

**Oklahoma State System  
of  
Higher Education**



**ADMISSION  
POLICY  
IMPACT  
STUDY**

**April 7, 2000**

(Revised)

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# Admission Policy Impact Study

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# Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

## ADMISSION POLICY IMPACT STUDY

April 2000

### Executive Summary

#### PURPOSE:

- The State Regents require a periodic review of the admission policy to assure that the implementation of the admission standards is consistent with the intent of the policy and to document the impact of the policy on student success. This report covers fall 1989, the year prior to the multi-year phase-in of increased admission standards, to fall 1998 and replicates five previous studies since 1991.
- In 1989, the admission standards at the comprehensive universities required an ACT score in the top 50 percent or high school rank in the top 50 percent or high school GPA of 3.0 or higher. The admission standards have been incrementally increased since 1990, reaching their highest level in 1992. The standards in this study are a high school rank in the top 33.3 percent and a GPA of 3.0 or an ACT score in the top 33.3 percent. Due to the improved performance of Oklahoma high school students, the top one-third ACT score increased to 22 in fall 1996 at comprehensive universities. In fall 2000, the ACT at the University of Oklahoma will increase to 24 and rank to top 30 percent as requested by the institution.
- In 1990, the regional universities required for admission an ACT score in the top 66.6 percent or high school rank in the top 66.6 percent or high school GPA of 2.7 or higher. The admission standards have been gradually increased since 1991, reaching their highest level in 1993. For admission to a regional university, a student must achieve a high school rank in the top 50 percent and a GPA of 2.7 or an ACT score in the top half. Due to the improved performance of Oklahoma high school students, the top one-half ACT score will increase to 20 in fall 2000. Northeastern State University has been requiring an ACT of 20 since 1990.

#### FINDINGS:

- Similar to the national trends, total fall semester enrollment in the State System peaked in fall 1992 with 163,988 students. From fall 1989 to fall 1998, total fall semester enrollment increased 2.9 percent.
- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, total fall semester first-time freshman enrollment increased 8.9 percent in the State System, increased 6.6 percent at the comprehensive universities, increased 14.0 percent at the regional universities, and increased 7.6 percent at the two-year colleges. Although there was an overall enrollment increase at the comprehensive universities, OU increased 26.6 percent and OSU decreased 11.3 percent.
- Enrollments of freshmen directly from high school in the State System decreased from 14,428 in fall 1989 to 12,820 in fall 1994, then increased to 14,388 in fall 1998. The decrease in freshmen directly from high school corresponds to the decline in the number of

high school graduates. However, the percentage of high school graduates enrolling directly in the State System increased from 38.5 percent in fall 1989 to 42.8 percent in fall 1998.

- The first-year dropout rate decreased from 11.9 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 10.2 percent for fall 1996 freshmen at the comprehensive universities. At the regional universities, the first-year dropout rate increased from 23.0 for fall 1989 freshmen to 27.7 percent for fall 1994 freshmen, then decreased to 23.9 percent for fall 1996 freshmen. At the two-year colleges, the dropout rate increased from 32.0 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 37.4 percent for fall 1994 freshmen, then decreased to 33.6 percent for fall 1996 freshmen.
- From fall 1989 to fall 1992, the six-year graduation rates increased from 51.8 to 52.3 percent at the comprehensive universities and decreased from 35.5 to 33.4 percent at the regional universities. At the two-year colleges, the three-year graduation rates decreased from 16.5 for fall 1989 freshmen to 13.6 percent for fall 1992 freshmen, then increased to 15.6 for fall 1995 freshmen.
- The percentage of new freshmen at the comprehensive universities who have an ACT of 21 or higher increased from 58.3 percent in fall 1989 to 78.6 percent in fall 1995. Since fall 1996 when the top one-third of Oklahoma ACT scores increased to 22, the percentage of first-time freshmen with an ACT of 22 or higher increased from 72.8 percent to 75.2 percent in fall 1998. At the regional universities, the percentage of first-time freshmen entering with an ACT of 19 or higher increased from 39.8 in fall 1989 to 65.5 percent in fall 1998.
- Since the core high school curriculum requirements increased from 11 to 15 units in fall 1997, the percentage of freshmen who took the core increased from 72 to 76 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 55 to 60 percent at the regional universities, and from 41 to 44 percent at the two-year colleges.
- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, the proportion of minority students in the freshman class increased for the State System from 18.3 to 27.5 percent, from 15.2 to 22.8 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 24.6 to 32.0 percent at the regional universities, and from 16.4 to 27.2 percent at the two-year colleges. The percentage of Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans all increased at each tier.
- Of those students admitted through the alternative admission category, 8.9 percent at comprehensive and 6.7 percent at regional universities were scholarship athletes. With average ACT scores of 19 at the comprehensive universities and 17 at the regional universities, these students earned an average GPA of 2.53 and 1.78 and completed an average of 13 and 8 hours, respectively.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The *Admission Policy Impact Study* is an attempt to determine the effects of the increased admission standards on the State System and the institutional student profiles. Information generated through this review process is used by the State Regents to determine whether the admission standards are appropriate and if the goal of enhancing student success is being met.

