

AGENDA ITEM: Action

Title: Change in Mesa State College Admissions Standards for Entering, First-time Students

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Board of Trustees approve higher admissions standards for Mesa State baccalaureate-seeking freshmen, beginning with students seeking admission in summer/fall 2007, by: 1) raising the admissions index to 85; 2) offering provisional admission to students with an index of 75 – 84; and 3) admitting students, with an index of less than 75, to MSC's Western Colorado Community College.

Background:

Admission to Colorado Colleges and Universities

Admission to Colorado's public four-year colleges and universities is defined in large part by an admission index for entering freshmen. The freshmen index is a calculated measure combining a student's performance on a standardized test (e.g., ACT, SAT) and his/her high school grade point average (GPA) or class rank. There is nearly even weighting given to each of the two components; higher performance by a student on these components results in a higher admissions index. Based on an institution's statutory role and mission, CCHE established a tiered structure that assigns a minimum freshmen index to each college or university (Table 1), with higher indices associated with more selective institutions.

Table 1. CCHE Freshmen Admissions Index* for Colorado Public Four-Year Colleges and Universities, Fall 2005

Governing Board/Institution	Selectivity Category	Freshmen Index
Colorado School of Mines	Highly Selective	110
University of Colorado		
CU – Boulder	Selective	103
CU – Colorado Springs	Selective	92
CU – Denver/HSC	Selective	93
Colorado State University		
CSU – Fort Collins	Selective	101
CSU – Pueblo	Moderately Selective	86
University of Northern Colorado	Selective	94
Adams State College	Moderately Selective	80
Fort Lewis College**	Selective	80
Mesa State College	Moderately Selective	80
Metropolitan State College of Denver*	Modified Open	76
Western State College	Moderately Selective	80

*Index applies only to applicants pursuing four-year programs at all institutions. At MSCD, the admissions index applies only to applicants who are 19 years of age and younger

**FLC's index will increase to 86 in fall 2006 and to 92 in fall 2008 and become a 'selective' institution.

To allow some flexibility, each baccalaureate institution may admit up to 20% of its applicants having an index below that specified in CCHE policy, a concept often referred to as the “admissions window.”

The freshmen admissions index does not apply to community colleges. With the creation of its community college division, Mesa State has an opportunity to clarify several pathways for students wishing to access higher education at the college and enhance the likelihood of student success at each entry point. The challenge is to identify the best placement for students at the time of admission. More specifically, what are the minimal criteria to be admitted into the baccalaureate division which best predict success? This agenda item requests that the Mesa State College Board of Trustees raise the admission standards for students admitted to four-year programs for academic year 2006 – 2007. Admission of transfer students to baccalaureate institutions is a separate calculation based on a GPA calculation from the prior institution. No change is requested for transfer applicants.

Analysis of Mesa State Entering Students

Admission of first-time freshmen to Mesa State College currently requires a student, who intends to pursue a baccalaureate degree to have a minimum admissions index of 80, unless admitted through the window. Table 2 presents the distribution of index scores for Mesa State’s past eight entering first-time classes, the admissions index averages for the entire cohort, and that segment of the cohort that graduated during the previous year (i.e., recent high school graduates). The first four cohorts reflect a very limited use of the window (i.e., index of 80 or less) whereas the four most recent classes had 7 – 10% as window admits. On the high end, six of the eight cohorts have had more than 20% of the cohort in the 110 or higher index category. It should be noted that, beginning in fall 2004, the CCHE index was updated and resulted in centering scores upward by approximately five points (e.g., the former range of 80 – 84 now equates to 85 – 89, etc. using the newer index recentering).

As one might expect, students with higher index scores generally have a greater likelihood of being more successful academically. Currently, 54% of baccalaureate-seeking students meeting Mesa State’s minimum index of 80 require some remediation, thereby slowing their academic progress. Analysis by several measures indicates this to be the case. Table 3 documents first- through third-year retention rates for seven cohorts, followed by graduation rates for four cohorts in Table 4. While there is no definitive breakpoint, the tables clearly reflect differences in students’ on-going progress toward completion of a baccalaureate degree when they are admitted with an index of 90 or higher. Further evidence of differences in student success related to the admissions index is found in Table 5. First semester grade point averages for seven entering classes are summarized, and again, an index of 90+ marks a shift to higher academic performance in five of the cohorts.

