



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND SERVICE COMMITTEE	
Friday, September 8, 2023	Special Meeting
9:00 a.m. (EDT)/8:00 a.m. (CDT)	Virtual/Knoxville, TN

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Remarks of the Chair
- III. [Admissions Policy Proposal \(All Campuses\) – Action](#) Tab 1
- IV. Closing Remarks
- V. Adjournment

Note: Under the Bylaws of the Board, items not stated in the call of a special meeting may not be considered at the meeting.



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Meeting Date: September 8, 2023

Committee: Education, Research, and Service

Item: **Admission Policy Proposal (All Campuses)**

Type: Action

Presenter: Randy Boyd, President

Background

In order to expand access, recruit more of Tennessee's best and brightest students to its campuses, promote greater geographic representation, and further its land grant mission, the University's administration is proposing an enhancement to the admissions policies for each of its undergraduate campuses that would guarantee admission to those Tennessee high school students who meet certain criteria as further described in the attached Admissions Policy Proposal (Exhibit A).

In taking this step, the UT System would join public institutions in at least a dozen other states, including Arizona, Florida, and Texas, which offer guaranteed admissions to eligible students. University admissions officials project that this change would have a positive effect on the number of Tennesseans choosing to apply to and enroll at one of its campuses. If approved, this change would apply to all campuses offering undergraduate admissions and go into effect immediately for the current (Fall 2024) admissions cycle.

Results of the initiative will be reviewed annually with the Board of Trustees and adjustment may be made in future years based on outcomes and effectiveness tied to the university's mission and goals.

The proposed change to admissions policies is supported by the Chancellors at each of the University's campuses.

Committee Action

The Committee Chair will call for a motion to recommend adoption of the following resolution by the Board of Trustees.

[Resolution follows on the next page.]



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Resolved:

The Board of Trustees hereby approves the following:

1. The undergraduate admission policies applicable to each of the University's campuses shall be amended to offer guaranteed admission¹ to all Tennessee high school students who meet any of the following criteria:
 - a. Finish in the top 10%² of their high school's graduating class; or
 - b. Achieve a 4.0³ or higher GPA; or
 - c. Achieve a 3.2³ or higher GPA and have an ACT composite score of 23⁴ or higher (or an SAT score of 1130-1150 or higher).

¹ Students must meet campus application deadlines for guaranteed admission. Guaranteed admission means an offer of undergraduate admission to the University of Tennessee campus to which the applicant has applied (subject to satisfaction of the applicable eligibility requirements). Such an offer does not guarantee acceptance into a particular college, school, department, major, or program.

² Class rank and GPA will be determined based on an applicant's 6th semester transcript (i.e., following the completion of their junior year).

³ UT Knoxville calculates and utilizes a weighted Core GPA based on a student's grades in 16 Core academic subjects. Other campuses may choose to use a student's cumulative high school GPA.

⁴ UT Knoxville will require a minimum ACT subscore of 19 in Math and English.

All applicants, regardless of class rank or GPA, must submit ACT/SAT test scores.

2. This resolution shall be effective immediately, and the foregoing admission requirements shall be applicable to the Fall 2024 class.
3. The proper officers of the University are authorized to take other actions as may be necessary and deemed appropriate to effectuate the changes to the outstanding admission policies to comply with the provisions of this resolution.
4. The President (or his/her designee) is authorized to issue additional guidance to the campuses from time to time, as may be deemed appropriate and approved by the President, to further clarify the intent and applicability of the admission requirements as set forth herein.



Exhibit A

PROPOSAL: UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS

In a bold effort to expand access, recruit more of Tennessee’s best and brightest students to its campuses, promote greater geographic representation, and further its land grant mission, the University of Tennessee (UT) is proposing an enhancement to its admissions policies at each of its undergraduate campuses that would **guarantee admission⁽¹⁾ to all Tennessee high school students who meet any of the following eligibility criteria:**

- Finish in the top 10%⁽²⁾ of their high school’s graduating class; or
- Achieve a 4.0⁽³⁾ or higher GPA; or
- Achieve a 3.2⁽³⁾ or higher GPA and have an ACT composite score of 23⁽⁴⁾ or higher (or an SAT score of 1130-1150 or higher).

Note: All applicants are required to submit ACT/SAT test scores, regardless of class rank or GPA.

In taking this step, the UT System would join public institutions in at least a dozen other states, including Arizona, Florida, and Texas, that offer guaranteed admissions to eligible students.* If approved, this change would apply to all undergraduate campuses and go into effect immediately for the current (Fall 2024) admissions cycle. Results of the initiative will be reviewed annually with the Board of Trustees and adjustment may be made in future years based on outcomes and effectiveness tied to the university’s mission and goals.