As with past versions, this study was limited to a few of the many factors that can affect student admission and retention.

It is not possible to conclude that the increase in admission standards caused, solely or in part, any particular result; however, the following conclusions can be made:

- Data support continuation of current admission standards.
- There is a direct relationship between core high school courses and performance on the ACT. All research data agree that high school students who take challenging high school courses in core subject areas perform higher on the ACT. In keeping with these findings, in December 1999, the State Regents approved a third avenue for admission based solely on a student's GPA in the 15-unit high school core curriculum. The third option also rewards students for taking challenging Advanced Placement courses.
- Because taking more core courses improves ACT scores, the number of students with ACT scores at or above the minimum should continue to increase slightly because the number of required core high school units increased from 11 to 15 in fall 1997. The State Board of Education's incentive program for Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the high schools should continue to raise high school performance.
- All students desiring to pursue higher education have access via the State Regents' three roads of entry as represented by the three tiers: two-year colleges, regional universities, and comprehensive universities. Additionally, all students desiring to attend and/or graduate from a particular comprehensive or regional university have access via the special admission provisions or the two transfer admission categories.
- The State System can expect an increase in enrollment due to improved or stable retention and because the number of high school graduates is projected to increase through 2000-2001.
- The number of first-time freshmen who are 21 years of age or older may continue to decline due to an improved economy.
- Minority freshman enrollment and dropout rates are not being negatively impacted by the increased admission standards, especially at the comprehensive universities.

# Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

## ADMISSION POLICY IMPACT STUDY

April 2000

### PURPOSE:

The State Regents' "*Policy Statement on Admission To, Retention In, and Transfer Among Colleges and Universities of the State System*" (II-2-35) requires a periodic review of the admission policy implementation. The purpose of the review is two-fold: (1) to assure that the implementation of the standards is consistent with the intent of the policy and (2) to document the impact of the policy on student success.

This report covers fall 1989, the year prior to the multi-year phase-in of increased admission standards, to fall 1998 and replicates five previous studies since 1991. The information in the tables was updated to the latest year available. As with past versions, this study was limited to a few of the many factors that can affect student admission and retention. It is not possible to conclude that the increase in admission standards caused, solely or in part, any particular result.

### BACKGROUND:

As described in Table 1, the comprehensive universities increased admission standards beginning in fall 1990 by requiring both a minimum high school GPA *and* class rank. Then the comprehensive universities raised the high school rank criterion and the ACT percentile from 50 percent to 40 percent in fall 1991 and to 33.3 percent in fall 1992.<sup>1</sup>

The regional universities raised their high school rank and ACT requirement from 66.6 percent to 60 percent in fall 1991, to 55 percent in fall 1992, and to 50 percent in fall 1993. Also in fall 1991, the regional universities required a minimum high school GPA *and* class rank.<sup>2</sup>

For the past several years, the ACT score, high school rank (top 33.3 percent at comprehensive universities and top 50 percent at regional universities), and GPA (3.0 at comprehensive universities and 2.7 at regional universities) minimums have remained the same. Due to higher ACT scores reported for Oklahoma high school graduates, the top 33 percent ACT score increased from 21 to 22 in fall 1996 at the comprehensive universities. Similarly, due to the improved performance of Oklahoma high school students, the top one-half ACT score will increase to 20 in the fall 2000.