CCHE Higher Education Admission Requirements

In October 2003, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education adopted a pre-collegiate curriculum that students applying for admission to a Colorado public four-year institution are expected to meet. Implementation of the statewide Higher Education Admission Requirements (HEAR) begins in 2008 with a 15-unit curriculum, followed in 2010 by an increase to an 18-unit requirement. These requirements are shown in Table 6.

Table 2. ADMISSIONS INDEX DISTRIBUTION FOR ENTERING, FIRST-YEAR MESA STATE STUDENTS SEEKING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE, FALL 1998 - PRELIMINARY 2005

Index Category	Fall 1998		Fall 1999		Fall 2000		Fall 2001	
	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort
Less than 80	21	3.4	19	3.2	11	1.7	5	0.9
80 - 84	79	12.8	76	12.9	71	11.2	92	16.3
85 - 89	98	15.9	85	14.4	93	14.6	75	13.3
90 - 94	87	14.1	85	14.4	94	14.8	92	16.3
95 - 99	82	13.3	74	12.5	94	14.8	68	12.0
100 - 109	123	19.9	146	24.7	147	23.1	119	21.1
110 and Higher	128	20.7	106	17.9	125	19.7	114	20.2
Total	618	100.0	591	100.0	635	100.0	565	100.0
Average Index					98.4		97.6	
Recent High School Graduate Average Index					100.6		100.3	

(cont.)

Index Category	Fall 2002		Fall 2003		Fall 2004*		Prelim. Fall 2005*	
	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	# in Cohort	% of Cohort
Less than 80	46	7.1	72	10.7	50	6.8	87	10.1
80 - 84	95	14.6	89	13.2	92	12.5	118	13.6
85 - 89	93	14.3	110	16.4	84	11.4	117	13.5
90 - 94	81	12.4	96	14.3	97	13.1	109	12.6
95 - 99	76	11.7	89	13.2	97	13.1	117	13.5
100 - 109	135	20.7	114	17.0	130	17.6	136	15.7
110 and Higher	126	19.3	102	15.2	188	25.5	181	20.9
Total	652	100.0	672	100.0	738	100.0	865	100.0
Average Index	97.1		95.4		98.9		96.5	
Recent High School Graduate Average Index	96.7		95.9		94.3		96.9	

*Based on updated CCHE index

Table 3. RETENTION RATES FOR MSC FIRST-TIME, BACCALAUREATE-SEEKING STUDENTS

Cohort Entering in --	Index Category	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	Percent Retained After --		
				1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Fall 1998	Less than 80	21	3.4	52.4	38.1	28.6
	80 - 84	79	12.8	51.9	35.4	34.2
	85 - 89	98	15.9	60.2	37.8	31.6
	90 - 94	87	14.1	57.5	44.8	32.2
	95 - 99	82	13.3	62.2	47.6	41.5
	100 - 109	123	19.9	60.2	49.6	43.1
	110 and Higher	128	20.7	75.0	59.4	56.3
	Total	618	100.0	61.8	46.6	40.6
Fall 1999	Less than 80	19	3.2	47.4	31.6	26.3
	80 - 84	76	12.9	47.4	31.6	26.3
	85 - 89	85	14.4	48.2	32.9	31.8
	90 - 94	85	14.4	54.1	32.9	34.1
	95 - 99	74	12.5	56.8	47.3	44.6
	100 - 109	146	24.7	63.0	50.7	43.8
	110 and Higher	106	17.9	73.6	63.2	54.7
	Total	591	100.0	58.2	44.3	39.9
Fall 2000	Less than 80	11	1.7	36.4	18.2	0.0
	80 - 84	71	11.2	42.3	33.8	26.8
	85 - 89	93	14.6	53.8	41.9	32.3
	90 - 94	94	14.8	56.4	42.6	43.6
	95 - 99	94	14.8	54.3	48.9	39.4
	100 - 109	147	23.1	69.4	56.5	52.4
	110 and Higher	125	19.7	78.4	65.6	63.2
	Total	635	100.0	61.1	49.8	44.6
Fall 2001	Less than 80	5	0.9	40.0	40.0	20.0
	80 - 84	92	16.3	50.0	33.7	30.4
	85 - 89	75	13.3	58.7	44.0	37.3
	90 - 94	92	16.3	56.5	47.8	35.9
	95 - 99	68	12.0	64.7	47.1	42.6
	100 - 109	119	21.1	67.2	63.9	52.9
	110 and Higher	114	20.2	69.3	64.9	61.4
	Total	565	100.0	61.4	51.7	44.6
Fall 2002	Less than 80	46	7.1	39.1	30.4	23.9
	80 - 84	95	14.6	35.8	34.7	28.4
	85 - 89	93	14.3	58.1	34.4	29.0
	90 - 94	81	12.4	56.8	53.1	37.0
	95 - 99	76	11.7	65.8	51.3	43.4
	100 - 109	135	20.7	71.1	52.6	43.7
	110 and Higher	126	19.3	77.8	67.5	63.5
	Total	652	100.0	60.7	48.6	41.0
Fall 2003	Less than 80	72	10.7	47.2	29.2	
	80 - 84	89	13.2	43.8	39.3	
	85 - 89	110	16.4	47.3	26.4	
	90 - 94	96	14.3	65.6	50.0	
	95 - 99	89	13.2	69.7	51.7	
	100 - 109	114	17.0	61.4	57.9	
	110 and Higher	102	15.2	72.5	57.8	
	Total	672	100.0	58.6	45.2	
Fall 2004	Less than 80	50	6.8	22.0		
	80 - 84	92	12.5	50.0		
	85 - 89	84	11.4	45.2		
	90 - 94	97	13.1	48.5		
	95 - 99	97	13.1	55.7		
	100 - 109	130	17.6	61.5		
	110 and Higher	188	25.5	76.6		
	Total	738	100.0	56.9		