STATEWIDE IMPACT

In 2021, 28% of Tennessee’s public high school students who graduated with a 3.75 GPA or higher chose to go out of state for college.† By offering automatic admission to its top high school graduates, prospective students will know earlier in the college selection process that there is a place for them at their state’s top public university system. They will only be an application away from being admitted.

In 2022, Tennessee’s public high schools graduated 64,580 students.† Using this total as a baseline, UT’s new guaranteed admission policy would make upwards of 6,400 prospective students automatically eligible for admission to the university in 2024. During that same year, 15,939 (27.7%) of Tennessee’s high school graduates had an ACT composite score of 23 or higher.†

* Jessica Callahan, “States with Automatic or Guaranteed College Admissions Policies,” Connecticut General Assembly, Office of Legislative Research, March 3, 2021.
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/rpt/pdf/2021-R-0077.pdf>.

† Source: THEC Student Information System (THECSIS)

Research by Lincove and Cortes found that guaranteed admissions programs help to encourage college-ready students from low-income backgrounds to seek out four-year degrees and more rigorous university experiences.[‡] Their study also noted that guaranteed admissions programs can result in increased applications due to reduced information asymmetry and increased transparency about the college admissions process. Outcomes like these could be especially impactful for low-income, academically prepared high school students across Tennessee.

CAMPUS IMPACT

While the university's campuses in Chattanooga, Pulaski, and Martin admit the majority of applicants who meet the above criteria, their offers are not guaranteed. Having a public promise of admission is likely to have a positive effect on applications and the number of enrolled Tennesseans at each campus. A paper by Fletcher and Mayer points to multiple studies that demonstrated how guaranteed admissions policies led to increased applications from students in the top decile of their high schools while also widening the pool of high schools that provide these applicants.[§] In the same paper, Fletcher and Mayer shared that students who were guaranteed admission were also less likely to apply to competitors, including competing private universities.

At the university's flagship campus in Knoxville, enrollment leaders project that such a change could generate a 5-10% increase in applications from in-state students, resulting in an additional 500 admitted Tennesseans and 250 more in-state students who enroll in the Fall of 2024. These positive estimates are supported by the above study by Lincove and Cortes. The authors found that a top 10% eligibility guarantee was associated with a 16-percentage-point increase in the probability of applying to a flagship campus for high-income, highly qualified students and a 22-percentage-point increase for similar low-income students.[‡]

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- (1) *Students must meet campus application deadlines for guaranteed admission. Guaranteed admission means an offer of undergraduate admission to the University of Tennessee campus to which the applicant has applied (subject to satisfaction of the applicable eligibility requirements). Such an offer does not guarantee acceptance into a particular college, school, department, major, or program.*
 - (2) *Class rank and GPA will be determined based on an applicant's 6th semester transcript (i.e., following the completion of their junior year).*
 - (3) *UT Knoxville calculates and utilizes a weighted [Core GPA](#) based on a student's grades in 16 Core academic subjects. Other UT campuses may choose to use other measures, including a student's cumulative high school GPA.*
 - (4) *UT Knoxville will require a minimum ACT subscore of 19 in Math and English.*

[‡] Jane A. Lincove and Kalena E. Cortes, "Match or Mismatch? Automatic Admissions and College Preferences of Low- and High-Income Students," National Bureau of Economic Research, August 2016, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22559>.

[§] Jason Fletcher and Adalbert Mayer, "Tracing the Effects of Guaranteed Admission Through the College Process: Evidence from a Policy Discontinuity in the Texas 10% Plan," National Bureau of Economic Research, January 2013, <http://www.nber.org/paper/w18721>.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

UT CORE WEIGHTED GPA

AUGUST 2023

UT, Knoxville calculates a weighted core GPA for first-year applicants based on grades earned in sixteen core courses. The UT Core GPA calculation is utilized for undergraduate admissions review and merit scholarship eligibility.

UT's weighted core GPA is based on grades earned in the **Core Academic Subjects** listed below. **Completion of all sixteen core courses is not required for admission but strongly encouraged.**

In the core academic subjects, GPA is weighted by UT to reflect academic rigor across honors courses (0.5 quality points added), Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge AS and A Level, International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment courses (1.0 quality points added).

UT calculates GPA on a 4-point scale and uses unweighted high school course grades as the basis of its calculation. If an applicant attends a high school that does not weight courses, UT will also not weight coursework.

UT verifies the UT core weighted GPA to determine final admissions and scholarship eligibility when the final high school transcript is received following confirmation of enrollment.

Core Academic Subjects | Used to Calculate the UT Core Weighted GPA

- 4 English
- 4 Math (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, statistics, or other advanced math)
- 3 Science (biology, chemistry, physics, or other science)
- 1 American history
- 1 European history, world history, or world geography
- 2 Single foreign language (or ASL)
- 1 Visual or performing arts

Please see the State of Tennessee's [Department of Education](#) website for graduation requirements.