

# **Student Admissions Exceptions Report 1998**

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## Student Admissions Exceptions Report

Fall 1997 was an important date in the evolution of University admissions policy. To be admitted, applicants were required to complete a more rigorous high school curriculum and submit higher test score and high school graduating class rank combinations than any previous freshman class. With any change of this magnitude, it is reasonable to assume that there will be a transitional implementation phase as progress is made toward reaching admissions objectives. It is also a time to verify that the careful decisions made in forming policy proved sound in practice. This report responds to these issues in two ways. First, progress toward reaching admissions targets is assessed by comparing the academic characteristics of sequential fall freshman classes. Second, the importance of each component of the admissions requirement is determined by two measures of performance for those who did or did not satisfy each requirement: a) by the rate at which fall 1996 students returned for a sophomore year and b) by the rate at which fall 1997 freshman earned a GPA  $\geq$  2.0.

Throughout the document the term exception will be used to identify students not meeting each and every component of the published required sum of test score and high school rank and core course distribution for regular admission. Many students classified as exceptions in this report were admitted because they presented very strong credentials in most respects and many have performed well.

Two admission policies will be discussed in this report. The first is that of the University of Missouri and the second is the CBHE's standards for selective institutions. The test score and class rank requirements of the two are equal but the policies differ in high school core course requirements. The University of Missouri policy requires one more math and science unit and requires two foreign language units. The CBHE policy does not require foreign language units. Instead it requires 3 elective units among core disciplines or foreign language.

*The 1997 University of Missouri freshman admission policy exception rate for the four campuses was 20%, less than half the exception rate that would have been the case if 1997 standards had been applied to 1996 freshmen. That is substantial improvement from one year to the next. In addition, the 1997 admissions policy is doing a good job of identifying students with a high likelihood of success. For example, the retention rate for fall 1996 students who met the 1997 requirements was 10% higher than for those who did not (84% vs. 74%). Likewise, the freshman-year academic success rate (percentage with GPA  $\geq$  2.0) for fall 1997 students who met the admission requirements was 16% higher (90% vs. 74%). In sum, the University made good progress toward implementing the policy and the policy is functioning well to identify strong applicants.*

### Key Observations

#### Change from fall 1996 to fall 1997 (Table 1)

- The fall 1997 freshman class was clearly better prepared than the fall 1996 class. Comparing the fall 1996 and 1997 classes showed that the number of University of Missouri exceptions to 1997 policy had been reduced by over half (52% to 20%) and the number of CBHE exceptions had been reduced by nearly half (23% to 12%). More importantly, this magnitude of improvement occurred at each campus of the system.
- More 1997 applicants completed the more rigorous college preparatory program. In 1996: 30% had fewer than four math courses, 15% had less than two foreign language courses, and 7% had less than 3 science courses. By 1997, those rates were reduced from 30% to 8% in math, from 15% to 4% in foreign language, and from 7% to 2% in science. Furthermore, while 46% of fall 1996 freshman had less than the 1997 core, only 15% had an exception in 1997. The exception rate also improved greatly for the less rigorous CBHE core, dropping from 11% to 6%.
- The percentage of freshmen not meeting the test score and class rank requirement decreased from 16% to 7%. The 1997 test score and class rank combination exception rates by campus were 7% (UM-Columbia), 13% (UM-Kansas City), 2% (UM-Rolla), and 14% (UM-St Louis).

## **Retention of fall 1996 cohort (Table 2)**

- Based on the performance of 1996 freshmen, those who met 1997 standards were retained at a much higher rate than those who did not. Across the system, 79% of the 1996 freshman class returned for a second year. The retention rate of those who met the 1997 requirements was 84%. It was 74% for those who did not. With the exception of UM-Rolla, the retention advantage was very clear: 88% vs. 77% at UMC, 79% vs. 65% at UMKC, and 73% vs. 62% at UMSL. UM-Rolla is often a unique case in these studies due to its quantitative focus and high standards. Very few UMR students fail to meet test score and class rank requirements and those who do not meet core requirements typically do not have the required number of units in disciplines less closely associated with performance in engineering: fine arts, foreign language, or social studies.
- It is also important to note that the retention rates of 1996 exceptions to 1997 policy were fairly high. Nearly 74% of the exceptions returned for a sophomore year. Clearly, alternative and supplemental admission policies have succeeded in admitting students with a reasonably high likelihood of success in spite of specific standard policy deficiencies.

## **Freshman-year academic success rate of fall 1997 cohort (Table 3)**

- System-wide 87% of all full-time, first-time, degree-seeking freshmen earn a 2.0 or better GPA. For those who met all 1997 requirements, the success rate was 90%. The success rate was 74% for those who did not. By examining the success rates by nature of deficiency, it is clear that test score and rank exceptions were more significant than core course exceptions and that the success rates of those failing to meet both the score and rank combination and high school core course distribution were relatively unsuccessful (63%).
- Examining the success rates of those failing to meet specific components of the core requirement shows that a fine arts or social studies deficiency was of less consequence than was a foreign language or English deficiency, but that math and science deficiencies were the most important. The success rates of students with fine arts or social studies deficiencies were over 80% while the success rates of those with science and math deficiencies were less than 70%.

