

## ENROLLING STUDENT-ATHLETES—CLASS ENTERING 2013

### Introduction

The [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#) has the final decision-making authority for all candidates for undergraduate admission to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The admissions office follows policies established by the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina system and by the Board of Trustees of UNC-Chapel Hill. By trustee policy, the admissions office also applies procedures approved by the [Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions](#), a standing faculty committee appointed by the Chancellor.

Trustee policy provides for the admission of students who "give evidence of possessing special talents for University programs requiring such special talents." The Advisory Committee has approved intercollegiate athletics as one such program and has allocated 160 spaces in each year's entering first-year class, on average, for students who will be participating. In addition to these 160 student-athletes, other student-athletes—roughly 50 first-year students per year—are admitted without regard to their talent in athletics. Together, these student-athletes comprise approximately 5 percent of the entering first-year class.

All candidates for undergraduate admission, including all prospective student-athletes, are evaluated comprehensively by the admissions office. The primary criterion for admission is the student's capacity to succeed academically at the University. Beyond this criterion, there is no formula for admission and no fixed standard that every student must meet. Rather, as the Advisory Committee has instructed in its [Statement on the Evaluation of Candidates](#), the Office of Undergraduate Admissions "evaluate[s] individual candidates rigorously, holistically, and sympathetically" and in light of "the ways in which each candidate will likely contribute to the kind of campus community that will enable the University to fulfill its mission." This kind of individualized evaluation requires careful attention to quantitative measures such as test scores, as well as a nuanced understanding, informed by careful research, of what these measures do and do not predict. But it also requires consideration of qualities that cannot be easily measured, including, in the words of the Advisory Committee, "intellect, talent, curiosity, and creativity; leadership, kindness, and courage; honesty, perseverance, perspective, and diversity." Finally, this method of evaluation requires that the admissions office consider "not only the achievements and potential of each applicant," but also "the context within which achievements have been realized and potential forged."

In addition to the individualized, comprehensive, and holistic evaluation afforded to every candidate for admission, a small number of student-athletes may only be offered admission if they are also evaluated and recommended by the [Committee on Special Talent](#), a faculty group established by the Advisory Committee. This committee's [charge, procedures, and membership](#) are published on the Faculty Council website.

### About This Document

This document focuses on the admissions credentials of first-year student-athletes and has been developed at the request of the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, the Office of

Undergraduate Admissions, and the Department of Athletics. In May 2013, the Advisory Committee convened the working group of faculty members and administrators named below. Our group was charged with developing a report on the admission of student-athletes that would foster transparency; protect the privacy of individual students; provide context for campus and national conversations about the academic preparation and success of student-athletes; enable assessment of admissions and other academic processes; disaggregate information meaningfully and fairly; encourage ongoing improvement; and provide leadership.

Our group met periodically through the summer and the 2013-2014 academic year to develop our document and define terms and methodology. We also consulted with the Advisory Committee and with the [Faculty Athletics Committee](#), which is elected by the voting faculty and charged by Faculty Code with “informing the faculty and advising the chancellor on any aspect of athletics, including ... the academic experience of varsity athletes, athletic opportunities for members of the University community, and the general conduct and operation of the University’s athletic program.” We also sought advice from the [Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group](#).

### **Fairness in Reporting**

Through our work together, we have gained a greater appreciation for the part of our charge that calls for fairness, especially towards the students whose admission to the University we are describing. We appreciate the intense interest in athletics, and we want this document to contribute to a reasoned, well-informed, and constructive conversation about the role that athletics can and should play in the broad life of the University. But we also want to treat student-athletes with the care and respect that all students at the University deserve—the same care and respect that we ourselves would hope to be afforded, were we to find ourselves in similar circumstances.

This challenge is further complicated both by the wide range of qualities that the University considers in admissions and by the practical impossibility of summarizing any quality that does not involve a test score or a grade-point average. At best and in combination, scores and grades predict less than a third of the variance in the eventual academic performance of students who enroll at the University. Other factors, including the personal qualities enumerated by the Advisory Committee, account for the rest. Although these personal qualities, unlike test scores and grade-point averages, cannot be quantified or expressed as medians or in percentiles, they are no less real and no less valuable, both for individual students and for the University community more generally. They are also integral to the evaluation of every candidate for admission, including candidates who will be participating in intercollegiate athletics.

