

Admissions Review & Identification/Support of Entering At-risk Students

Six years ago, the Faculty Senate performed a comprehensive assessment of Wright State's admissions policy to determine if admitted students were likely to succeed and if admissions practices were consistent with policies. This working group met as necessary to deliver a report to the Senate's Undergraduate Academic Policies Committee and to the Senate's Undergraduate Student Success Committee.

Charges:

1. The group should evaluate the consistency of the University's admissions policies with its current admissions practices.
2. It should also work to identify criteria (e.g. ACT scores, high school GPAs, Pell-eligibility) that suggest a student admitted directly from high school would have a less than 25% chance of graduating in at least six years; and between a 25% and 50% chance of graduating in at least six years.
3. Recommendations regarding the development of policies that would allow conditional admission of students determined to be at-risk upon admission and strategies that would provide enhanced support for conditionally admitted students would be welcome.

Committee Members:

Craig Baudendistel

Geoffrey Owens

Paul Carney

Laura Bearhs

Amanda Spencer

Tim Littell

Ayse Sahin

Susan Carrafiello

Robert Ray

Charge #1 Current Admissions Policy & Practice

Current policy 3110 contains the following requirements and general guidelines in terms of admission:

New, Direct from High School Policy:

Domestic, direct from high school students (defined as those who have completed their high school degrees or equivalents within 2 years of applying) must:

- Have completed the Ohio K-12 Core Curriculum or its equivalent from another US state or territory.
- A 2.0 high school GPA or equivalent; and
- Have taken the ACT or SAT within two years of applying (for university placements tests in Math and English, standardized test scores must fall within this time period to be considered valid for placement).

Applicants who have a high school GPA of 2.5 may be admitted with any ACT/SAT score. While the scores are used for the purposes of placement in the appropriate level introductory English and Math courses, they are not currently used for admissions purposes.

If an applicant has a GPA between 2.0 and 2.5, the admissions office will take into consideration their ACT or SAT scores. If they have an ACT composite score of at least 15 or a combined critical reading and math SAT score of at least 830, they will be admitted.

Admissions Practices Regarding New, Direct from High School Applicants [Including both Dayton and Lake Campus]:

Contrary to a general belief that Wright State University is an “open enrollment” institution, there exist hard cutoffs, most notably, the 2.0 GPA, that result in some applicants being denied. Additionally, admissions officers may consider applicants between a 1.9 and 2.0 GPA if they identify extenuating circumstances that may have adversely affected their high school GPA but do not necessarily reflect their overall performance. They will also take into consideration a reasonably high ACT score as a mitigating factor. A cursory look at only domestic new, direct from high school enrolled students for Fall 2019 indicate this discretionary window only affects a small percentage of incoming students (0.33% being below the 2.0 GPA cutoff).

Additionally, based on applications, 3.56% of new, direct from high school applicants are denied entry to WSU based on GPA/ACT only.

Admissions is also allowed some discrepancy to admit those who did not complete the Ohio K-12 curriculum requirements (or an equivalent curriculum from another state or US territory). The Admissions office has a petitions process (separate from the University Petitions Process) for such applicants.

One option for rejected applicants is to encourage them to participate in one of the pathway partnership program with one of the local community colleges (commonly Sinclair, Cark State and possibly Edison State). If they follow the partnership agreement, and successfully complete a predetermined course sequence, they are admitted to Wright State University. Some students have opted to go to a community college to raise their GPAs, without enrolling in the structured partnership pathway. These students are then treated as transfer students, going by different admissions rules, but risk not having addressed the deficiencies that prevented unconditional admission in the first place. There currently does not seem to be tracking for students who took the pathway program.

Other Categories of Applicants:

There are separate rules for applicants who two or more years removed from completing high school, international applicants, transfer students and non-degree seeking students. Generally, ACT and SAT scores are not considered as part of their application package. The UCIE works with admissions to process transcripts and evaluate diplomas of international applicants to determine eligibility and admission. Generally, if students in any of these categories have deficiencies, these deficiencies will be addressed though placement tests or consultation with Division of Student Success and Academic Advising after they have been admitted.

