

**Resolution 2015-3. On Admission Standards for Athletic Recruits
Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions
November 13, 2015**

On February 27, 2015, Faculty Council referred to the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions *Resolution 2015-3. On Admission Standards for Athletic Recruits*, which states:

The University should eliminate the admission of Tier I candidates (i.e., those athletic recruits whose first-semester GPA's are expected to fall below 2.3.) At the same time, the University should take all possible steps to broaden the diversity of the undergraduate student body independently of the admission of Tier I athletes.

The committee unanimously recommends that this resolution not be adopted for these reasons:

Admissions-Related Reasons

- **Strong Support for Whole File Review for All Undergraduate Applicants to UNC-Chapel Hill.** The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions has encouraged comprehensive, individualized evaluation of each candidate for nearly twenty years. Compared to threshold or bright-line admissions, the Advisory Committee strongly supports whole file review to yield a stronger and more diverse student body, better account for the contextual factors that are not captured by standardized test scores and other quantitative assessments, and better match the values of our University.
- **Need to Interpret Grades and Test Scores Appropriately.** The resolution proposes the use of a single cutoff measure derived from a test score and a grade-point average—that is, a measure below which no student may be admitted under any circumstances. Such a “bright line” approach to admissions runs directly counter to best practices nationally regarding the use of test scores and grade-point averages, both at the undergraduate and graduate level.
- **Strong Support for the Fair Treatment of All Special Talent Students in Admissions Process.** The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions was uncomfortable with the specific implication that, by virtue of being a student-athlete, a special admissions decision rule should be used. The Committee felt that specific subgroups of students were inappropriately targeted and that assumptions were made about the subgroup. In addition, the group did not agree with the implication that student body diversity relates to the consideration or admission of the students in the subgroup in question.

Faculty Governance Reasons

- **Effective Functioning of Current Policies and Practices.** The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions found that the current policies and procedures regarding the admission of student-athletes, including those who require review by the Committee on Special Talent, are working effectively to identify students who are capable of succeeding academically at the University. More specifically, the Advisory Committee found that the Committee on Special Talent is functioning effectively; that its members are deliberate in their evaluation of candidates; and that its evaluations are informed by evidence, including evidence about the subsequent academic performance at the University of students reviewed and recommended by the committee in prior years.
- **Culture of Transparency and Regular Data Presentation to the Admissions Advisory Committee.** The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, a duly appointed committee of Faculty Council, received information annually for the last three years about academic performance of student-athletes who have been reviewed by the Committee on Special Talent; will continue these annual reviews in the future; and will advise the Office of Undergraduate Admissions on changes in policies and procedures if data about academic performance of enrolled students suggest that changes are necessary.

- **Continued Transparency for the Future.** Effective immediately, the Special Talent Committee Chair or designee will provide a regular report at each and every Admissions Advisory Committee meeting to offer brief summaries of student cases, committee activities, and other information requested by the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will also continue to report annually and in detail to Faculty Council on athletics and all special talent admissions, as it has for the classes enrolling in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

In following pages we describe the steps that the Admissions Advisory Committee took to consider the Resolution 2015-3. This background information includes findings of fact that contributed to our recommendation.

Respectfully submitted by the voting members of the Admissions Advisory Committee:

Martha Alexander, Romance Studies
Paul Cuadros, Media and Journalism
Jonathan Engel, Physics and Astronomy
Daniel Gitterman, Chair, Public Policy, Committee on Special Talent Member
Susan King, Dean, School of Media and Journalism
Lee May, Academic Advising, Committee on Special Talent Member
Thomas Otten, Music
Abigail Panter, Psychology and Neuroscience, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education (Chair)
Charlene Regester, African, African American, and Diaspora Studies
Douglas Shackelford, Dean, Kenan-Flagler Business School
Beverly Taylor, Chair, English and Comparative Literature

Non-voting consultants and non-voting *ex officio* members of the Admissions Advisory Committee:

