulted from their modeled policies. At these two campuses, the policies are apparently of limited importance. In contrast, UC Riverside's actual rate was substantially lower than the modeled rate. That would suggest that UCR's policy is at least unevenly enforced. The same could be said for UCM.
- Application of UC Merced's nine semester limit to UCM cohorts yielded a modeled 52% four-year graduation rate, much higher than the actual 31% four-year graduation rate observed for these cohorts.

Whether clear communication and enforcement of UC Merced's nine semester limit would cause students to modify enrollment behavior adequately and graduate at a rate of about 50% is a question that will be answered in time as efforts are underway to call students' attention to the policy and warn those not expected to finish on time. One of the factors that distinguished sister campus policies was the emphasis placed on SCHs. SCH load and other behaviors under student control is the subject of the next paper.

Appendix:

<http://registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/enrollment-and-registration>

### **Normal Progress to Degree**

UC Merced undergraduate degree programs are designed to be completed in eight semesters or four academic years. To meet the normal progress requirement, undergraduate students are expected to enroll in and pass an average of 15 units per semester, completing the 120 units necessary for graduation in four years. An extension of enrollment beyond nine semesters requires the approval of the student's School.

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### **UCD**

**Expected Progress.** Undergraduate students are expected to graduate in 12 quarters (four years). To do so, students should plan to complete an average of 15 units per quarter (15 units per quarter for 12 quarters totals 180 units). Because occasions arise which prevent students from achieving expected progress towards the degree, the campus has established minimum progress requirements, to which students must adhere.

**Minimum Progress Requirements.** To meet minimum progress, a full-time regular undergraduate is required to maintain an average of at least 13 units passed over all quarters of enrollment. Minimum progress is calculated at the end of every Spring Quarter for the preceding three quarters (Fall, Winter, Spring) comprising the academic year. Undergraduate students falling below this requirement are not in good academic standing and may be disqualified from further enrollment at the University. Quarters for which a student was officially approved for part-time status are omitted from the minimum progress calculation. For more information, see [Probation and Dismissal](#).

**Certification of Full-Time Status.** Undergraduate students must carry a study load of at least 12 units (including workload units) each quarter in order to be certified as full-time students for insurance and financial aid purposes or to compete in intercollegiate athletics. Graduate students must carry a study load of at least 12 units each quarter in order to be certified as full-time students.

**Course Load Limits in the College of Letters and Science.** Freshman students in their first year and transfer students in their first quarter of residence may not take more than 17 units each quarter. For all other Letters and Science students, the study list may not exceed 21 units each quarter. These unit limitations include non-credit remedial courses and repeated courses, but not make-up work to remove incomplete grades.

**Course Loads in the College of Engineering.** Because of the large number of required units in engineering programs, many students must take more than 15 units per quarter and/or attend summer session to finish in four years.

**UC Irvine Academic Senate Manual**

**THE MANUAL OF THE IRVINE DIVISION OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE  
PART II - REGULATIONS OF THE IRVINE DIVISION**

**Chapter I: General Requirements**

**Section 3: Scholarship Regulations**

**Regulation A385. Normal Progress Requirement (Undergraduate)**

*Regular undergraduate students will become subject to probation or to disqualification from further registration in the University if they fail to make normal progress toward the baccalaureate degree, if they fail to declare a major by the time they reach junior status (90 units excluding college work completed prior to high school graduation), or after declaring a major, if they fail to follow the program of study required by the academic unit of their major. Students who have selected undeclared status within a school may be subject to probation or to disqualification if they fail to follow a program of study leading to completion of lower-division School requirements.*

*(A) Normal progress for all regular undergraduate students is defined in the following table, in terms of quarter units completed at the end of quarters enrolled.*

Quarter	Normal Progress	Subject to Probation	Subject to Disqualification
1	12 - 15	8 - 11	7
2	24 - 30	16 - 23	15
3	36 - 45	24 - 35	23
4	50 - 60	40 - 49	39
5	65 - 75	56 - 64	55
6	80 - 90	72 - 79	71
7	96 - 105	89 - 95	88
8	112 - 120	106 - 111	105
9	128 - 135	124 - 127	123
10	145 - 150	142 - 144	141
11	162 - 165	160 - 161	159
12	180 -		

*Note: A new definition of normal progress was approved at the Divisional Senate Assembly meeting on November 4, 2004. A change in the quarterly units, as listed in the following table, will become effective Fall Quarter 2005.*