Consistency Between Policy and Current Admissions Office Practice:

When the 2012 *ad hoc* Committee was reviewing policy and practice, Wright State University had yet to fully develop its Policy Index. As a result, the committee at the time was unable to find locate an official admissions policy, but was able to piece together admissions criteria using information from the Wright State University Admissions web page.

Since that time, and likely in response to the absence of a written policy, the Faculty Senate and Provost approved Policy 3110, the Undergraduate Admissions Policy. There appears to be a close match between

the current admissions policy language and the 2012 recommendations of the *ad hoc* Committee, strongly suggesting that it was drafted to reflect their recommendations.

The policy has been revised since that time, most notably in 2017. However, the major change implemented at that time included changes to international student language proficiency requirements. There are several ways in which the policy language concerning admissions requirements has fallen out of synch with current practice in the Office of Admissions. Most notably, the policy contains the following footnote under 3110.2, Admission:

“Applicants with ACT English scores of 12 or below and/or ACT Math scores of 13 or below (or the English and Math SAT equivalents) must successfully demonstrate proficiency or complete appropriate foundational programs or coursework before their first term of study”

This language seems to represent an attempt to follow on the recommendations of the *ad hoc* committee, by using the scores of 12 and 13 on English and Math as an indicator of an student being at risk, and in need of additional interventions. However, while all students are required to be placed in appropriate introductory English and Math classes prior to registering for classes using standardized tests, there is no current mechanism in place to provide additional interventions or special foundational course work for students with low ACT scores through the Admissions Office. And this intervention, even if it were being practiced in Admissions, would not apply to the great many students who are not required to submit ACT or SAT scores, such as international or students returning two or more years after graduating from high school.

Current Policy Revisions and Recommendations

Currently, the UAPC is in the process of updating the policy: one of the most urgently needed updates is to incorporate language explicitly stating that international students who have completed secondary level education, and other categories of high school completers, who are eligible for admission. It has also developed a proposed separate policy for non-degree seeking applicants.

Since the policy is currently undergoing revisions, it should not be difficult for the UAPC to incorporate additional recommendations during its deliberations in the Fall of 2019.

Charge #2: Criteria to Identify at Risk, Direct from High School Students (less than 25% chance of graduating in at least six years; and between a 25% and 50% chance of graduating in within six years).

So far, the data set the committee has received from IR only showed general graduation rates of particular groups of students. Additionally, scores were averaged/binning. In order to evaluate this charge, we need individual, raw GPA and ACT scores for admitted students over the past 6 years. The current cutoffs for admission is a 2.5 GPA, or a 2.0-2.5 combined with an ACT of 15 or higher.