In 1988, Northeastern State University requested higher admission standards than the regional tier. In fall 1991, students entering NSU were required to achieve an ACT score of 20 or higher or a 3.0 high school GPA or class rank in the top half. In fall 1992, students were required to score a 20 or higher ACT score or rank in the top 55 percent *and* achieve a

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<sup>1</sup> In October 1998, the State Regents approved a request from the University of Oklahoma to increase admission standards to an ACT composite score of 24 and a top 30 percent high school rank beginning in fall 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Beginning in fall 2000, the required ACT score for admission will increase from 19 to 20 at regional universities.

high school GPA of 2.7 or higher. In fall 1993, the class rank requirement returned to the top 50 percent.

In addition to the two regular avenues of admission just described<sup>3</sup>, the State Regents' Admission Policy has multiple "Right to Try" opportunities and a second chance provision: alternative admission, adult admission, home study or unaccredited high schools, summer provisional admission (four-year institutions only), summer curricular deficiency program (regional universities only), and transfer probation. Oklahoma State University had an additional fall "Right to Try" provision from fall 1995 to fall 1997. The Admission Policy also provides standards for high school students to enroll concurrently.

**Table 1**

Semester	ACT	High School Rank	High School GPA	"Right to Try" Categories
<b>Comprehensive Universities</b>				
Fall 1989	50% or	50% or	3.0	Summer, Special Waiver, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.
Fall 1990	21 or	50% and	3.0	Summer, Special Waiver, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.
Fall 1991	21 or	40% and	3.0	Summer,* Alternative, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.  *The State Regents modified the Summer Admission Program for comprehensive institutions in 1993.
Fall 1992	21 or	33% and	3.0	
Fall 1993				
Fall 1994				
Fall 1995				
Fall 1996	22	33% and	3.0	
Fall 1997				
Fall 1998				
<b>Regional Universities (minus NSU)</b>				
Fall 1990	19 or	67% or	2.7	Summer, Special Waiver, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.
Fall 1991	18 or	60% and	2.7	Summer, Summer Provisional for Curricular Deficiencies, Alternative, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.
Fall 1992	19 or	55 % and	2.7	
Fall 1993	19 or	50% and	2.7	
Fall 1994				
Fall 1995				
Fall 1996				
Fall 1997				
Fall 1998				

<sup>3</sup> A third avenue was approved in December 1999 for implementation prior to fall 2000. This admission option requires a 3.0 GPA at comprehensive universities and 2.7 GPA at regional universities based solely on the State Regents' 15-unit high school core curriculum.



Northeastern State University				
Fall 1990	20 or	50% or	3.0	Summer, Special Waiver, Adult, Home Study or Unaccredited High School.
Fall 1991	20 or	50% or	3.0	
Fall 1992	20 or	55% and	2.7	
Fall 1993	20 or	50 % and	2.7	
Fall 1994				
Fall 1995				
Fall 1996				
Fall 1997				
Fall 1998				
Two-Year Colleges				
Open Admission				

## METHODOLOGY:

Data included in this study are the latest available. Most of the data were derived from the Unitized Data System (UDS). Other sources of data included the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

## FINDINGS:

### Total Student Enrollments at National Public Institutions (Table 2)

- From fall 1989 to fall 1997 (most recent national data available), student enrollment in public higher education institutions increased at the four-year institutions and peaked in 1992 at the two-year institutions.
- From fall 1989 to fall 1997, total national enrollments increased 7.5 percent. Student enrollment decreased between fall 1994 and fall 1995 (0.4 percent), but rose 0.3 percent and 2.3 percent in the last two years. This increase was due primarily to an increase at two-year colleges.

