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RE: NE Faculty Support for the Reinstatement of the SAT/ACT Requirement for Admissions

Dear President Milliken, Chair Anguiano, Chair Scott, Chancellor Lyons, Chair Philip, Chair Zakaria and Dean Asta:

As nuclear engineering faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, our mission is to educate and train the next generation of scientists, engineers, and thought leaders with expertise needed to tackle some of the nation's most critical challenges. This involves education and training in fundamental and applied nuclear science and engineering that drives transformative advances in energy, health, and nuclear security. We are preparing students not only equipped to face these challenges but also capable of solving them, developing the skills essential for success in industry, the national laboratories, academia, and government.

Nuclear power offers a clean, reliable baseload energy source, with a green light from the federal government for rapid expansion. Our discipline also encompasses **fundamental nuclear science** and its critical applications in power generation, radiation detection, medical imaging, cancer therapy, and medical isotope production. **Nuclear security** has a rapidly increasing role in protecting nuclear materials, controlling dual-use technologies, supporting nuclear nonproliferation, and assuring global peace and safety. To fully realize the benefits of nuclear energy while mitigating the risks, our discipline requires a trained workforce with advanced problem-solving skills grounded in mathematical rigor.

The stakes are incredibly high. Given the vital role nuclear engineering plays in securing a stable future, we must ensure that students admitted to our program are the best and brightest. As the sole nuclear engineering department in the University of California system, our capacity to admit students is limited, demanding an admission process that accurately identifies top-tier talent.

Currently, our admissions process is falling short of this crucial goal. In the absence of standardized tests like the SAT/ACT coupled with the growing influence of AI-assisted essays and inflated GPAs, we lack the data required to ensure that admitted students possess the foundational mathematics background necessary for success. This deficit is painfully evident in our classrooms. While other UC institutions note [deficiencies in introductory mathematics](#), we have observed a corresponding deficit in essential higher-level concepts like multivariable calculus, differential equations, and linear algebra in our junior- and senior-level classes. Before our students can focus on the relevant nuclear physics, neutronics, and modeling and simulation required to meet nuclear engineering challenges, our faculty are forced to dedicate valuable classroom time to reviewing these mathematical foundations.

This situation is unsustainable. In many of our classes, up to one-third of the students arrive unprepared, forcing faculty to spend excessive time reviewing foundational mathematics. This reduces the time available to cover discipline-specific topics, potentially leading to a reduction in the rigor of our training. Ultimately, this represents a disservice to the two-thirds of students ready to tackle more advanced coursework, preventing them from achieving the mastery they are ready for.

To secure our pipeline and ensure the future of nuclear science and engineering in the state of California and the nation, we call for reinstatement of the SAT/ACT requirement in the undergraduate admissions process beginning with the 2027 admissions cycle.

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