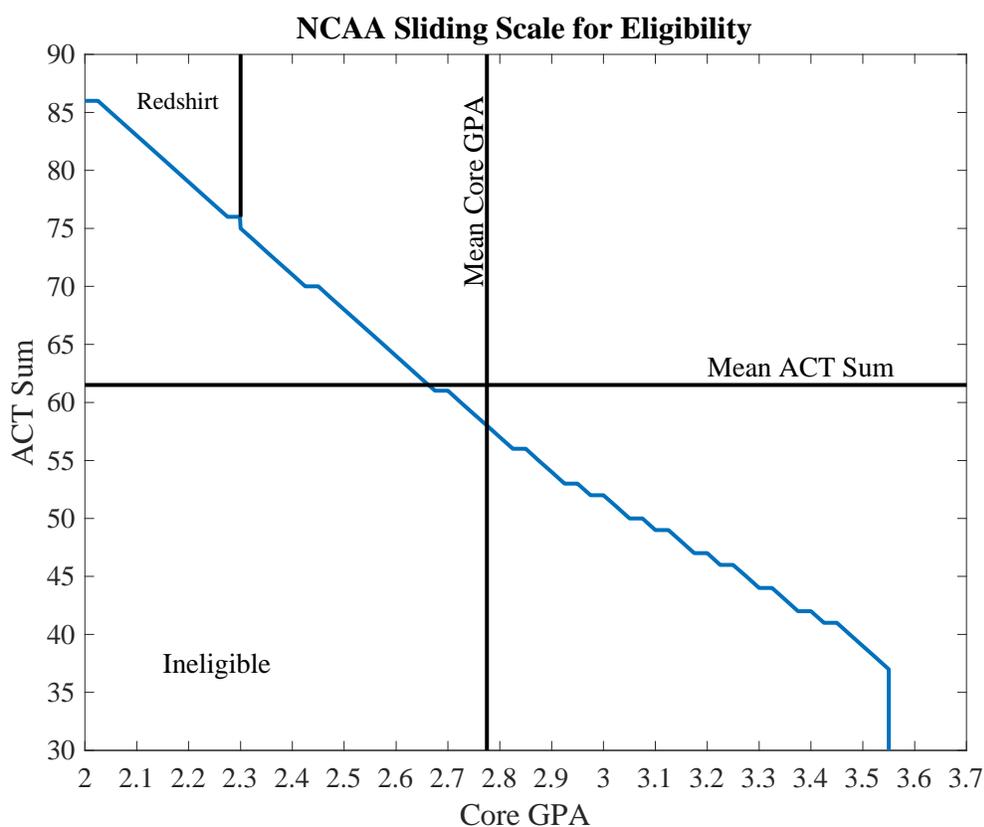
The above data represent ‘snapshot’ data. They may be used as the basis for developing a dashboard or longitudinal view of students as they move from freshman to graduation. It may be possible to glean more dynamic data from the current data set, but it’s broken up by demographic, not quantitative data such as ACT and HS GPA metrics and as such, is probably not as helpful in predicting future graduation rates using admissions criteria. The types of information consistent with this committee’s charge would

resemble the following: “you have a 24 ACT and a 3.8 GPA, you have a 57% chance of graduating in 6 years.”

It would be useful to know if or when each student graduated, and if not, how long they lasted (attrition). For students who left the university, it would also be useful to sort them into students who leave ‘not eligible to return’ (this might include students who were academically dismissed), ‘those eligible to return’ (this can further be sorted into students who left while on probation (<2.0) and those in good standing), and if possible, discern reasons why they ceased attending (personal/family reasons, transfer, military deployment, illness, etc.). More robust data would enhance the ability to generate a model to predict success rates for admitted students.

NCAA Sliding Scale for Eligibility vs. WSU Admission Criteria

As part of the Committee’s charge, it examined the NCAA eligibility criteria, and compared it to current admissions criteria, as a possible model for revising current admission criteria. Currently, the NCAA uses a sliding scale to determine eligibility of student athletes. The sliding scale looks like this:



While a much more truncated version of this type of sliding scale, involving some combination of both ACT and GPA might be feasible for general admissions, the highly nuanced and complex scale used by NCAA may not be practical for general admissions. First, Wright State University would have to have collected more detailed and timescale data correlating scores and combination of scores and attrition/completions. Second, the NCAA student athletic population, while often reflecting the demographic diversity of other cohorts of New, Direct from High School students, are also exceptional. First, at most, Wright State University has about 250 students participating in intercollegiate athletics. Additionally, student athletes tend to be among the most highly motivated population because their

continued participation in athletics depends on academic progress. As a result, it is usually only a fraction of this already small segment that requires intensive remediation. And the 'carrot' of continued participation and scholarship eligibility will tend towards success in this remediation.

Depending on what detailed longitudinal data disclose, it might be feasible to identify a much more basic sliding scale that would be practicable for the general student population. While WSU has an absolute cutoff for GPA set at 2.0, an absolute cutoff does not exist for ACT scores. It can be argued that, with supporting historical data, someone for example with a 1.8 GPA and an ACT score of 27 might be predicted to be an individual with high chance of completion if they were admitted because of their ACT score alone. The whole purpose of having combined or scaled cutoffs is recognition that there are cohorts of students that can be successful with the correct support structure; Low GPA/High ACT and High GPA/Low ACT. At least one of the metrics are high to warrant a chance at college. As of now, WSU focuses only on GPA as a cutoff.

