To the UC Regents, UCOP, Academic Senate leadership, and the people of California:

We write as University of California mathematics faculty, joined by faculty from other STEM disciplines. UC has long served students from every background and has been a powerful engine of social mobility for the people of California. That public trust must be protected for future generations. Today, UC's mission is at risk. To preserve that mission:

We call for the reinstatement of the SAT/ACT mathematics requirement for applicants to STEM majors beginning with the 2027 admissions cycle, alongside STEM faculty oversight of readiness standards and admissions practices affecting those majors.

Over the past five years, we have seen a widening divergence in mathematical preparation levels within the same classroom. This trend indicates that current admissions practices do not provide a sufficiently reliable check on mathematical readiness for STEM majors. The UC San Diego Senate–Administration Workgroup on Admissions report documents this crisis in stark terms: in the last five years, the number of students whose mathematics skills fall below high school level increased nearly thirtyfold; moreover, 70% of those students fall below middle school levels, reaching roughly one in twelve members of the entering cohort. These findings are corroborated by data across our campuses. For example, for three consecutive years, 20-30% of UC Berkeley first-semester calculus students who participated in mathematical diagnostic testing displayed severe preparation deficits.

Basic mathematical fluency is analogous to literacy; without it, success in university-level STEM becomes structurally unattainable for students. We now observe preparation gaps so severe that instructors must reteach middle-school mathematics while simultaneously teaching the material students need for sciences, engineering, economics, and other quantitatively demanding fields. UC has been a national leader in supporting under-resourced students to do well in mathematics. However, UC has finite resources and can help only so many students, and only when the preparation deficits they need to overcome are within reach.

Furthermore, the widening spread between underprepared and well-prepared students creates polarized courses, weakening the foundation available to many students and making it harder to teach at the level required for advanced STEM work. UC is increasingly unable to provide its students with the education needed to become leaders in California's scientific, technological, and economic future. We are already seeing the warning signs: longer pathways through prerequisite material, reduced readiness for advanced coursework, and growing pressure to dilute quantitative rigor. Left unaddressed, these trends will lead to declining graduation rates, longer time to degree, and reduced completion of STEM majors, with consequences for California's highly skilled STEM workforce.

California's public higher-education system is a coordinated pathway through community college, CSU, and UC that aligns students with the instruction best suited to their preparation. The current admissions system is undermining this structure by admitting students directly into STEM UC programs without a reliable measure of whether they are prepared to succeed. This serves no one well.

The widening abilities gap followed the 2020 elimination of the SAT/ACT, a temporary measure that has now become a permanent vulnerability. This outcome was explicitly predicted by the Academic Senate's 2020 Standardized Testing Task Force (STTF) report, which warned that removing these tests would eliminate a vital predictor of college success and obscure the impact of severe high-school grade inflation. Unfortunately, the outcomes cautioned against in that report have now materialized in the data across our campuses. All other leading STEM institutions, including the UC's primary peers, have resumed using SAT/ACT in their admissions to ensure foundational fluency. For the University of California to remain a global leader in STEM, it is essential to restore these objective benchmarks.

Rather than measuring advanced mathematical ability, the SAT/ACT tests provide a critical baseline: a common external check that students have the core mathematical fluency required for university-level STEM coursework. SAT/ACT scores can also identify high-potential students in under-resourced schools whose talent might otherwise go unrecognized because of limited access to advanced coursework.

The SAT/ACT mathematics requirement is not an obstacle to equity; rather, it is a prerequisite for it. Failing to measure preparation gaps does not remove barriers; it moves them into the classroom, where they become harder to overcome. An admissions process that ignores foundational readiness does a disservice to the most vulnerable students. True access requires an honest assessment of the support students need and where, within California's public higher-education system, they can best receive it.

The current admissions metrics, based primarily on GPA and essays, can no longer reliably distinguish readiness for university-level STEM majors in an era of severe grade inflation and AI-assisted application essays. We therefore call upon the University of California to:

1. **Reinstate SAT/ACT Requirements:** Require SAT/ACT mathematics scores for applicants to STEM-intensive majors, effective with the 2027 cycle.
2. **Validate Academic Readiness:** Use these scores as a common measure of basic readiness to provide a necessary counterweight to inconsistent high-school grades.
3. **Establish Faculty Oversight:** Ensure STEM faculty oversight of readiness standards and of admissions policies that materially affect STEM programs.
4. **Mandate Institutional Accountability**: Test admissions criteria against student outcomes, and revise them if they fail to predict readiness.

Obscuring preparation gaps harms both students individually and the University collectively. It offers the appearance of access while undermining the chance of success. UC must ensure that every student is challenged appropriately, supported in closing real gaps, and given a path toward a degree that retains its full value in the global economy. Restoring objective data and introducing faculty oversight will allow the University to support students effectively, provide institutional accountability, and preserve the standards that make a UC STEM degree meaningful.

Sign the Open Letter from UC STEM Faculty