

Contact: Rachel Boon

**2017 REGENT ADMISSION INDEX (RAI) BIENNIAL REVIEW**

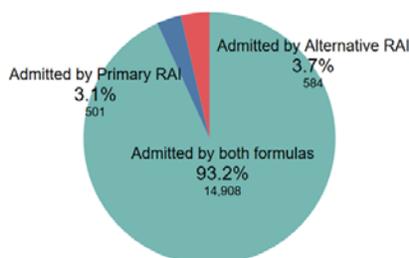
**Actions Requested:**

1. Consider approval of the Admissions Study Team proposal to adopt the Alternative RAI formula as the only Regent Admission Index formula starting with students admitted for summer 2020.
2. Authorize the Executive Director to file the notice of intent to amend the Iowa Administrative Rules (IAC 1.1(262)) on admission of undergraduate students using the Regent Admission Index.
3. Consider approval of the proposed changes to the Board Policy Manual 3.2.B.ii.a.3, contingent upon approval of the change to Iowa Administrative Rules.

**Key Facts**

- Currently, a Regent Admissions Index (RAI) score is calculated for all resident, first-time applicants to determine eligibility for automatic admission to the Regent universities. Students from schools that report class rank use the primary RAI formula. Students from high schools that do not report class rank use the alternative RAI formula.
- A growing number of high schools, both in Iowa and nationally, have dropped the use of class rank. Currently, 53 of approximately 360 Iowa high schools do not rank their students, representing 27% of all new Iowa resident freshman applicants. Overall, 46% of first-time students at the Regent universities, Iowa residents and non-residents, have no class rank.
- Every two years, the inter-institutional Admissions Study Team reviews the performance of the RAI to evaluate its effectiveness and make recommendations for changes.
- The Admissions Study Team analyzed records of 15,000 Iowa resident students who enrolled at a Regent university by applying both formulas to each student and testing the difference.
- Analysis found it would not affect the automatic admission outcome of 93.2% of students. Of those previously admitted under the Primary RAI formula, 3.1% would no longer be automatically admitted (but would still be eligible for admission consideration via holistic review), and 3.7% of students who had not qualified for automatic admission would now be admitted automatically.
- The Admissions Study Team examined the formulas for indications of systemic bias by racial/ethnic identity or socioeconomic status (as measured by Free and Reduced Lunch program participation). There was little to no bias identified.

Comparing outcomes of the two formulas  
for the same students



**Proposed Change to Iowa Administrative Rules:** The Executive Director will file intent to amend Iowa Administrative rules (IAC 1.1(262)) as follows (additions in bold, deletions in strikethrough):

“1.1(2) Admission criteria.

~~a. Effective for students who seek admission prior to fall 2009. Graduates of approved Iowa high schools who have the subject matter background required by each university and who rank in the upper one-half of their graduating class will be admitted to any regent university. Applicants who are not in the upper one-half of their graduating class may, after an individual review of their academic and test records, and at the discretion of the admissions officers:~~

- ~~(1) Be admitted unconditionally,~~
- ~~(2) Be admitted conditionally,~~
- ~~(3) Be required to enroll for a tryout period during a preceding summer session, or~~
- ~~(4) Be denied admission.~~

~~ab. Effective for students who seek admission in fall 2009 and thereafter~~ **through spring 2020.**

(1) ~~Decisions on admission to a regent university are based on the following four factors: performance on standardized tests (SAT Reasoning Test or ACT); high school grade point average (GPA); high school percentile rank in class (when available); and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas. A primary regent admission index (RAI) will be calculated for each freshman applicant using the formula below when the high school has provided a class rank. For purposes of calculating the primary regent admission index, the ACT composite score has a top value of 36 (SAT scores will be converted to ACT composite equivalents); high school rank is expressed as a percentile with 99 percent as the top value; high school GPA is expressed in a four-point scale; and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas is expressed in terms of years or fractions of years of study.~~

$$\text{RAI} = (2 \times \text{ACT composite score}) + (1 \times \text{high school rank expressed as a percentile}) + (20 \times \text{high school grade point average}) + (5 \times \text{number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas})$$