Note: Students who have transferred to another institution are not reported after initial entering year.

Table 4. GRADUATION AND SUCCESS* RATES FOR MSC FIRST-TIME, BACCALAUREATE-SEEKING STUDENTS

Cohort Entering in --	Index Category	# in Cohort	% of Cohort	Cumulative % Grad After --			6 Yr Success Rate*	
				4 Years	5 Years	6 Years	% Enrolled	% Success*
Fall 1998	Less than 80	21	3.4	9.5	19.0	23.8	4.8	28.6
	80 - 84	79	12.8	6.3	17.7	20.3	10.1	30.4
	85 - 89	98	15.9	5.1	19.4	20.4	7.1	27.6
	90 - 94	87	14.1	9.2	14.9	18.4	10.3	28.7
	95 - 99	82	13.3	11.0	34.1	34.1	2.4	36.6
	100 - 109	123	19.9	17.1	34.1	31.7	2.4	34.1
	110 and Higher	128	20.7	28.9	46.1	53.1	1.6	54.7
	Total	618	100.0	14.1	29.0	31.1	5.2	36.2
Fall 1999	Less than 80	19	3.2	0.0	10.5	15.8	5.3	21.1
	80 - 84	76	12.9	5.3	9.2	14.5	7.9	22.4
	85 - 89	85	14.4	1.2	7.1	18.8	4.7	23.5
	90 - 94	85	14.4	5.9	12.9	17.6	11.8	29.4
	95 - 99	74	12.5	8.1	24.3	32.4	8.1	40.5
	100 - 109	146	24.7	10.3	25.3	33.6	6.2	39.7
	110 and Higher	106	17.9	17.0	36.8	48.1	5.7	53.8
	Total	591	100.0	8.3	20.3	28.6	7.1	35.7
Fall 2000	Less than 80	11	1.7	0.0	0.0			
	80 - 84	71	11.2	0.0	11.3			
	85 - 89	93	14.6	3.2	17.2			
	90 - 94	94	14.8	4.3	19.1			
	95 - 99	94	14.8	10.6	27.7			
	100 - 109	147	23.1	11.6	33.3			
	110 and Higher	125	19.7	25.6	46.4			
	Total	635	100.0	10.4	27.6			
Fall 2001	Less than 80	5	0.9	0.0				
	80 - 84	92	16.3	6.5				
	85 - 89	75	13.3	10.7				
	90 - 94	92	16.3	7.6				
	95 - 99	68	12.0	8.8				
	100 - 109	119	21.1	21.0				
	110 and Higher	114	20.2	28.9				
	Total	565	100.0	15.0				

*Success rate is defined as percent of original cohort that has either graduated or continues to be enrolled the following fall semester at Mesa State.

Note: Students who have transferred to another institution are not reported after initial entering year.

