

UC **SANTA BARBARA**
Audit & Advisory Services

Audit Memorandum

Admissions Data Analytics Review

March 6, 2023

Performed by:

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Approved by:

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Report No. 08-23-0007

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AUDIT AND ADVISORY SERVICES
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March 6, 2023

To: Distribution

From: Ashley Andersen, Audit Director

Re: **Admissions Data Analytics Review**
Audit No. 08-23-0007

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As part of the 2022-2023 audit plan, Audit and Advisory Services completed a retrospective review of donations to UCSB and local Senior Management Group (SMG) personnel data to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by these donations or personnel. This review was initiated in response to a recommendation from the June 2019 systemwide internal audit of undergraduate admissions.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objective of this review was to perform data analytics to identify undergraduate admissions decisions that could have been influenced by donations to UCSB or the applicant's relationship to an SMG member.

The scope of the review included the following:

- Donations received by UCSB during the period January 1, 2019 through November 14, 2022.
- UCSB SMG personnel active from January 1, 2019 through October 24, 2022.
- Applications for undergraduate admission submitted from November 1, 2019 through March 31, 2022 for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 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 local SMG personnel active 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 who made cumulative donations of \$10,000 or more and/or SMG personnel active during the audit period. Data fields compared across datasets to identify “matches” included all or a subset of the following:
 - Names of donors and donors’ spouses
 - SMG employees and/or SMG employees’ spouses
 - Names of admitted students and parents
 - Addresses
 - Email addresses
 - Phone numbers
 - Foundations or businesses with the same name as the admitted student
 - Campus ID number

The donations portion of the 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 and/or applicant’s relationship to an SMG member) 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
 - Communication with donor or SMG employee
 - Timing of personnel actions under SMG employee’s authority
 - 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
 - Department or program to which donations have been directed as well as their specified purpose
- Provided the results of the risk assessment to the Locally Designated Official to determine whether to further review and/or investigate any of the matches.

The review was conducted in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

Audit and Advisory Service's analysis identified 17 admissions of applicants who may be related to donors who gave a cumulative amount in excess of \$10,000 during the audit period. Further, Audit and Advisory Services identified one admission of applicant who may be related to SMG personnel active during that time.

Based on the risk assessment performed on those matches, Audit and Advisory Services flagged two admissions for the Locally Designated Official to prioritize for further analysis and/or investigation¹.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Ashley Andersen
Audit Director
Audit and Advisory Services

Distribution

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