### Total Student Enrollments at Oklahoma State System Institutions (Table 3)

- Similar to the national trends, total fall semester enrollment in the State System peaked in fall 1992 with 163,988 students. From fall 1989 to fall 1998, total fall semester enrollment increased 2.9 percent, fluctuating between -2.9 and 4.3 percent from year to year.
- Fall semester enrollment at the comprehensive universities increased 6.8 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998: OU increased 12.2 percent and OSU increased 0.7 percent.
- Fall semester enrollment at the regional universities increased 0.4 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998, with one-year differences fluctuating between -4.4 and 3.5 percent.
- Fall semester enrollment at the two-year colleges increased 2.1 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998, with one-year differences fluctuating between -3.6 and 7.2 percent.

### **Total First-Time Freshman Enrollments at Oklahoma State System Institutions (Table 4)**

- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, total fall semester first-time freshman enrollment increased 8.9 percent, with one-year differences fluctuating between -7.1 and 6.3 percent.
- Fall semester first-time freshman enrollment at the comprehensive universities increased 6.6 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998; however, OU increased 26.6 percent and OSU decreased 11.3 percent.
- Fall semester first-time freshman enrollment at the regional universities increased 14.0 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998, with one-year differences fluctuating between -3.4 and 8.8 percent.
- Fall semester first-time freshman enrollment at the two-year colleges increased 7.6 percent from fall 1989 to fall 1998, with one-year differences fluctuating between -9.1 and 7.9 percent.

### **High School Graduates (Tables 5 and 6)**

- The number of high school graduates declined from 37,828 in 1987-88 to 31,653 in 1992-93, then increased to 36,535 in 1998-99.
- Projections generated by State Regents' staff indicate that the number of high school graduates will continue to increase to 38,608 through 2000-01.
- Enrollments of freshmen directly from high school in the State System decreased from 14,428 in fall 1989 to 12,820 in fall 1994, then increased to 14,388 in fall 1998.
- The decrease in freshmen directly from high school corresponds to the decline in the number of high school graduates. However, the percentage of high school graduates enrolling directly in the State System increased from 38.5 percent in fall 1989 to 39.7 percent in fall 1998.
- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, the percentage of high school graduates enrolling directly in college increased from 10.6 to 10.8 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 10.5 to 10.9 percent at the regional universities, and from 17.3 to 18.0 percent at the two-year colleges.

### **Applications, Acceptances, and Enrollments (Table 7)**

UDS data for institutions in the regional and two-year tiers were incomplete and therefore are not reported. The following data exclude foreign students.

- Since fall 1990, the number of applications generally decreased at the comprehensive universities from 6,694 in fall 1990 to 6,025 in fall 1993, then increased to 7,719 in fall 1998.
- Between 96 and 98 percent of the applicants were accepted each fall except fall 1992 (93 percent).
- The percentage of students accepted that enrolled decreased from 63.7 percent in fall 1990 to 61.3 percent in fall 1998.

### **Dropout Rates (Tables 8 and 9)**

Dropouts in this study are “within the state” and defined as students who are not enrolled at any college or university in Oklahoma, although they may have dropped out of their original institutions.

