

Admissions Policy FAQ

How have admissions decisions been made up until now?

Undergraduate admission into a UT System academic institution is usually granted through one of three mechanisms: automatic admission under the state's top 10 percent law; admission by meeting specifications set by the university, usually related to class ranking, grade point average and test scores; or a holistic review process, which includes academic performance as well as other skills, talents and characteristics.

How was the new policy developed?

The policy was crafted using recommendations from a [2014 report from UT System's Office of Academic Affairs](#), the [2015 Kroll Report](#), and the [2015 report from the Blue Ribbon Panel on Admissions](#). All UT System academic presidents had significant input in drafting the policy. This new policy is designed to provide clear guidance to institutions to ensure fairness, transparency and integrity in the admissions process.

How does the new policy address transparency?

The new policy specifically requires institutions to identify the criteria used in the holistic review process and to make the criteria widely available on the institution's web site.

How does the new policy eliminate undue influence?

The policy clearly outlines how third-party inquiries and communications about student applicants are to be handled and requires that presidents, provosts and deans ensure that admission offices are shielded from undue influence. Admissions decisions shall involve collaborative decision-making among multiple, qualified, well-trained parties.

How does the policy clarify what constitutes a viable letter of recommendation?

The policy is clear that any communications that are considered in the admissions process must provide credible input of a substantial nature regarding the applicant's ability or achievements. Simply identifying relationships to an applicant's family or noting a dedication to the university does not constitute a substantive recommendation letter. Such correspondence will not be included in the applicant's file and, if sent to the president's office, will not be forwarded to admissions.

If a president forwards a letter to the admissions office, does that letter hold more weight based on the fact that it was forwarded from the president? What if the correspondence indicates a personal relationship between the letter writer and the president?

Letters of recommendation or any other type of communication will be given the same consideration regardless of whether they are sent directly to the admissions office or are received from outside the standard admissions process, such as being forwarded from a president, provost or dean. A letter of recommendation will be considered based on the information it provides about a prospective student. The policy directs that admissions officials will give no consideration to any relationship the letter writer may have with the president or anyone else at the university. Any communication that goes beyond

substantive information about an applicant and appears to influence or coerce will not be considered and must be reported to the appropriate officials if egregious.

Is it appropriate for a government official to write a letter of recommendation for an applicant?

Anyone with substantive knowledge about a student applicant's abilities or accomplishments, including a government official, is welcome to write a letter of recommendation. To be considered as part of the applicant's admissions file, the letter must provide relevant information about the applicant's skills, academic record or character. Only substantive information about the applicant will be considered.

What if a letter from an influential person, whether a donor, a potential donor or a government official, hints that special treatment is expected?

If a letter insinuates that special treatment is expected, that letter will not become a part of the applicant's file and the institution president will inform the Chancellor and UT System General Counsel if egregious.

Does an institution president have any discretion or decision-making authority in admissions decisions?

Yes. It is the responsibility of the president to operate in the best interest of the institution. On very rare occasions, a president may have cause to admit a *qualified* student who may not have been admitted through the normal process if doing so is of the highest institutional importance.

What is the definition of "very rare"?

It is inappropriate to attempt to identify a specific number because cases in which special admissions might be granted will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must be of highest institutional importance. However, the numbers are expected to be very low and there are likely to be years in which there are none.

If a donor makes a gift to a university, does that increase the odds that his or her letter of recommendation will admit a select student?

No unqualified students will be accepted into the university. Moreover, the university may not consider any type of quid pro quo arrangement through which a gift is promised on the condition that a certain student will be admitted.

If additional consideration is given to a student recommended by that donor, does that mean that another qualified student will be displaced?

No. Example: UT Austin's current enrollment rate is typically about 50 percent of all qualified students who are offered admission. In order to enroll a target of approximately 7,500 new freshmen, the university would plan to offer admission to approximately 15,000 qualified students. Offering admission to 15,001 students or even 15,010 students does not displace anyone who actually accepts admission and enrolls.

What kind of oversight will ensure the policy is upheld?

Presidents will report to the chancellor any special admissions cases and explain the rationale for that admission in the context of very rare situations of highest institutional importance. If the chancellor observes a deviation from the policy, the chancellor will provide a public report to the Board of Regents.

Does this new policy affect litigation in the Fisher Case?

No. The UT System General Counsel does not anticipate any new challenges or complications.