## ***Campus-level Observations***

### **UM-Columbia**

#### Table 1

The change in percentage of students meeting standard 1997 requirements at UM-Columbia has been substantial. Only about half of the 1996 freshman class would have met 1997 UM standards but 83% of the 1997 class did so. In terms of class rank and test score requirements, the percentage meeting the 1997 standards went from 58% (42% exceptions) to 88% (12% exceptions). In terms of meeting the goal of 10% exceptions set by the Curators, UM-Columbia has made dramatic progress and, at 17% total exceptions, is reasonably close to the target. The test score, class rank exception rate was only 7% overall and the core exception rate was 12%. Only 2% of admitted students did not meet either the test score and class rank requirement or the core distribution requirement.

In terms of CBHE policy standards, the Columbia campus should probably be considered in compliance. Strictly stated, the CBHE policy allows for no core course exceptions and the UM-Columbia campus had a core course exception rate of 3%. Given the peculiarities of public university admissions, it is unlikely that any campus will be able to significantly reduce that figure. The CBHE policy does allow 10% test score and class rank combination exceptions and UM-Columbia was under that limit.

Of the core course requirements, the mathematics and foreign language units were generally the problem areas. Some 12% of the class had all but the fourth required unit of mathematics and 7% did not meet the foreign language requirement. Except for these two areas, all content area requirements were met by more than 95% of all students.

Table 2

Overall, 83% of the fall 1996 UM-Columbia freshman report cohort returned for a second year. Retention was significantly higher for those who met the 1997 requirements (88%) than for those who did not (77%). The retention rates of those failing to meet only the required rank/score combination or core distribution

## UM-Rolla

### Table 1

From 1996 to 1997, the Rolla campus dramatically increased the number of students who met 1997 UM requirements. The proportion doubled (39% to 78%). In addition, UM-Rolla sharply reduced the percentage of students not meeting the test score and high school rank requirements (52% to 20%) and the percentage not meeting the test score requirement (9% to 2%). The UM-Rolla campus generally shows data patterns consistent with its engineering focus. Very few students do not meet the test score and class rank requirement (2% in 1997) but many more do not have the required unit of fine arts (10% in 1997) or foreign language (7% in 1997). Of the 22% who did not meet the University of Missouri's 1997 requirements, 20% did not meet the requirement due to core course distributions. However, the overall exception rate was reduced dramatically from 61% to 22% due to greater compliance with core requirements.

### Table 2

In terms of retention, the UM-Rolla campus has probably reached a plateau where significant improvement is unlikely. Those 1996 students meeting the 1997 requirements were actually retained at a slightly lower rate than were those who met the requirements (81% vs. 77%). There was no association between meeting requirements and retention. In addition, failing to meet the individual component requirements of the 1997 policy was not clearly associated with retention except for mathematics where only 72% of those with less than 4 units of high school math returned for a second year.

### Table 3

The success rates in Table 3 may be a better reflection of admission requirements than Table 2's retention figures because the 1997 policies did apply to the fall 1997 students. However, the performance differences of those with and without the core or those meeting or not meeting the freshman requirements reinforces the notion of a plateau. When those not meeting requirements perform about as well as those who do, it does not mean that the requirements are meaningless. Instead, it is more likely that the students admitted are of uniformly high ability and that exceptions were few and the decision to admit exceptions were very well made. Given Rolla's disciplinary concentration and geographic location, it is probably unlikely that Rolla's academic performance measures will be improved significantly.

## UM-St Louis

### Table 1

This was probably a function of urban service and of the fact that the freshman class had lower mean test score and class rank. However, there was a very significant difference in performance between those meeting the requirements (82%) and those not meeting the requirements (64%). In terms of which deficiencies components were associated with poorest performance, it is difficult to reliably identify patterns as the number of students involved is small. That said, mathematics and science deficiencies were probably most significant.

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### ***Caveats***

1. First, this report imposes fall 1997 criteria on fall 1996 students. That is misleading because it is unreasonable to expect applicants to meet future admission standards. While misleading, imposition

# TABLES

**Table 1: Change from 1996 to 1997 in Number and Type of Admission Exceptions**

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	U of Missouri	CBHE
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	U of Missouri	CBHE	
	Fall 1997	Fall 1996	Fall 1997
			

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	U of Missouri	CBHE	
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**Table 2: Retention of Fall 1996 Freshmen**

		U of Missouri's 1997 Policy			CBHE's 1997 Policy								
		Cohort	Returned for 2nd Year		Cohort	Returned for 2nd Year							
University of Missouri - COLUMBIA													
Enrolled first-time, degree-seeking, full-time students		3,573	2,949	83%	3,573	2,949	83%						
Meeting Standard Criteria		1,865	1,635	88%	2,952	2,491	84%						
Exceptions		1,708	1,314	77%	621	458	74%						
Nature of deficiency(ies)													
(a) High school core course(s) only		1,241	967	78%	154	111	72%						
(b) High school percentile rank and ACT only		194	150	77%	428	321	75%						
(c) Both high school core course(s) and HS%/ACT%		273	197	72%	39	26	67%						
(a+c) Total high school core exceptions		1,514	1,164	77%	193	137	71%						
(b+c) Test score and high school percentile rank exceptions		467	347	74%	467	347	74%						
Nature of high school core course(s) deficiency(ies)													
English		50	30	60%	50	30	60%						
TM	1	Fine Arts	4	3	6	62	51	82%	0	62	50	82%	7

**Table 2: Retention of Fall 1996 Freshmen**

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**Table 3: Annual Report on Fall 1997 Exceptions to Current University of Missouri and CBHE Policies**

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	U of Missouri		CBHE	
	Fall 1997	Successful	Fall 1997	Successful
University of Missouri - SYSTEM				
Enrolled first-time, degree-seeking, full-time students	4,999	4,338 87%	4,999	4,338 87%