~~NOTE: For purposes of calculating the primary regent admission index, the ACT composite score has a top value of 36 (SAT scores will be converted to ACT composite equivalents); high school rank is expressed as a percentile with 99 percent as the top value; high school GPA is expressed in a four-point scale; and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas is expressed in terms of years or fractions of years of study.~~

~~(2) Graduates of approved Iowa high schools who have the subject matter background required by each university and who meet the regent admission index of 245 required for automatic admission will be admitted to any regent university. Applicants who do not meet the regent admission index of 245 for automatic admission or for whom a regent admission index cannot be calculated may, after an individual review of their academic and test records, and at the discretion of the admissions officers: 1. Be admitted unconditionally, 2. Be admitted conditionally, 3. Be required to enroll for a tryout period during a preceding summer session, or 4. Be denied admission.~~

~~The regent universities recognize that the traditional measures of academic performance do not adequately describe some students' potential for success. Therefore, the regent universities strongly encourage all interested students to apply for admission. Applicants who feel their academic record is not an accurate reflection of their potential for success are encouraged to provide supplemental information explaining their circumstances, in addition to the application, academic transcripts, and test scores.~~

**(b) Effective for students who seek admission for summer 2020 and thereafter.** An alternative regent admission index (RAI) will be calculated for each freshman applicant using the equation below when the high school has not provided a class rank. **For purposes of calculating the alternative regent admission index, the ACT composite score has a top value of 36 (SAT scores will be converted to ACT composite equivalents); high school GPA is expressed on a four-point scale; and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas is expressed in terms of years or fractions of years of study.**

$$\text{RAI} = (3 \times \text{ACT composite score}) + (30 \times \text{high school grade point average}) + (5 \times \text{number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas})$$

~~NOTE: For purposes of calculating the alternative regent admission index, the ACT composite score has a top value of 36 (SAT scores will be converted to ACT composite equivalents); high school GPA is expressed on a four-point scale; and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas is expressed in terms of years or fractions of years of study.~~

Freshman applicants from Iowa high schools who have an RAI of at least 245 and who meet the minimum number of high school courses required by **requirements** of the regent universities will qualify for automatic admission to any of the three regent universities. Freshman applicants who have an RAI below 245 may also be admitted to a specific regent university; however, each regent university will review these applications on an individual basis, and admission decisions will be specific to each institution.”

**Proposed Change to Board Policy Manual:** Contingent upon approval of the change to Iowa Administrative Rules, the Board Policy Manual also will need updates to reflect the changes. The proposed change will amend policy 3.2.B.ii.a.3 as follows:

~~“The primary Regent Admission Index (RAI) is calculated using the following formula:~~ **Effective for students who seek admission in fall 2009 through spring 2020:**

- a. Regent Admission Index = (2 x ACT composite score) + (1 x high school rank) + (20 x high school grade point average) + (5 x number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas).
- b. The alternative Regent Admission Index which will be used for Iowa students from high schools that do not provide high school class rank is calculated using the following formula: Regent Admission Index = (3 x ACT composite score) + (30 x high school grade point average) + (5 x number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas).

**Effective for students who seek admission for summer 2020 and thereafter, the regent admission index (RAI) will be calculated for each freshman applicant using the equation below:**

- a. **Regent Admission Index = (3 x ACT composite score) + (30 x high school grade point average) + (5 x number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas)."**

If approved by the Board of Regents, this policy change will go into effect after approval by the Iowa Legislature's Administrative Rules Review Committee.

**Background:** In 2006, the inter-institutional Admissions Study Team developed the Regent Admission Index (RAI) as the new requirement for first-time undergraduate admissions to the three Regent universities. Starting with the entering class of 2009, the following formula created a composite score:

$$\begin{aligned} & (2 \times \text{ACT composite score}) \\ & + (1 \times \text{percentile high school rank}) \\ & + (20 \times \text{high school GPA}) \\ & + (5 \times \text{number of full-year HS core courses}) \\ & = \text{Regent Admission Index} \end{aligned}$$

An RAI composite score of 245 or higher, in addition to the completion of minimum required courses, earned an Iowa resident automatic admission to any of the three Regent universities. The RAI formula is one of the most transparent college admission systems in the country, allowing students to determine in advance of applying to a Regent university if they qualify for automatic admission.

