

Affirmative Action in Education

Why Percent Plans Don't Work Summary of Percent Plans

How effective have percent plans been in achieving a racially diverse campus? The short answer: Not very.

- In Texas, California, and Florida the gap between the racial distribution of traditional college-freshman-age population and that of the enrollments (as well as applications and admissions) to the states' university systems and to their premier campuses is substantial and has grown even as the states have become more diverse.
- Proportional representation of enrolled (as well as applied and admitted) Blacks and Hispanics on the flagship (e.g., UT Austin, UC Berkeley, University of Florida) campuses has decreased since the end of race-conscious policies.
- Even among those campuses with rising minority populations, none of the premier institutions in Texas, California, or Florida has reached enrollment levels reflecting the potential college-going population.
- Percent plans have fallen well short of creating diverse flagship campuses that reflect the states they are intended to serve.
- Percent plans seem to have the least impact on the most competitive campuses, which have persisting declines in admission and enrollment in spite of many levels of efforts to make up for affirmative action.
- What the plans actually appear to do, when they work, is to serve as a kind of conduit for what are actually systems of race-attentive outreach, recruitment, support programs, and financial aid. Without such supports, percent plans are more like empty shells—and even with such supports, on some campuses, the plans fail, because none show any potential for keeping up with the changing populations of the states or creating greater equity in educational systems.

[Source: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "Percent Plans in College Admissions: A Comparative Analysis of Three States' Experiences," (2003)]

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Percent Plans in Texas, California, and Florida

[Source: Civil Rights Project at Harvard University]

| | Texas | California | Florida |
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| Who gains automatic admission through the percent plan? | The top 10 percent of graduating students from each public or private high school in Texas | The top 4 percent of graduating students from each comprehensive public high school or private high school accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in California | The top 20 percent of graduating students from each public high school in Florida |
| What criteria must 'percent plan' candidates meet? | <p>Currently, there are no specific course requirements that a student must meet beyond those defined by the "minimum graduation criteria" to be percent plan eligible. Legislation has been passed, however, that will require all eligible students to obtain a Recommended High School Diploma beginning with students entering the 9th grade in 2004-2005 (House Bill 1144).¹</p> <p>Additionally, students must submit SAT or ACT scores and an application during the appropriate filing period.</p> | <p>11 units of specified high school coursework must be completed by the end of the junior year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 unit of history/social science • 3 units of college preparatory English • 3 units of math • 1 unit of lab science • 1 unit of language other than English • 2 units of other "a-g" required credits <p>Additionally, qualified students must submit an undergraduate application during the appropriate filing period and complete the remaining eligibility requirements to enroll: 4 additional units of coursework; SAT I or the ACT; and 3 SAT II tests.</p> | <p>Completion of 19 college preparatory courses, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 units of English • 3 units of math • 3 units of natural science • 3 units of social science • 2 units of foreign language • 4 additional academic electives from the above 5 subject areas <p>Additionally, students must submit SAT or ACT scores and an application during the appropriate filing period.</p> |

¹ The Minimum Graduation Plan currently required to be eligible under the 10 percent plan includes 4 credits of English; 3 credits of math, including algebra; 2 credits of science; 2 ½ credits of social studies; ½ credit of economics; 1 credit of an academic elective; 1 ½ credits of physical education; ½ credit of health education; ½ credit of speech; 1 credit of technology applications; and 5 ½ credits of electives. The 'Recommended Graduation Plan,' which will be required to be eligible under the 10 percent plan beginning the Fall 2008 includes: 4 credits English; 3 credits math including geometry; 3 credits science; 3 ½ credits social studies; ½ credit economics; 1 ½ credits physical education; ½ credit health education; 2 credits language other than English; 1 credit fine arts; ½ credit speech; 1 credit technology applications; and 3 academic elective credits (Texas Education Agency, n.d.).

| | Texas | California | Florida |
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| How is class rank calculated? | The Texas school or school district from which the student graduated or is expected to graduate calculates the rank based on standing at the end of the 11th grade, middle of the 12th grade, or at high school graduation, whichever is most recent at the application deadline. | Participating schools must submit students' transcripts; the UC system administrators then determine the top 4 percent of students based on GPA for UC-approved coursework completed in 10 th and 11 th grades. UC notifies students of their ELC status at the beginning of their senior year. | Each secondary school district determines how class rank will be calculated. |
| To what does the automatic admissions policy gain you admissions? | The public Texas university of your choice | A UC system campus, although not necessarily the one of your choice | An SUS institution, although not necessarily the one of your choice |

Sources: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (www.theccb.state.tx.us); University of California Office of the President (www.ucop.edu); One Florida Initiative (<http://www.oneflorida.org/>).