It is also worth noting that, with additional graduation/attrition data, these cutoffs can be adjusted periodically as additional data and infrastructural support systems for at risk students become available.

Charge #3 Recommendations regarding the development of policies that would allow conditional admission of students determined to be at-risk upon admission and strategies that would provide enhanced support for conditionally admitted students.

Among recommendations for this working group are the following:

Recommendation #1: Make certain that current GPA conditions, required threshold scores and other markers of unconditional admission are clearly articulated in the policy. (this will depend in part in implementation of other recommendations, especially #4 below)

Recommendation #2: Make certain that the policy addresses policies specific to Admissions qualifications, and not post-admissions placement procedures or criteria including recommendation for remediation work. Placement is separate from admissions, and outside of the expertise of admissions officers. Such language could be shifted from Admissions policy to a specific policy on post-admissions placement. Such a policy can delegate the responsibility to a specific college or department, the Student Success Center or Academic Advising. This change would simplify the overall Admissions Policy .

Recommendation #3: Call on the Faculty Senate to review Admissions policies at least once every three years. Normally, policies are slated to be reviewed once every five years. However, admissions represents a considerably more dynamic area of policy, especially in light of changing student demographics and continually changing ODHE mandated high school graduation requirements.

Recommendation #4: Identify a research question that is sufficiently robust enough to identify both academic and demographic markers for post admissions success. Any analysis will

- a) start with the Domestic, New, Direct from High School students. Once established, it may be possible to expand database to other categories of incoming students, such as those arrive two or more years after graduation, international students, etc.
- b) go back a limited number of years. A useful starting point could be 2012, with the commencement of semesters. But a three year window might also be sufficient.

- c) start with individual student ACT and HS GPA (along with demographic and major) to be able to make intelligent decisions on cutoff values and or targeted remediation. Other factors can be added as more information becomes available.
- d) Examine the attrition rate of students who cease to be enrolled. As the data become refined, it may be possible to gather data on specific reasons for their separation (transfer, family/work commitments, financial need, military deployment, etc.)

Recommendation #5: Identify targeted investment required in places where the most impact can be made (i.e., scholarships, summer camps, curricular changes, TA student support in existing classes, career/advising coaching). Small input, large output. (Not that large input couldn't be visited once more resources are available.)

Recommendation #6: Investigate the costs and benefits of developing a pilot study of applicants who would not normally be accepted under current admissions criteria, but whom, based on any suggested revised cutoffs hypothesized using the above criteria, could be conditionally admitted, pending completion of a Community College Partnership Pathway Program. The participants in this pilot study could then be assigned a Wright State University advisor who will coordinate with advisors in the partnership institution to monitor their progress. Such a pilot study would have the following advantages:

- a) Pathway agreements already exist with area community colleges. It would not be necessary to create a new infrastructure for the pilot study, other than to assign a WSU academic advisor for each student.
- b) Conditionally admitted Students would receive level appropriate structured coursework though the existing agreements. The study could also examine the efficacy of introducing other targeted investments if needed.
- d) In contrast to direct admit students to Wright State University who subsequently went on probation, assuring that an advisor monitors Pathway program students' progress to completion would better serve students' needs.
- e) If student performance in the pilot study did not meet expectations, students would have the option of continuing towards the terminal degree in the partnering community college.
- f) Such a study would allow study of the pathway program's efficacy as a variable in enhancing the success of students who utilize it.

Recommendation #7: Recommend the formation of an *ad hoc* committee during the academic term to follow up on developing the research question, collecting the data and presenting it. Time limitations prevented the summer working group from actually processing data. But institutional research is already assisting in developing the research question and pulling necessary data. A successor group would assure continuation of the processing of this information.