Table 5. FIRST SEMESTER GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR ENTERING FIRST-YEAR MSC STUDENTS SEEKING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE, FALL 1998 - 2004

Index Category	Fall 1998		Fall 1999		Fall 2000		Fall 2001	
	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA
Less than 80	21	1.77	19	1.58	11	2.31	5	2.49
80 - 84	79	1.93	76	1.76	71	1.71	92	2.02
85 - 89	98	2.09	85	2.22	93	2.15	75	2.32
90 - 94	87	2.24	85	2.20	94	2.10	92	2.43
95 - 99	82	2.43	74	2.49	94	2.33	68	2.68
100 - 109	123	2.86	146	2.79	147	2.75	119	2.86
110 and Higher	128	3.15	106	3.14	125	3.41	114	3.31
Total	618	2.50	591	2.48	635	2.51	565	2.65

(cont.)

Index Category	Fall 2002		Fall 2003		Fall 2004	
	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA	# in Cohort	Avg. GPA
Less than 80	46	2.01	72	1.89	50	1.32
80 - 84	95	1.68	89	1.69	92	1.70
85 - 89	93	1.99	110	1.93	84	1.90
90 - 94	81	2.27	96	2.37	97	2.03
95 - 99	76	2.55	89	2.45	97	2.27
100 - 109	135	2.88	114	2.84	130	2.38
110 and Higher	126	3.37	102	3.30	188	3.24
Total	652	2.50	672	2.39	738	2.33

Note: As of Nov 14, 2005, 1,336 first-time students entered in summer/fall 2005; 23 were non-degree-seeking; 310 were seeking an AA/AS, 79 an AAS; and 44 a technical certificate; 15 were not eligible for freshmen standards. Thus, 865 were baccalaureate-seeking.

Table 6. CCHE Higher Education Admissions Requirements (HEAR)

Implementation	English Units	Math Units	Natural Science Units	Social Science Units	Other
For spring 2008 – 2009 high school graduates	4	3 (algebra I and higher)	3 (two of which must be lab-based)	3	2 units academic electives
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For spring 2010 and later high school graduates	4	4 (algebra I and higher)	3 (two of which must be lab-based)	3	2 units foreign language; 2 units academic electives

Note 1: Academic electives include additional courses from core area as well as foreign languages (2 units must be from the same language), computer science, art, music, journalism, drama, honors, advanced placement, and international baccalaureate courses.

Note 2: An academic unit, often referred to as a Carnegie unit, is equivalent to one full year of credit in a specific subject.

A college or university may admit students not meeting HEAR but must do so as a window admit. The requirements do not apply to concurrently enrolled high school students until the students are formally admitted to a four-year institution, and students seeking a certificate or two-year degree program at a four-year institution also are exempt from the curricular expectations.

Because implementation of these requirements will occur in two years, the potential impact of this course completion should be considered by the Trustees as part of their on-going discussion of admissions standards for 2008 and beyond. Table 7 presents the frequencies of students completing HEAR in high school and their accompanying admissions index range for Mesa State students enrolling for the first-time this summer or fall.

Proposed Admissions Standards for First-time Entering Undergraduates

To develop a recommendation on admissions standards, staff initially reviewed the review process used by the college. For students not meeting the minimum index of 80, the college currently does one of the following: 1) admits the student as a window admit; 2) enrolls the student in a two-year academic program from which s/he may transfer later into a baccalaureate program; 3) redirects the student to a vocational or technical program; or 4) denies the student admission. With the establishment of Mesa State's community college division, it now becomes the entry point for students previously falling in options 2, 3 and 4 above.

For academically-prepared students who meet or exceed the admissions index, granting regular admission to those pursuing a baccalaureate degree is obvious. The question then is one of defining the appropriate minimum index for regular admission. This index then sets the floor, or lowest index score for provisional admission through the window. According to CCHE policy, Mesa State, like other institutions, may admit no more than 1% of its applicants who have an index that is more than ten points below its lowest admissions window index. Research shows, however, that the students who are more than 10 points below the admissions index would be better served by redirecting them to the community college division rather than admitting them through the window into the baccalaureate division.

In addition to the data presented in Tables 3 - 5, the role that completion of CCHE's Higher Education Admissions Requirements has on the admissions index was evaluated. As the 2008 implementation date nears, more high school students are completing the curriculum, and Mesa State has begun analysis of the relationship of the pre-collegiate core to the admissions index. Preliminary findings, based on this fall's entering freshmen class, indicate that completion of the 2008 core with grades of C or higher produces a predicted admissions index of 96.5 (Table 8). For students with one unit missing in each of the curriculum areas, the predicted index is 84.5. Approximately 5.7% of Mesa State's current first-year students, who graduated from high school last year, entered Mesa State with 9 or fewer academic units (excluding electives) with a passing grade (based on data in Table 6). Further, students completing more of the pre-collegiate curriculum achieved a higher admissions index.

