

# UC SANTA BARBARA

UCSB Audit and Advisory Services

Audit Memorandum

**Donations Review**

June 10, 2021

**Performed by:**

Antonio Mañas-Melendez, Associate Director  
Gifty Mensah, Senior Auditor

**Approved by:**

Ashley Andersen, Audit Director

Report No. 08-21-0004

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AUDIT AND ADVISORY SERVICES  
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June 10, 2021

To: Distribution

From: Ashley Andersen, Audit Director

Re: **Donations Review**  
**Audit No. 08-21-0004**

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

As part of the 2020-2021 audit plan, Audit and Advisory Services completed a retrospective review of donations to UCSB to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by these donations. These reviews were initiated in response to a recommendation from the June 2019 systemwide internal audit of undergraduate admissions.

## **OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

The overall objective for this project was to review donations to UCSB to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by these donations.

The scope of the review included the following:

- Donations received by UCSB during the period January 1, 2017 through November 5, 2020.
- Applications for undergraduate admission submitted from November 1, 2017 through March 31, 2020 for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic years (date range includes both the regular and late application periods).

## **APPROACH**

To conduct this review, Audit and Advisory Services performed the following procedures:

- Obtained a dataset of donations received during the audit period.
- Obtained a dataset of applications for undergraduate admission submitted during the audit period.

- Performed data analysis to identify admissions of applicants who may be related to donors from the donations' dataset. Data fields compared across datasets to identify "matches" included all or a subset of the following: names of donors and donors' spouses, names of admitted students and parents, addresses, email addresses, phone numbers, foundations or businesses with the same name as the admitted student, and campus ID number. This analysis was limited to cumulative matching donations of \$10,000 or more received during the audit period.
- Reviewed data trends and other available information to assess the risk of questionable admissions decisions (i.e., those at risk of being influenced by donations) for the "matches" identified. Criteria/factors considered as part of this assessment included all or a subset of the following:
  - Dollar amount of the donation
  - Pattern or timing of giving
  - Applicants admitted by exception
  - Applicants admitted to a school with impacted majors
  - Applicants who were recommended for admission on basis of special talent
  - Lack of participation in special talent for which the application was recommended
  - Low application review scores/ratings
- Provided the results of the risk assessment to the Locally Designated Official to determine whether to further investigate any of the matches.

## OVERALL CONCLUSION

Audit and Advisory Service's analysis identified 14 admissions of applicants who may be related to donors who gave a cumulative amount in excess of \$10,000 during the audit period. Based on the risk assessment performed on those matches, Audit and Advisory Services flagged 2 admissions for the Locally Designated Official to prioritize for further analysis and/or investigation<sup>1</sup>.

The cooperation and assistance provided by you during the review was appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,



Ashley Andersen  
Audit Director  
Audit and Advisory Services

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<sup>1</sup> Referral to the Locally Designated Official for further analysis is not necessarily indicative of improper influence or inappropriate activities associated with the admissions decision.

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