In 2015, the Admissions Study Team, after a review of the original formula, added the Alternative RAI formula for high schools that do not provide a class rank. A growing number of high schools in Iowa and nationally have dropped the use of class rank. Currently, 53 of approximately 360 Iowa high schools do not rank their students, representing 27% of all new Iowa resident freshman applicants. Overall, 46% of new freshman applicants to the Regent universities, both Iowa residents and non-residents, have no class rank. The alternative formula went into effect for Fall 2016 and is used only for students from schools with no rank.

#### **ALTERNATIVE RAI**

$$\begin{aligned} & (3 \times \text{ACT composite score}) \\ & + (30 \times \text{high school GPA}) \\ & + \underline{(5 \times \text{number of full-year HS core courses})} \\ & = \text{Regent Admission Index} \end{aligned}$$

To ensure equitable admissions outcomes, the Regents calibrated the Alternative RAI formula to generate scores similar to the Primary formula, particularly around the 245 threshold for automatic admission. As seen below, a student with a 20 ACT composite, in the top half of their high school class, holding a 3.0 high school GPA and 19 college-prep classes in high school earns a 245 under both the Primary formula and Alternative formula. Note: A student with a high school rank of 50 (as shown below) is in the top 50% of their graduating class.

PRIMARY RAI		ALTERNATIVE RAI	
ACT	<input type="text" value="20"/>	ACT	<input type="text" value="20"/>
HS Rank	<input type="text" value="50"/>	HS Rank	<input type="text"/>
HS GPA	<input type="text" value="3.00"/>	HS GPA	<input type="text" value="3.00"/>
Courses	<input type="text" value="19"/>	Courses	<input type="text" value="19"/>
RAI Index	<b>245</b>	RAI Index	<b>245</b>

The average Regent university student (see graphic below with Regent averages provided for each component) earns a slightly lower RAI score under the Alternative formula but still scores well above the 245 threshold for automatic admission. Note: A student with a high school rank of 75 (as shown below) is in the top 25% of their high school graduating class.

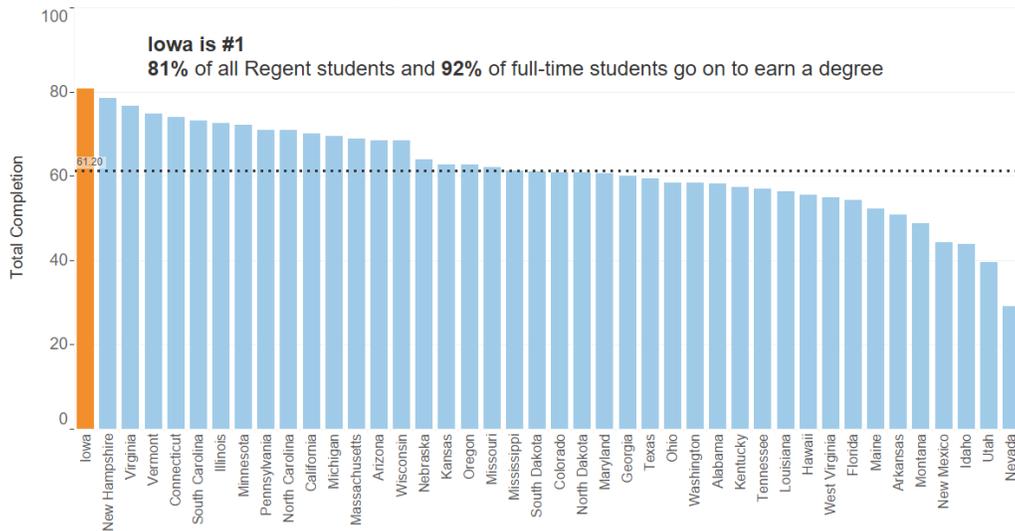
PRIMARY RAI		ALTERNATIVE RAI	
ACT	<input type="text" value="24"/>	ACT	<input type="text" value="24"/>
HS Rank	<input type="text" value="75"/>	HS Rank	<input type="text"/>
HS GPA	<input type="text" value="3.60"/>	HS GPA	<input type="text" value="3.60"/>
Courses	<input type="text" value="20"/>	Courses	<input type="text" value="20"/>
RAI Index	<b>295</b>	RAI Index	<b>280</b>