In the absence of data about the personal qualities of the students who are enrolling, any statistical summary of those students is at best a partial portrait. When the summary focuses unduly on test scores, the portrait risks becoming a caricature. The makers of the SAT and the ACT encourage colleges and universities to use their tests in conjunction with other quantitative and qualitative factors. In keeping with this advice, the admissions policies of both the UNC system and UNC-Chapel Hill promote flexibility and fairness in the use of test results. In the UNC system, students who do not achieve designated scores on the SAT or ACT may still be offered admission, provided that faculty members are involved in the evaluation of their applications and provided they are approved by their respective chancellors. At UNC-Chapel Hill, the Advisory Committee

has developed [Guidelines for Standardized Testing](#) that instruct the admissions office to consider test scores as “one factor among many.”

Because of the limitations attributed to standardized tests by their own designers, because these tests are “one factor among many” in admissions, and because few of these many other factors can be quantified, we have concluded that detailed disaggregation of test scores would distort as much as it clarified. In keeping with past reports to Faculty Council, we provide results for student-athletes who enrolled through the special-talent policies and procedures described above, as well as those for all first-year student-athletes. But we urge readers not to ascribe to these results more predictive power than they rightfully can claim.

### Importance of Perspective

We also hope readers will maintain a sense of perspective. In our view, it would be neither fair nor constructive to compare student-athletes to other UNC-Chapel Hill students on the few dimensions that can be quantified, and then to conclude, based on this comparison, that the former are somehow unqualified or unprepared. The students we describe in this document were among the most carefully evaluated candidates in their entering class. Even by the rough measure of testing, they compare well academically with undergraduate populations at leading universities nationwide. Among the 33 leading public universities in the Association of American Universities (AAU), the median 25<sup>th</sup> percentile SAT score for all undergraduate student bodies in 2012 was 1100, and the median 75<sup>th</sup>

percentile score was 1340. In comparison, the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile test score for the 201 student-athletes who enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill in 2013 was 1030, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile was 1290.

	Student-Athletes at UNC-Chapel Hill	Student Bodies at 33 AAU Publics
25th %ile	1030	1100
75th %ile	1290	1340

To put this comparison another way: by our estimation, if the 201 enrolling student-athletes comprised their own university, their 25<sup>th</sup> percentile score would equal or exceed those of the entire undergraduate population at six AAU publics, and their 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score would equal or exceed those of the entire population at nine AAU publics. Most of these student-athletes, we believe, would have been competitive candidates for admission at other well-regarded schools. Many—including more than 80 percent of the enrolling football recruits who signed letters of intent last February—were offered scholarships at other top-30 public and private universities.

We recognize that aggregate statistics such as these can be criticized for hiding those students within the group who came to us least prepared. For that reason, our report includes information about the few students who did not meet either the minimum course or the minimum admissions requirements of the UNC system, as well as information about those who were reviewed and recommended by the Committee on Special Talent.

Where possible, we have also included information about how these student-athletes are performing academically through the end of Fall 2013 semester. As readers review this information, we hope they will remember their own first semesters in college.

## Conclusion

The University has acted repeatedly over the last several years to strengthen student-athlete admissions. In 2011, the Committee on Special Talent received a new charge and new operating procedures, and its membership was expanded to include more tenured faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences. In 2012, the Advisory Committee established clearer academic expectations for prospective student-athletes.

The student-athletes described in this document are the first to enroll at the University under these new guidelines. They are better credentialed, in the aggregate, than the students who preceded them. The number of student-athletes requiring faculty review—fourteen—was nine fewer than in 2012 and less than half the number than in 2006. Our admissions expectations for student-athletes have risen and will continue to rise.

We close with one additional thought. Admissions processes are best understood as means towards an end, not ends in themselves. The University's admissions processes, including those that involve student-athletes, are not intended to maximize the credentials that students present upon admission. Rather, they are designed to identify and enroll students who will succeed both academically and personally, contribute to the experience of their classmates, and help the University achieve its broad mission. Although we were charged with reporting admissions statistics, and although we have done our best to fulfill that charge, we believe those statistics matter less than the eventual achievements and experiences of the students whom our report imperfectly describes.

