

Update on Texas Top Ten Percent Plan for Your Students

The Texas Legislature recently enacted changes to the Top Ten Percent Plan, which provides for the automatic admission of high-ranking students to any public university in Texas. The changes will slightly limit automatic admissions beginning in the fall of 2011 to UT Austin, but this limit does not apply to other state universities.

The following update explains changes made by the new law, including the mandated notification requirements to high school students by high school counselors. We encourage you to distribute this information to educate parents and students about the law and opportunities to pursue higher education. A camera-ready version is available in PDF format at www.idra.org.

The Top Ten Percent Plan – Essential Facts for Parents, Students, School Administrators and Counselors

What is the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan?

High school students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class are guaranteed automatic admission to any public university in Texas, including UT Austin and Texas A&M in College Station.

How will students know if they are eligible for automatic admission to a public university, including UT Austin?

The new law states that high schools must provide written notification to all entering high school freshmen and their parents of the Top 10 Percent Plan law. Counselors must explain the requirement of the Top 10 Percent Plan law to high school sophomores and juniors in the top 25 percent of their class.

What changes were made to the Top Ten Percent Plan in the 2009 Texas legislative session?

Few changes were made to the overall Top Ten Percent Plan. Due to the tremendous increase in applications to UT Austin and pressure from UT, the legislature capped the automatic admissions to UT Austin at 75 percent of UT Austin's entering class.

The cap begins with the entering class of 2011-12 and only affects admissions at UT Austin. In 2008, UT Austin's total entering class was comprised of 76 percent Top 10 Percent Plan students. The new cap of 75 percent of Texas residents will ensure that roughly the same number of Top 10 Percent Plan students have the opportunity to be admitted to UT Austin.

What is the effect of the changes made to the Top Ten Percent Plan in the 2009 Texas legislative session for all other state colleges and universities?

Every other public university in Texas besides UT Austin is still required by state law to continue to admit all Top 10 Percent Plan applicants from Texas high schools. The Top Ten Percent Plan requirements remain unchanged for all these institutions.

Do the changes made to the Top Ten Percent Plan in the 2009 Texas legislative session take effect immediately?

No, the enrollment cap of Top 10 Percent Plan students at UT Austin will take effect for the entering 2011-12 class. All eligible Top 10 Percent Plan

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students who graduate prior to 2011 will remain eligible for automatic admission to UT Austin.

Is the 75 percent cap of Top Ten Percent Plan enrollees at UT Austin a permanent cap?

No, the legislation provided that the cap will remain in effect through 2015 and then the cap will be removed. The Texas legislature will then have to decide whether to reauthorize the cap at UT Austin.

Beginning in 2011, how will UT Austin determine which Top Ten Percent Plan students receive priority should the number of Top 10 Percent Plan applicants exceed the 75 percent cap?

The new law provides that UT Austin accept the highest-ranked students first until the cap is achieved. This means UT Austin will accept all students in the top 1 percent of their class, then all students in the top 2 percent and so on until 75 percent of the university's projected entering class enrollment is comprised of 10 percent students. The remaining Top 10 Percent Plan students would then compete for admission to UT in the non-Top 10 Percent Plan applicant pool utilizing UT Austin's holistic evaluation admissions criteria.

What happens if two students are ranked at the same percentile when the cap is reached?

Officials at UT Austin have publicly committed to accepting all students of the same rank once the cap is reached. This means that if multiple students are ranked in the top 8 percent of their class when UT Austin reaches the 75 percent cap threshold, UT Austin will accept all the applicants that are ranked

in the top 8 percent of their class.

Will there be any notice of the class rank percentile necessary to gain automatic admission to attend UT Austin?

Yes, the legislation provides that on September 15 of every year, UT Austin will notify every school district of the anticipated necessary class rank percentile to receive automatic admission for the next school year.

Does this mean UT Austin will no longer consider race and ethnicity or other subjective factors in their admissions criteria?

No, UT Austin will continue to consider a multitude of criteria including race and ethnicity in its non-Top 10 Percent Plan admissions plan. In fact, the new law provides that if UT Austin is no longer permitted to use race or ethnicity as factors in its admissions by court order or by a vote of the Board of Regents, then the 75 percent cap no longer applies and all Top 10 Percent Plan students will receive automatic admission.

What other changes made to the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan will affect automatic admission to public universities in Texas?

The new law also provides that Top 10 Percent Plan students who enter a junior college and complete the core curriculum with a GPA of at least 2.5 may retain their automatic admission to enter UT Austin and other four-year public universities for a maximum of four years after their high school graduation. These students must have been originally accepted for admission to the four-year universities at the time of their high school graduation.

IDRA is pleased to share this update with Texas schools, families, and community members in partnership with a network of organizations committed to improving access to higher education for all Texas students, including the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Mothers Against Discrimination and Racism in Education and Society, Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education, Texas League of United Latin American Citizens, Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches, and University Leadership Initiative.

For background information on the Texas Top Ten Percent Plan visit the IDRA web site.