- The first-year dropout rate decreased from 11.9 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 10.2 percent for fall 1996 freshmen at the comprehensive universities.
- At the regional universities, the first-year dropout rate increased from 23.0 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 27.7 percent for fall 1994 freshmen, then decreased to 23.9 percent for fall 1996 freshmen.
- At the two-year colleges, the dropout rate increased from 32.0 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 37.4 percent for fall 1994 freshmen, then decreased to 33.6 percent for fall 1996 freshmen.
- When dropout rates are measured by whether a student remains at the same institution, Oklahoma comprehensive universities had a fall 1996 dropout rate of 22.8 percent compared to 21.6 percent nationally. Oklahoma regional universities had a fall 1996 dropout rate of 39.2 percent compared to 26.6 percent nationally. Oklahoma two-year colleges had a fall 1996 dropout rate of 46.8 percent compared to 47.2 percent nationally.
- At the comprehensive universities from fall 1989 to fall 1996, the dropout rates decreased for Caucasians (11.1 to 9.8 percent), African Americans (17.0 to 10.4 percent), Native Americans (17.5 to 11.1 percent), Hispanics (17.3 to 12.5 percent) and Asian Americans (9.4 to 6.2 percent).
- At the regional universities from fall 1989 to fall 1996, the dropout rates increased for Caucasians (21.2 to 22.0 percent), African American (26.5 to 28.3 percent) and Asian Americans (23.9 to 24.6 percent), but decreased for Native Americans (28.4 to 27.4 percent) and Hispanics (38.6 to 29.4 percent).
- At the two-year colleges from fall 1989 to fall 1996, the dropout rates increased for Caucasians (29.9 to 32.2 percent), African Americans (40.6 to 41.5 percent), Hispanics (29.5 to 35.7 percent), but decreased for Native Americans (43.5 to 39.1 percent) and Asian Americans (29.7 to 21.3 percent).

### **Graduation Rates (Table 10)**

Graduation rate is defined as the percent of first-time, full-time, degree-seeking freshmen who graduated from a comprehensive or regional university in six years or from a two-year college in three years. This “within-the-state” graduation rate includes students who transferred and graduated from another Oklahoma institution.

- From fall 1989 to fall 1992, the six-year graduation rates increased from 51.8 to 52.3 percent at the comprehensive universities and decreased from 35.5 to 33.4 percent at the regional universities.

- At the two-year colleges, the three-year graduation rates decreased from 16.5 percent for fall 1989 freshmen to 13.6 percent for fall 1992 freshmen, then increased to 15.6 percent for fall 1995 freshmen.
- When graduation rates are measured by students who remain at the same institution, the fall 1992 rate for Oklahoma comprehensive universities was 46.1 percent and 53.6 percent nationally. Oklahoma regional universities had a 26.7 percent fall 1992 graduation rate compared to 41.0 percent nationally. The Oklahoma two-year colleges had a 13.6 percent fall 1992 graduation rate compared to 38.8 percent nationally.

### **High School Preparation (Tables 11 – 13)**

An expected result of the higher admission standards was the larger proportion of first-time freshmen who met the State Regents' ACT criteria.

- The percentage of new freshmen at the comprehensive universities who had an ACT score of 21 or higher increased from 58.3 percent in fall 1989 to 78.6 percent in fall 1995. Since fall 1996 when the top one-third of Oklahoma ACT scores increased to 22, the percentage of first-time freshmen with an ACT of 22 or higher increased from 72.8 percent to 75.2 percent in fall 1998.
- At the regional universities, the percentage of first-time freshmen entering with an ACT of 19 or higher increased from 39.8 in fall 1989 to 65.5 percent in fall 1998.
- Of the fall 1998 first-time freshmen in the State System for whom ACT, high school rank, and high school GPA information was available, most (61.8 percent) met both criteria: 66.7 percent at the comprehensive and 56.6 percent at the regional universities. Approximately 10 percent of the freshmen met only the ACT admission requirement, and approximately 19 percent met only the high school rank and GPA requirement.
- Since the core high school curriculum requirements increased from 11 to 15 units in fall 1997, the percentage of freshmen who took the core increased from 72 to 76 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 55 to 60 percent at the regional universities, and from 41 to 44 percent at the two-year colleges. The data are self-reported by students who take the ACT prior to completing high school, and thus are subject to error.

### **Ethnic Group and Age (Tables 14 – 16)**

- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, the proportion of minority students in the freshman class increased for the State System from 18.3 to 27.5 percent, from 15.2 to 22.8 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 24.6 to 32.0 percent at the regional universities, and from 16.4 to 27.2 percent at the two-year colleges.
- The representation of each minority group among the first-time entering freshmen increased in the State System and in all tiers between 1989 and 1998.
- The percentage of first-time freshmen in the State System who were 21 years or older increased from 27.8 percent in fall 1989 to 32.4 percent in fall 1991, then decreased to 24.0 percent in 1998.