Quarter	Normal Progress	Subject to Probation	Subject to Disqualification
1	12 - 15	8 - 11	7
2	26 - 30	18 - 25	17
3	41 - 45	27 - 40	26
4	56 - 60	41 - 55	40
5	71 - 75	56 - 70	55
6	86 - 90	72 - 85	71
7	101 - 105	88 - 100	87
8	116 - 120	105 - 115	104
9	132 - 135	124 - 131	123
10	148 - 150	141 - 147	140
11	164 - 165	159 - 163	158
12	180 -		

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*(B) Status Determination*

*1. Undeclared students who have completed the number of units specified in the given quarter of their enrollment, as shown in the table above, and are following a course of study prescribed by their School are making "Normal Progress."*

*2. Students who have declared a major must follow the program of study required for their major, as well as complete the units specified in the given quarter of their enrollment, as shown in the table above, in order to make "Normal Progress." Students must declare a major by the time they reach junior status (90 units excluding college work completed prior to high school graduation).*

*3. Students who fail to make Normal Progress as defined in (1) or (2) above are subject to being placed on probation by the faculty of their academic unit or its designated agent, or for first-year undecided/undeclared students, by the Faculty Board for Undecided/Undeclared Students or its designated agent.*

*(C) Disqualification*

*Students who have completed two consecutive quarters on academic probation without having*

achieved at the end of that period at least the normal rate of progress specified under (A) and (B) are subject to disqualification.

*(D) Advanced Standing Status*

*For purposes of calculating "Normal Progress," "Subject to Probation," and "Subject to Disqualification," students admitted to the University with advanced standing will be classified with respect to quarter of enrollment at entrance in accordance with the following table:*

Quarter at Entrance	Advanced Standing Quarter Units at Entrance
1	0-14
2	15-29
3	30-44
4	45-59
5	60-74
6	75-89
7	90-104
8	105-119
9	120-134
10	135-149

*(E) Units Not Allowed*

*Units earned under the following three circumstances are not to be counted toward determination of the quarter at entrance under (D) above: 1) Advanced Placement Examination; 2) College Level Examination; 3) concurrent enrollment in college courses while in high school.*

*(F) Access UCI: Concurrent Enrollment (En 5 April 2007)*

*UCI students will have the units and grade points of courses taken through Access UCI transferred to their record when they have been admitted or readmitted to regular student status. (Variance to SR 810 A.) Units taken through Access UCI will not be counted towards determination of Advanced Standing Quarter Units at Entrance if they are taken under the circumstances cited in sub-section (E).*

*(G) Advanced Standing Authority (SRs 612 and 630)*

*The quarter of enrollment at entrance of students (including baccalaureate degree candidates who already hold a baccalaureate degree) seeking admission to the University with 150 or more advanced standing units will be determined by the Faculty offering the curriculum in which such students seek to enroll. This determination will be made consistent with the program required for such students to obtain the desired degree and with University residence requirements.*