Michelle Brown, Academic Support Program for Student Athletes
Taffye Benson Clayton, Diversity and Multicultural Affairs
Marcus Collins, Center for Student Success and Academic Counseling
Christopher Derickson, University Registrar
Stephen Farmer, Enrollment and Undergraduate Admissions
Barbara Polk, Undergraduate Admissions
Bettina Shuford, Student Affairs
Dan Thornton, Scholarships and Student Aid
Lynn Williford, Institutional Research and Assessment

Committee Charge

The Faculty Code of University Government § 4-24. Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions states that:

- a. The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions consists of the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or the dean's designee as chair; the associate dean for academic advising in the College of Arts and Sciences; two other academic deans from outside the College of Arts and Sciences; and seven faculty members engaged in undergraduate instruction, all appointed by the chancellor. At least five of these faculty members hold primary appointments in the College of Arts and Sciences. The university registrar, the director of undergraduate admissions, and the vice chancellor for student affairs are ex officio, non-voting members of the committee.
- b. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the director of undergraduate admissions. In particular, it addresses the design and application of admissions policy, recommends guidelines for special talent and exceptional admissions, and monitors and responds to the national college admissions environment.
- c. The committee meets at least once each semester or more on call of the chair. The chair calls a meeting whenever requested by the director of undergraduate admissions.

The Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions discussed the Resolution 2015-3 in multiple settings:

- **At its regularly scheduled meeting of March 31, 2015.**
- **At its regularly scheduled meeting of April 14, 2015.** Committee members reviewed:
 - Current admissions policies and procedures, including those regarding special-talent student-athletes that were included within the University's [January 12, 2015, response](#) to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (reprinted as [Appendix A](#));
 - A timeline of key recommendations and discussions by the Advisory Committee from 1997-1998 through 2013-2014 ([Appendix B](#)); and
 - Protected and confidential student information, reviewed in closed session, regarding the admission and academic performance outcomes of students recruited in each of the University's intercollegiate athletics programs, including those students whose predicted first-year grade-point averages were below 2.3.
- **At its regularly scheduled meeting of September 1, 2015.**
 - With the Committee's new members for the 2015-2016 academic year, all members were encouraged to read or reread the public documents that had been discussed in April.
 - Dr. Bruce Cairns, chair of the faculty, also attended the meeting to review the schedule by which the Committee would be expected to provide its recommendation to Faculty Council. At that time the Committee learned that the resolution would likely be considered at the Faculty Council meeting of November 13, 2015. Given this probable schedule, the committee discussed the possibility of holding a called meeting to review additional background information before discussing and voting on the resolution at its regularly scheduled meeting of October 27, 2015.
- **At a joint Advisory Committee and the Faculty Athletics Committee meeting on October 13, 2015.**
 - Chairs of both committees (Panter, Renner) called a meeting to review the policies and procedures that govern the evaluation, admission, and enrollment of special-talent student-athletes.

- Before this called meeting, members of both committees were provided the same detailed description of admissions policies and procedures and the timeline of key recommendations that the Advisory Committee had reviewed in April 2015, as well as the public reports on athletics admissions for the classes entering in 2013 and 2014 ([Appendix C](#), [Appendix D](#)).
- Detailed admissions results for 2015, a results summary from 2006-2015, and a summary of course enrollments by various samples of first-year students, including student-athletes reviewed by the Committee on Special Talent, who enrolled in 2014 ([Appendix E](#)).
- Protected and confidential student information reviewed in closed session—specifically, the admissions credentials, cumulative UNC-Chapel Hill grade-point average, and current academic status of every enrolling student-athlete reviewed by the Committee on Special Talent in 2013, 2014, and 2015.
- **At its regularly scheduled meeting of October 27, 2015.**
 - The Committee on Special Talent was invited to join the Advisory Committee meeting for the discussion and to provide information about all special talent student reviews conducted within that committee. The Special Talent chair was present along with two additional members who are appointees of both committees.
 - Nine of the eleven voting members of the Advisory Committee were present.
 - The Advisory Committee received the [public report on athletics admissions for the class entering in 2015](#) ([Appendix F](#)) and heard a summary of comments provided to Chair Panter by one of the two members who could not attend. The committee then discussed the resolution at length.