- From fall 1989 to fall 1998, the percent of first-time freshmen over 21 decreased from 4.4 to 3.3 percent at the comprehensive universities, from 17.9 to 15.7 percent at the regional universities, and from 41.8 to 36.1 at the two-year colleges.

### **Type of Admission (Tables 17-18)**

Beginning fall 1991, first-time freshmen were classified by the following admission types: regular admission-baccalaureate program, regular admission-associate of arts or sciences, regular admission-associate in applied science/certificate, summer provisional, special non-degree seeking, alternative, adult, home study or unaccredited high school, opportunity, international, concurrent, and undergraduate transfer.

The admission policy allows comprehensive and regional universities to admit a specified percentage or number of first-time freshmen by alternative admission based on criteria other than performance and curricular requirements. Two-year colleges have open admission and do not use the alternative admission category. The alternative admission policy states that institutions must establish admission criteria that identify students who (1) have a reasonable chance for academic success, (2) have an unusual talent or ability in art, drama, music, sports, and the like, or (3) are educationally or economically disadvantaged and show promise of being able to succeed in a program or curriculum at the institution where they desire to enroll. Alternative admission may not be granted in significant disproportion to scholarship athletes and is to be used to promote the State System goal of Social Justice.

Beginning fall 1991, the comprehensive universities were allowed to admit up to 7 percent of the total first-time freshmen from the previous year into the alternative admission category. The regional institutions could admit 6 percent or 50 students, whichever was greater. In fall 1992, the percentage increased to 8 percent at the comprehensive institutions and 7 percent or 50, whichever was greater, at the regional institutions. The amount remained the same in fall 1993 at the comprehensive universities and was raised to 8 percent or 50, whichever was greater, at the regional universities.

- In fall 1998, the comprehensive universities exceeded the allowable number of alternative admits by 8 students and the regional universities admitted fewer than the allowable number of alternative admits (75.9%). Of the alternative admits, 8.9 percent at comprehensive and 6.7 percent at regional universities were scholarship athletes. With average ACT scores of 19 at the comprehensive universities and 17 at the regional universities, these students earned an average GPA of 2.53 and 1.78 and completed an average of 13 and 8 hours, respectively.
- In fall 1998, 31.7 percent of alternative admission students were minority students (33.7 percent at comprehensive and 30.1 percent at regional universities). This compares to 22.8 percent and 32.0 percent minority freshmen at comprehensive and regional institutions, respectively (Table 14).

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

The *Admission Policy Impact Study* is an attempt to determine the effects of the increased admission standards on the State System and the institutional student profiles. Information generated through this review process is used by the State Regents to ascertain whether the admission standards are appropriate and if the goal of enhancing student success is being met.

As previously noted, this study has limitations which preclude drawing definitive conclusions; however, the following conclusions can be made:

- Data support continuation of current admission standards.
- There is a direct relationship between core high school courses and performance on the ACT. All research data agree that high school students who take challenging high school courses in core subject areas perform higher on the ACT. In keeping with these findings, in December 1999, the State Regents approved a third avenue for admission based solely on a student's GPA in the 15-unit high school core curriculum. The third option also rewards students for taking challenging Advanced Placement courses.
- Because taking more core courses improves ACT scores, the number of students with ACT scores at or above the minimum should continue to increase as the number of required core high school units increased from 11 to 15 in fall 1997. The State Board of Education's incentive program for Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the high schools should continue to raise high school performance.
- All students desiring to pursue higher education have access via the State Regents' three roads of entry as represented by the three tiers: two-year colleges, regional universities, and comprehensive universities. Additionally, all students desiring to attend and/or graduate from a particular comprehensive or regional university have access via the special admission provisions or the two student transfer admission categories.
- The State System can expect an increase in enrollment due to improved or stable retention and because the number of high school graduates is projected to increase through 2000-2001.
- The number of first-time freshmen who are 21 years of age or older may continue to decline due to an improved economy.
- Minority freshman enrollment and dropout rates are not being negatively impacted by the increased admission standards, especially at the comprehensive universities.