**Biennial Review:** Every two years, the Admissions Study Team reviews the performance of the RAI to evaluate its effectiveness and make recommendations for changes to the Board of Regents. As part of the 2017 review, the Team analyzed outcomes for over 15,000 students who enrolled in a Regent university in Fall and Summer of 2013, 2014, 2015. The analysis had three primary goals:

- Review the appropriateness of the RAI formulas (both the weights and the use of two formulas)
- Affirm if 245 is still the appropriate minimum RAI score for automatic admission
- Determine if additional admission requirements exist that would improve student success

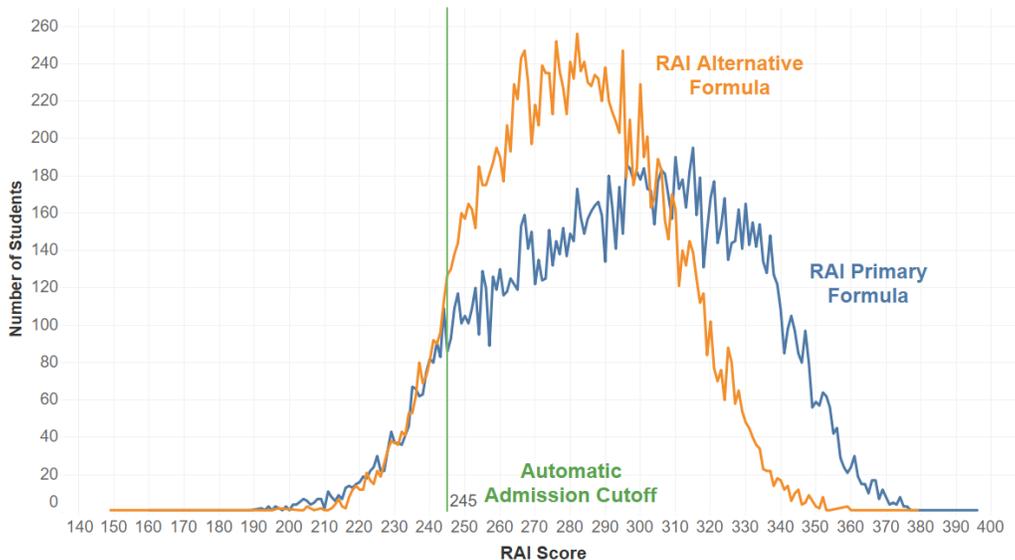
**Findings:** One measure of the success of the RAI as a tool for determining admission to the Regent universities is degree attainment. Based on data from the National Student Clearinghouse, a student who starts at a 4-year public university in Iowa is more likely to earn a degree than a 4-year public university student in any other state. The data below are for students who started college in Fall 2010, one year after the Regents starting using the RAI formula.

### Total Completion at any Institution after starting at a 4-year Public University



For the frequency distribution shown below, each student in the dataset was assigned a Primary RAI score and an Alternative RAI score based on their actual test scores, GPA, courses and class rank. When comparing the scores, students with a high RAI score (280+) typically score 10-15 points lower using the Alternative RAI formula. Scores that are around the 245 threshold are very similar under both formulas.

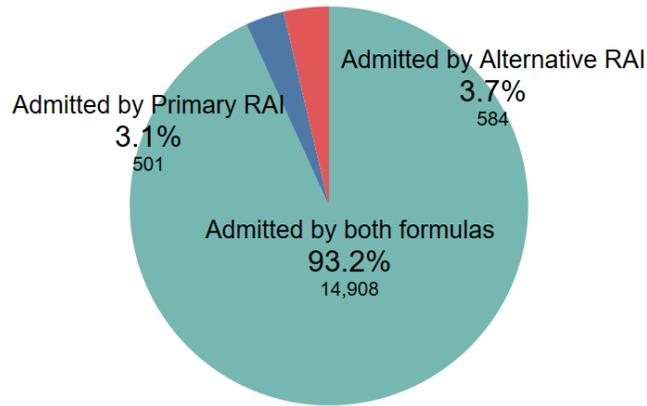
### Frequency Distribution of Primary & Alternative RAI Scores



Given the very limited impact on automatic admission outcomes, the Admissions Study Team explored the option of dropping the Primary RAI formula in favor of the Alternative RAI formula for all applicants. Based on three years of student data, the Team found it would not affect the automatic admission decision for 93.2% of students. Of those previously admitted under the Primary RAI formula, 3.1% would no longer be automatically admitted (but would still be eligible

for admission consideration via holistic review), and 3.7% of students who had not qualified for automatic admission would now be admitted automatically.