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## FACTS ABOUT ENROLLING STUDENT-ATHLETES—CLASS ENTERING 2013

- The first-year class that enrolled in 2013 included 201 student-athletes.
  - The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile high-school GPA for these 201 students was 3.37, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile was 4.28.
  - The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile test score was 1030. Among the 33 leading public universities in the American Association of Universities (AAU), the median 25<sup>th</sup> percentile SAT score for all undergraduate student bodies in 2012 was 1100.
  - The 75<sup>th</sup> percentile test score was 1290. Among the 33 AAU public universities, the median 75<sup>th</sup> percentile SAT score for all undergraduate student bodies in 2012 was 1340.
  - Through the end of Fall 2013 semester, the median UNC-Chapel Hill grade-point average for these 201 students was 2.9.
- In regard to UNC-system requirements:
  - All 201 student-athletes met the testing component of the minimum admissions requirements (MAR).
  - 198 of the 201 met the high-school grade-point average component of MAR.
  - 200 of the 201 met minimum course requirements (MCR).
- 154 of these first-year student-athletes were admitted under special-talent policies and procedures approved by the Board of Trustees of UNC-Chapel Hill and the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, a standing faculty committee appointed by the Chancellor.
  - The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile high-school GPA for these 154 students was 3.18, and the 75<sup>th</sup> was 4.00.
  - The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile test score was 990, and the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile score was 1180.
  - Through the end of Fall 2013 semester, the median UNC-Chapel Hill grade-point average for these 154 students was 2.8.
- Fourteen student-athletes required review by the Committee on Special Talent.
  - Nine of these fourteen students were recruited to participate in “revenue” sports, which the University, following UNC-system guidelines, defines as football, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball.
  - The fourteen students requiring faculty review are the lowest number on record—down from 23 in each of the last two entering classes and down from 29 in 2006.
  - Through the end of Fall 2013 semester, the median UNC-Chapel Hill grade-point average for these fourteen students was 2.5.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Who makes decisions regarding the admission of student-athletes?**

The [Office of Undergraduate Admissions](#) has the final decision-making authority for all candidates for undergraduate admission to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **What are the criteria for admission?**

All candidates for undergraduate admission, including all prospective student-athletes, are evaluated comprehensively and individually. The primary criterion for admission is the student's capacity to succeed academically at UNC-Chapel Hill. Beyond this criterion, there is no formula for admission and no fixed standard that every student must meet. Rather, as the Advisory Committee has instructed in its [Statement on the Evaluation of Candidates](#), the admissions office "evaluate[s] individual candidates rigorously, holistically, and sympathetically" and in light of "the ways in which each candidate will likely contribute to the kind of campus community that will enable the University to fulfill its mission."

### **Why are you reporting admissions data for student-athletes?**

For many years the Office of Undergraduate Admissions has provided annual reports to Faculty Council about first-year and transfer admissions, including student-athlete admissions. This report aims to build on that reporting tradition, and has been developed at the specific request of the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, and the Department of Athletics. The University faculty members and administrators named in the introduction are responsible for the framework for the report; the data have been validated by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Our goals for the report are to foster transparency; protect the privacy of individual students; provide context for campus and national conversations about the academic preparation and success of student-athletes; enable assessment of admissions and other academic processes; disaggregate information meaningfully and fairly; encourage ongoing improvement; and provide leadership.

### **Has the admissions process for student-athletes changed?**

The University has worked intensely to improve the assessment of prospective student-athletes. In 2011, the Advisory Committee approved a formal change and new guidelines for the Committee on Special Talent and expanded the committee's membership to include more tenured faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences. In 2012, the Advisory Committee established clearer academic expectations for prospective student-athletes. The students described in this document are the first to enter the University under these new guidelines.

### **Why do you publish statistics for "special-talent" student-athletes?**

Both University policy and guidelines established by the faculty through the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions provide for the admission of students with special talent in athlet-

ics, music, and dramatic art. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions has for many years reported annually on the admission of these students. The current report builds upon that tradition.

