

UC's policy concerning SAT II's considered unfair

Some believe that elimination of subject tests discriminates against Asians

by Christine Chang

Common are juniors whose bookshelves house enough SAT subject test books to keep bonfires ablaze for hours and hours. Next year, however, those bookshelves may be empty.

For students looking to pursue an education in the University of California system, the subject exams, also known as SAT II's, are inevitable. But this year's juniors will be the last generation of prospective UC applicants burdened with taking subject exams. In February of this year, the UC Board of Regents modified the admissions policy with hopes that "more qualified students will have the opportunity to be considered for admission to a UC," UC

Academic Senate Chair Mary Croughan said in a press release. A major difference in the new proposal is the elimination of two SAT subject tests required for admission, which are mandatory for all undergraduate students applying before Fall of 2012.

The changes, effective for the class of 2012, have been the source of controversy among high-performing academic students. In the past, SAT subject tests have generally given applicants an unbiased chance to demonstrate their understanding of various subjects. Through the current system, each student's score in respective subjects is computed and factored into the overall admissions decision.

Once the subject test requirements are

dropped, however, the University of California hopes to expand the pool of applicants to include minority groups such as Blacks and Chicano Latinos. "In Proposal for Eligibility Reform", a report issued by the university itself and reviewed by the UC Board of Regents, researched data reveals that Black admissions are expected to increase between 0 percent and 25 percent, Chicano Latinos between 0 percent and 15.8 percent, and Whites between 20.6 percent and 29.4 percent. The only specified ethnicity that is expected to decrease in admissions is Asian Americans: between 11.1 percent and 19.4 percent.

see UC POLICY page 3

UC POLICY: Students in danger of college rejection

continued from page 1

Currently, Asians make up the largest ethnic group throughout the entire chain of UCs, topping the number of Whites at seven of the nine universities. Nonetheless, many see the proposal as a subtle attempt to diversify UCs, thus reducing Asian admissions.

"If you can diversify without having to hurt anyone, then I'm all for it," senior Catherine Shieh said. "But if a group is going to be suppressed into a minority even though they're technically qualified, then that's not right."

According to MVHS's 2008-2009 School Accountability Report, our student body consists of about 71.7 percent Asians. A mere 11.1 percent decrease under the new policy means that approximately 200 of the 1808 Asians from MVHS would hypothetically be denied acceptance.

"They say the new policy will [bring in more minority students], but the numbers are so small, the projection is highly speculative," former UC Associate President Patrick Hayashi said. "I would be very surprised if there was an increase."

Many point out that subject tests help level the playing field and compensate for inflated grades. They provide a set of standards more objective than grades handed out by teachers with varying

expectations. Shieh is worried that under the new policy, GPAs will become a more dominant determining factor. But grades are subject to greater fluctuation than tests which Shieh feels is unfair for students at more academic, such as MVHS.

"The California master plan and UC eligibility criteria have been the single most important factor in setting and maintaining academic standards," Hayashi said. "Under the new policy, thousands will do what is asked of them but no longer be guaranteed the space. Most likely to suffer are the poor students and immigrants because they have a record of doing extremely well on subject tests."

The SAT reasoning test, also known as the SAT I, will then be the only test required under the new policy. According to Hayashi, immigrants and poorer students have made "tremendous progress" over the years through the subject test system. Because the SAT I focuses largely on reading comprehension and writing, Hayashi asserts that students who do not speak English at home tend to score lower. And once subject exams are eliminated, the reasoning test will be the only test involved in the application process.

"This is an equality issue more than anything else," Shieh said. "I think we have to ask the UC admissions officers, 'Are you willing to erase meritocracy for the sake of diversifying a student body?'"

A mere 11.1 percent decrease under the new policy means that approximately 200 of the 1808 Asians from MVHS would hypothetically be denied acceptance.