**Comparing outcomes of the two formulas  
for the same students**



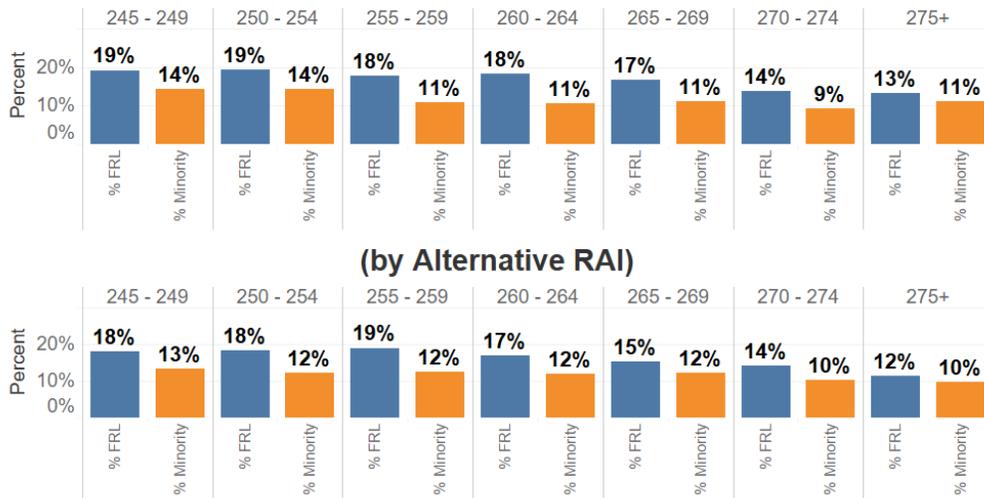
The table below shows how the groups differ by high school characteristics and university outcome metrics. It is important to note that students under the “Admitted by Alternative RAI” and “Admitted by Primary RAI” categories would only be admitted automatically under one formula but not the other. Students not admitted automatically are still eligible for consideration under holistic review by each university.

**Comparing the Two Formulas**

	Admitted by both formulas	Admitted by Alternative RAI	Admitted by Primary RAI	Admitted after Holistic Review
Number of Records	<b>14,908</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>799</b>
Average HS GPA	<b>3.67</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>2.93</b>
HS Rank	<b>78</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>46</b>
Average Core Courses	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>
Average ACT Comp	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
Average RAI Primary	<b>302</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>230</b>
Average RAI Alternative	<b>286</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>233</b>
Average First Year Regent GPA	<b>2.98</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>2.22</b>	<b>2.17</b>
Average First Year Credits	<b>27</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23</b>
% 2.0+ First Year GPA	<b>90.8%</b>	<b>67.6%</b>	<b>71.3%</b>	<b>69.6%</b>
% Entry STEM	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>23.8%</b>	<b>33.8%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>
One Year Retention	<b>89.0%</b>	<b>74.3%</b>	<b>74.7%</b>	<b>72.1%</b>

The Admissions Study Team also examined the two formulas for indications of systemic bias by racial/ethnic identity or socioeconomic status (as measured by Free and Reduced Lunch program participation). The distribution of both groups differed little by RAI formula.

**% Free & Reduced Lunch & Racial/Ethnic Minorities  
(by Primary RAI score)**



Based on these findings, the Admissions Study Team recommends eliminating the Primary RAI formula that includes high school class rank and dropping the descriptor “Alternative” from the non-rank formula. This will clarify one aspect of the admission process for students and counselors. Deferring implementation to students applying for summer 2020 and beyond provides sufficient time for communicating the change with school districts, counselors, students and their families.

The Council of Provosts reviewed and approved these recommendations.