### **Why don't you publish statistics for each individual sport?**

We considered publishing statistics for each individual sport but were concerned that doing so would compromise the privacy of individual students, given the small number of students recruited by some of the sports each year. Readers interested in statistics for the three "revenue" sports—which the UNC system defines as football, men's basketball, and women's basketball—may find them in the annual report on intercollegiate athletics received by the Board of Governors; as an example, please see the [2012-2013 report](#).

### **Why doesn't this report include more information about the academic performance of student-athletes once they've enrolled at the University?**

Our group was charged with developing a framework for reporting data on admissions, not academic performance. We have included limited information about performance for students through Fall 2013 semester.

Other information about the academic performance and graduation rates of student-athletes is publicly available on the NCAA website ([NCAA Reports of Academic Performance](#)). The Atlantic Coast Conference also regularly produces reports of student-athletes who earn honor roll distinction ([ACC Honor Roll](#)). The annual report on athletics to the Board of Governors of the university system also includes data on academic performance at each of the sixteen constituent universities, including UNC-Chapel Hill ([2012-2013 report](#)).

### **How were admissions expectations for student-athletes established?**

The primary criterion for admission for all students, including all student-athletes, is the student's capacity to succeed academically at the University. Specific admissions expectations for student-athletes are informed by close attention to the actual academic performance of student-athletes while enrolled at UNC-Chapel Hill. In keeping with guidelines established by the Advisory Committee for all candidates for undergraduate admission, the admissions office evaluates each prospective student-athlete individually and considers both quantitative and qualitative factors in its evaluation.

### **How are standardized tests used in admissions?**

The makers of the SAT and the ACT encourage colleges and universities to use their tests in conjunction with other quantitative and qualitative factors. In keeping with this advice, the admissions policies of both the UNC system and UNC-Chapel Hill promote flexibility and fairness in the use of test results. In the UNC system, students who do not achieve designated scores on the SAT or ACT may still be offered admission, provided that faculty members are involved in the evaluation of their applications and provided they are approved by their respective chancellors. At UNC-Chapel Hill, the Advisory Committee has developed [Guidelines for Standardized Testing](#) that instruct the admissions office to consider test scores as "one factor among many."

**Why do you report data about test scores using the SAT scale for Critical Reading and Math scores combined?**

Test scores are reported on the SAT scale for Critical Reading and Math scores combined so that the test score of every student is reported on a uniform scale. ACT composite scores are converted to the SAT scale for Critical Reading and Math using the [standard concordance table](#) approved by the College Board and ACT.

**Isn't it true that all of the students who require review by the Committee on Special Talent are recruited by the revenue sports?**

Nine of the fourteen students who required faculty review were recruited by revenue sports as defined by the UNC system: football, men's basketball, and women's basketball. The other five students were recruited by five different non-revenue sports.

**How can we compare the credentials of UNC student-athletes to the credentials of student-athletes at other universities?**

We doubt that such a comparison is possible. Few universities publish data about student-athlete admissions. Even when universities do publish such data, they may define the population of student-athletes differently from the way that this report defines the population, or they may use different methods for calculating test scores and grade-point averages.

The Board of Governors of the North Carolina public university system publishes information annually about the academic credentials and performance of student-athletes at each of its sixteen constituent universities. This information cannot be compared directly to the data contained in the current report, since the two reports use different data and different data definitions.

**Where may I read more about the University's admissions policies and practices, including those that pertain to student-athletes?**

More information about the University's admissions policies and practices can be found on the Undergraduate Admissions website ([Policies and Reports](#)). Information about policies and practices that pertain to students with special talent can be found in the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#).



## KEY TERMS

The data summarized in this report have been validated by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the [Office of Institutional Research and Assessment](#) using the definitions and methods described below. In keeping with University policy and practice, and in order to protect the privacy and other rights of individual students, this report does not include aggregate educational data, including admissions credentials, for groups with five or fewer students.

**Enrolling.** Enrolled in the University as of the official census date, which for Spring and Fall semesters is the 10<sup>th</sup> day of class.

**Class entering 2013.** First-year students who enrolled for the first time at the University during any 2013 term: Spring, Summer I, Summer II, or Fall.