Findings of Fact

As a result of these discussions, the Advisory Committee found that:

- As authorized the [Faculty Code of University Government](#), the members of the Advisory Committee are appointed by the Chancellor, and the committee is chaired by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or his or her designee. When there are committee vacancies, the chair of the committee attends the nominating committee of Faculty Council (consisting of all outgoing chairs of existing Faculty Council Committees) to obtain recommendations from chairs and/or information the nominating committee provides about self-nominations of interest. Based on chair recommendations and/or information from the faculty governance self-nomination interest survey, a slate is generated and is provided to the Secretary of the Faculty, who makes recommendations to the Chancellor. The committee has approved the formation, charge, and procedures of the Committee on Special Talent and has authorized the chair to appoint its members. Nominations for the Special Talent Committee are obtained in a similar fashion as members of the Advisory Committee, but with final review by the Advisory Committee and appointment by the chair of the Advisory Committee. [The charge, procedures, and membership](#) of the Committee on Special Talent have been published on the Faculty Council website for several years. The structure of the Advisory Committee and the Committee on Special Talent were reviewed and approved by the [Faculty Committee on University Government](#) in 2014.
- Since at least 1997-98, the Advisory Committee has consistently advised the Office of Undergraduate Admissions to evaluate each candidate comprehensively and on multiple dimensions and to avoid using rigid formulas to determine admission. The committee has also specifically instructed the admissions office not to rely on thresholds or cutoffs—that is, quantifiable credentials above which every student must be admitted or below which no student may be admitted.
- The policies and procedures governing the admission of student-athletes have been revised repeatedly since at least 2005-06. The committee approved the first written charge and operating procedures for the Subcommittee on Athletics Admissions, the precursor to the Committee on Special Talent, in 2009-10. The current criteria for review by the Committee on Special Talent were established by the Advisory

Committee in 2012-13 and took effect for students enrolling in 2013. Since then the Advisory Committee has reviewed, at least annually, detailed information about the admissions credentials and academic performance of students reviewed by the Committee on Special Talent. Starting in 2015, at each meeting there will be regular summaries of recent committee activities, student reviews, and minutes for each Advisory Committee meeting by the chair of the Committee on Special Talent.

- **The number of enrolling student-athletes who meet the current criteria for review by the Committee on Special Talent has declined from 29 in 2006 to nine in each of the last two academic years.** In 2001, using different and less rigorous criteria, the Advisory Committee reported to Faculty Council that 39 enrolling student-athletes had been reviewed and recommended by the Subcommittee on Athletics Admissions.
- **Of the 23 enrolling student-athletes who required review by the Committee on Special Talent in 2013 and 2014, 21 (or 91 percent) met the University's standards for academic eligibility as of the beginning of Fall 2015 semester.** The median cumulative grade-point average for all 23 students was 2.3, with two students above 3.0 and two students below 2.0. The median grade in ENGL 105 was 3.0.
- As of the beginning of Fall 2015, the nine enrolling student-athletes who required review by the Committee on Special Talent in 2014 **completed 58 different courses in 19 different departments at the University, and all had completed at least one First Year Seminar.** The number of courses completed by these nine student-athletes was within one standard deviation of the mean number of courses completed by five randomly chosen samples of nine non-athlete first-year students who enrolled in the same year and the same as the mean number of courses completed by two randomly chosen samples of nine special-talent fine-arts students who enrolled in the same year. The nine student-athletes participated in First Year Seminars at a greater rate than did any of the randomly chosen samples of first-year students.

List of Appendices

Appendix A. Admissions Policies, SACSCOC Response

Appendix B. Timeline, Major Admissions Advisory Committee Decisions

Appendix C. Enrolling Student-Athletes, Class Entering 2013

Appendix D. Enrolling Student-Athletes, Class Entering 2014

Appendix E. Joint Meeting, Faculty Athletics Committee-Admissions Advisory Committee 2015-10-13

Appendix F. Enrolling Student-Athletes, Class Entering 2015