*(H) Declaration of a Major*

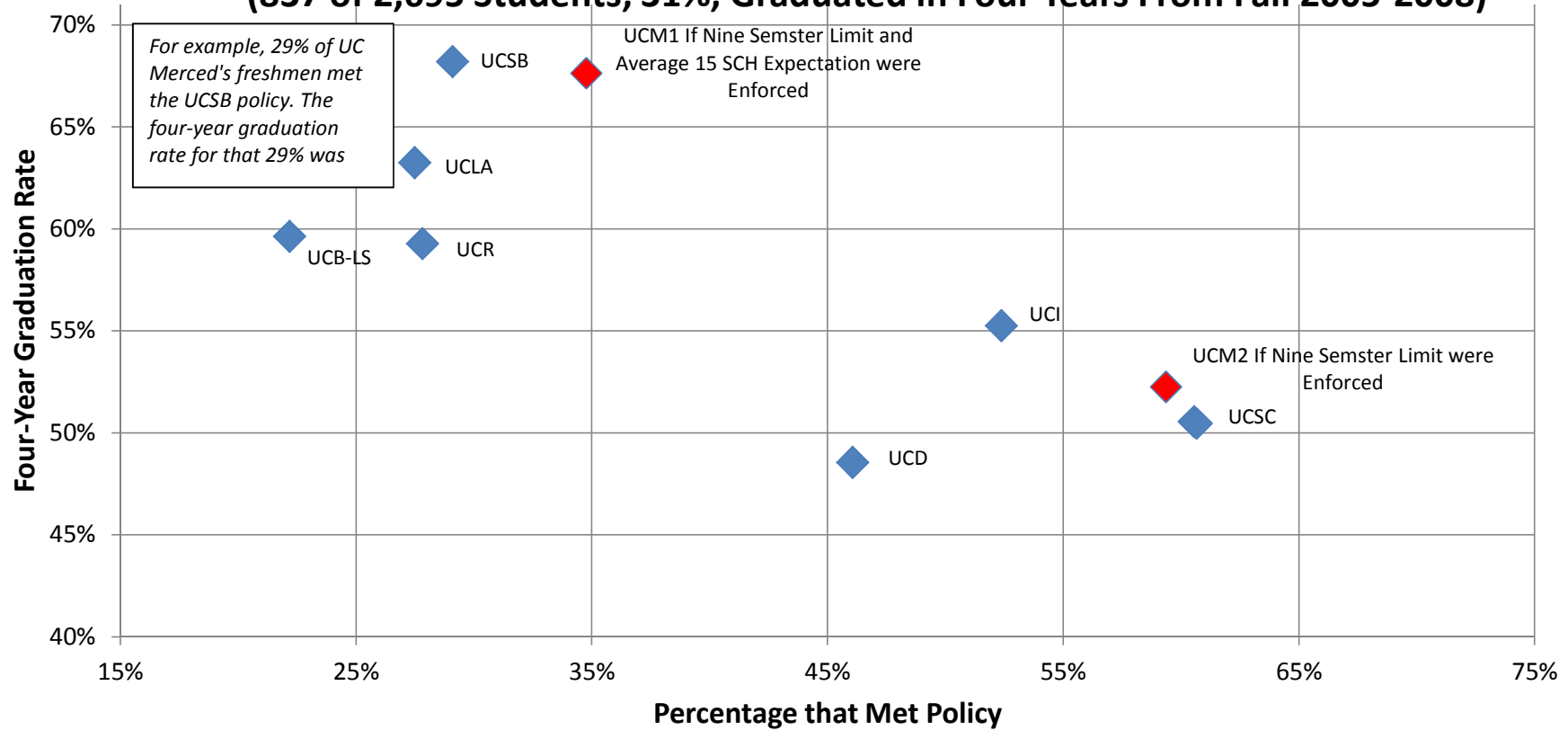
*For purposes of this regulation a student will be understood to have declared a major when he or she has been formally accepted by the Faculty of a degree-granting program or its designated agent to pursue a defined course of study leading to a baccalaureate degree.*

*(I) Graduation*

*All undergraduate students are expected to graduate when they have completed the baccalaureate requirements of their declared major or majors.*

*Revised June 4, 2007*

**Figure 1: Four-Year Graduation Rates if UC Campus Academic Progress Policies were Applied to UC Merced Entering Freshman Cohorts (837 of 2,695 Students, 31%, Graduated in Four Years From Fall 2005-2008)**





**Table 1: Comparing the Hypothetical Impact of UC Campus Policies (UCM Freshman Cohorts 2005-2008)**

	Met Policy		Of Those Graduating in Four Years, What Part Were Correctly Identified		Resulting Graduation Rate	Sister Campus Actual Four- Year Grad. Rates	Difference Between Actual Rate and UCM Modeled Rate
<b><i>UC Merced Experience</i></b>	<b>2,692</b>		837	100%	<b>31%</b>		
Berkeley LS	597	<b>22%</b>	356	43%	<b>60%</b>	71%	<b>11%</b>
Davis	1,240	<b>46%</b>	602	72%	<b>49%</b>	52%	3%
Irvine	1,410	<b>52%</b>	779	93%	<b>55%</b>	68%	<b>12%</b>
Los Angeles	740	<b>27%</b>	468	56%	<b>63%</b>	69%	6%
Riverside	749	<b>28%</b>	444	53%	<b>59%</b>	47%	<b>-12%</b>
San Diego	1,630	<b>61%</b>	824	98%	<b>51%</b>	57%	6%
Santa Barbara	783	<b>29%</b>	534	64%	<b>68%</b>	67%	-1%
Santa Cruz	1,633	<b>61%</b>	824	98%	<b>50%</b>	51%	0%
UC Merced Policy #1 (15 SCH Mean per Semester and 9 Semester Limit)	936	<b>35%</b>	633	76%	<b>68%</b>		
UC Merced Policy #2 (9 Semester Limit and 12 SCH per Semester Only)	1,598	<b>59%</b>	835	100%	<b>52%</b>		

Percentages in red were plotted below.