**All student-athletes.** The entire population of student-athletes in the first-year class. This group includes special-talent student-athletes (defined below) and other first-year student athletes who (a) were admitted and enrolled at the University without regard for their special talent in athletics and (b) appeared on the official Fall 2013 squad lists of the athletics department.

**Special-talent student-athletes.** All first-year student-athletes who enrolled at the University through the special-talent policies and procedures approved by the Board of Governors, the Board of Trustees, the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, and/or the faculty Committee on Special Talent.

**High-school GPA.** High-school grade-point average as reported by the student's high school. The results only include official GPAs reported by the student's high school, and only when the school reports GPAs on a 4.0 scale; no estimated GPAs are included. To maintain the integrity of admissions data, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions does not estimate GPAs when high schools do not provide them, and it does not recalculate GPAs when high schools provide them on anything other than a 4.0 scale. For 2013, 78 percent of special-talent student-athletes attended high schools that reported official GPAs on a 4.0 scale.

**25<sup>th</sup> percentile.** The value below which 25 percent of all the values in the group fall.

**75<sup>th</sup> percentile.** The value below which 75 percent of all the values in the group fall.

**Median.** The value at the midpoint of the group.

**Test score.** Highest official score earned by each student on either the SAT (Critical Reading and Math combined) or the ACT Composite, with the ACT Composite converted to the SAT Critical Reading and Math scale using the [standard concordance table](#) approved by the College Board and ACT. This method of summarizing test scores best represents the way that scores are used by the University. Under [guidelines for standardized testing](#) approved by the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions, when any candidate for admission submits results from both the SAT and the ACT, the University considers the test with the stronger results.

**Minimum course requirements (MCR).** The [minimum course requirements](#) for all undergraduate candidates established by the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina system. These requirements include four courses in English; two courses in a language other than English; four courses in mathematics, including one course for which Algebra 2 is a prerequisite; three

years of natural science, including one course in life or biological science, one course in physical science, and at least one course with a laboratory component; two courses in social science, including one course in United States history; and one additional course selected from any of these five core academic areas. Under UNC-system and UNC-Chapel Hill policy, students who do not meet MCR may be offered admission only after being reviewed and approved by the faculty Committee on Special Talent, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and the Chancellor.

**Minimum admissions requirements (MAR).** The [minimum admissions requirements](#) (MAR) for all undergraduate candidates established by the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina system. The current minimum requirements—which increased for students enrolling in 2013—include a HS GPA of 2.5 and a score of 800 on the SAT (Critical Reading and Math Combined) or 17 on the ACT. Under UNC-system and UNC-Chapel Hill policy, students who do not meet MAR may be offered admission only after being reviewed and approved by the faculty Committee on Special Talent, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and the Chancellor.

**Require review by the Committee on Special Talent.** In Fall 2012, the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions approved a framework for the admission of first-year special-talent students that categorized such students in three groups based largely upon their predicted first-year grade-point average (PGPA). Students with PGPA's below 2.3, students who do not meet MAR or MCR, and students who require review for possible violations of community standards may only be offered admission if they are first reviewed and recommended by the Committee on Special Talent. The new framework took effect for students enrolling in 2013; to enable comparisons over time, this same framework has been applied retrospectively to previous classes. Of the fourteen students requiring review in 2013, none required review for possible breaches of community standards.

**PGPA.** Predicted first-year grade-point average at UNC-Chapel Hill, calculated for each student-athlete based on the student's test score and NCAA core grade-point average and the athletics program (men's or women's) that the student will be joining. The PGPA formula, developed by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and the [Odum Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill](#), is based on the actual first-year performance of UNC-Chapel Hill special-talent student-athletes and explains approximately 30 percent of the variance in their first-year GPAs. The formula will be revised periodically as new cohorts enter the University and complete their first year.

**NCAA core grade-point average.** Grade-point average calculated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the governing body of intercollegiate athletics, based on student-athlete performance in core academic courses (see [NCAA Guidelines](#)). Because the NCAA core GPA is calculated on a standard 4.0 scale and is available for every student-athlete, the NCAA core GPA is used in the calculation of PGPA. High-school grade-point-average is used for reporting purposes to maintain consistency with data reported for all entering first-year students.