Table 7. RELATIONSHIP OF ADMISSION INDEX TO CCHE HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING FIRST-TIME MESA STATE STUDENTS SEEKING A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE, PRELIMINARY SUMMER/FALL 2005

Units of CCHE Higher Education Admissions Requirements Completed in High School	Headcount						
	Less than 80 Index	80-84 Index	85-89 Index	90-94 Index	95-99 Index	100-109 Index	110 + Index
3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
6	2	3	0	1	0	0	0
7	2	2	0	0	1	0	0
8	1	1	3	0	0	0	0
9	4	6	7	2	0	1	0
10	12	13	5	5	0	1	0
11	7	14	10	7	4	1	0
12	8	20	16	12	2	9	4
13	5	12	14	14	18	11	2
14	6	10	10	19	19	25	19
15	0	5	10	14	27	27	32
16	1	0	4	6	9	17	23
17	1	1	1	4	5	12	23
18	0	0	2	2	4	5	17
19	1	0	0	0	3	3	9
20	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
22	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	50	88	82	86	92	113	135

Date: Nov. 29, 2005; N = 646 recent high school graduates

Table 8. PREDICTED ADMISSIONS INDEX FOR ENTERING FIRST-TIME MESA STATE STUDENTS BASED ON COMPLETION OF COLORADO'S HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Curriculum	Units Comprising CO Higher Education Admissions Requirements	If 3 Units Completed in Four Core Curricular Areas	If 1 Unit Missing in Each of Four Core Curricular Areas
Mathematics	3	3	2
English	4	3	3
Natural Science	3	3	2
Social Science	3	3	2
Unit Subtotal	13	12	9
Electives*	2	2	2
Unit Total	15	14	11
Predicted Adm Index	96.5	93.7	84.5

*Not included in predicted index calculations

A third consideration was the perceived impact of a higher index on the college's applicant pool. Analysis of the data on student performance in Tables 3 – 6 and 7 suggests that a move to an admissions index in the range of 90 – 94 would be desirable. To raise the index 10+ points in a single increase, however, might be too aggressive and cause possible unintended consequences, including disruption of the college's enrollments. To avoid that possibility, a more conservative recommendation is preferable at the present time.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommended changes to Mesa State's admissions standards for entering freshmen are to:

- Increase the index to 85 for regular admission to the college's baccalaureate division, beginning with students seeking admission in summer/fall 2007;
- Offer provisional admission to students admitted to the baccalaureate division through the window with an index of 75 – 84. Provisionally-admitted students will enroll for no more than 12 credit hours per semester, be advised before registering (including the need to satisfy all remedial requirements in the first 24 hours, and enroll only in lower division courses). Once the student completes 24 hours and with 2.0 GPA or higher, the student then may declare a major in a baccalaureate program. If unsuccessful, the student will be placed on academic probation, which is consistent with current policy, and advised to enroll in a program in the community college division.
- Admit students with an index below 75 to Western Colorado Community College.

Once the on-going progress of students' meeting the HEAR can be assessed again next year, it is likely that the Trustees will be asked to consider raising the admissions index to the low 90s for students applying for admission to the baccalaureate division in summer/fall 2008.

Admission Standards for Undergraduate Transfer Students

CCHE's admissions policy specifies transfer standards, including those for students moving from two-year to four-year programs within an institution. Students transferring with 12 or fewer college-level semester credit hours are expected to meet the same criteria as entering freshmen. Students transferring with more than 12 college-level semester credit hours must have earned a 2.3 GPA or be admitted through the transfer window.

Beginning in 2008, transfer applicants with fewer than 30 college-level semester credit hours and students transferring within the same institution must also demonstrate academic preparation comparable to HEAR to meet the transfer standard if they graduate from high school in spring 2008 or later. Such preparation can be demonstrated by completing the pre-collegiate curriculum in high school and/or by successfully completing (with a grade of C- or higher) a college-level course in each core area (English, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences) where the high school unit requirements have not been fulfilled.

Unlike the admission standards for first-time entering freshmen seeking admission to the baccalaureate division, no change is anticipated for transfer applicants.

Approved by the MSC Board of Trustees December 2005