Policy Transparency and College Enrollment: Did the Texas Top 10% Law Broaden Access to the Public Flagships?

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Policy Context

• 1996: affirmative action was banned by the Hopwood decision (effective fall 1997).
• 1997: H.B. 588 establishes the top-10% program (effective fall 1998).
• 2007: For the second consecutive legislative session, the Texas legislature considered and scuttled a bill to cap the number of students granted automatic admission at 50 percent. Rural legislators opposed.
• 2008: 81% of the University of Texas at Austin’s entering class automatically qualified for admission. (41% in 1997).
• 2009: TX State Senate approved a bill to cap admissions at 60% of the incoming class. House has not voted.
Research Questions

• Did the Top-10% policy broaden the set of high schools sending applicants and enrollees to UT and TAMU?
• Did the representation of high schools in rural areas, small towns, and mid-size cities increase?
• Did the representation of high poverty and high minority high schools increase?
• Did the policy broaden the representation of certain regions of Texas?
• Did the policy affect the persistence of remaining a sender school?
Data

• UT:
  – Individual-level applicant data for the years 1990 to 2003 that have been compiled by the Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project (THEOP, www.theop.princeton.edu) – collapsed to the high school level.
  – UT-Austin Office of Admissions Research (OAR) for the years 1996 to 2007. Number of applicants and enrollees for Texas public high schools that sent one or more enrollees to UT.

• TAMU:
  – Individual-level applicant data for the years 1992 to 2002 that have been compiled by THEOP.

• Datasets merged with the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data (CCD) -- includes location, enrollment, racial composition, and share of students receiving free- or reduced price lunch.

• The analysis sample excludes private and alternative high schools, as well as public high schools that lacked a senior.

• 1,379 unique high school campuses.
Definitions

• The CCD identifies the “urbanicity” of high schools in eight categories. We reduce this categorization into four types:
  – “Urban” = Within the city limits of the principal city of a large urban area (Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, El Paso, Houston, or San Antonio).
  – “Suburban” = Within the urban area of these large cities, but not within the city limits.
  – “Rural” = Rural area outside of a Metro or Micropolitan Statistical Area.
  – “Town or Midsize City” = Any area not otherwise captured above, including midsize cities and towns.
• We further re-categorize any high school that lies within a 20-mile radius of the center of the large cities as “Suburban”.
• We hold the high school’s urban/suburban/rural/other designation fixed over-time, using it’s most recent value.
Definitions (Continued)

• High school’s percent underrepresented minority (URM = black + Hispanic) and percent receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) have been averaged for 1990-2006.

• Texas regions defined by the Texas Comptroller – collapsed into five regions: Alamo (including San Antonio), Capital (including Austin), Gulf Coast (including Houston), Metroplex (including Dallas), and the other nine regions combined.
Comptroller's 13 Regions of Texas
Methodology

• Concentration measured by Gini index
• Under/Over-representation measured by the ratio (or the difference) between the share of UT enrollees coming from type-X high schools of and the share of high school graduates from type-X high schools.
• 1996 to 2007 change in the share of the high school’s students enrolled at UT regressed on the high school’s characteristics.
• Duration model predicting the hazard of a high school ceasing being a sender of enrollees to UT as a function of the high school’s characteristics.
Prior Literature: Increasing Number of High Schools Sending Enrollees to UT
(Montejano, 2001; Saenz, 2007; UT-OAR, 2008)
Figure 1:
Share of Texas Public High Schools
Sending at Least One Applicant / Enrollee to UT-Austin or Texas A&M

UT Applicants

UT Enrollees

TAMU Applicants

TAMU Enrollees

Fall Year of Enrollment
Figure 2:
Concentration of HS Enrollment and UT and TAMU Applicants and Enrollees
Coming from Particular Texas Public High Schools
Figure 3:
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT, by High School's Urbanicity
Figure 4:
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT, by High School's Poverty

[Graph showing the share of enrollees to UT as a percentage of the share of high school enrollment by high school's poverty level over the years 1990 to 2007. The graph includes lines for <20% FRPL, 20-40% FRPL, 40-60% FRPL, and >60% FRPL.]
Figure 5: Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees at UT, by High School's Minority Student Share

- <20% URM (Black, Hispanic, or Native American)
- 20-40% URM
- 40-60% URM
- >60% URM

Fall Year of Enrollment

Share of Enrollees to UT / Share of HS Enrollment
Figure 6:
Over/Underrepresentation Among Enrollees to UT, by High School's Region

![Graph showing over/underrepresentation among enrollees to UT by high school's region.](image)
### Table 1: 1996 to 2007 Change in the Share of the High School's Students Enrolling at UT-Austin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If in suburban area</td>
<td>-0.12%</td>
<td>0.76% **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in rural area</td>
<td>1.02% ***</td>
<td>1.48% ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in town or mid-sized city</td>
<td>0.78% **</td>
<td>0.65% *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students who were black, Hispanic, or Native American</td>
<td>-0.96% *</td>
<td>1.07% *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students receiving Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch</td>
<td>5.49% ***</td>
<td>2.55% ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If in Capital region (Austin)</td>
<td>-3.30% ***</td>
<td>-2.90% ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in Gulf Coast region (Houston)</td>
<td>-0.78% *</td>
<td>-0.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in Metroplex region (Dallas)</td>
<td>-0.06%</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If in other region (excl. Alamo, Capital, Gulf Coast, Metroplex)</td>
<td>0.48%</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Constant                                | -0.93% ***       | -1.60% ***       |
|                                         | -0.38%           | -2.28% ***       |

Observations 1143 1143 1143 1143
R-Squared 3.5% 8.9% 12.4% 19.5%
Figure 7:
High schools' persistence in sending enrollees to UT
Table 2: Survival Analysis: Years that a High School Remains a Sender of Enrollees to UT-Austin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All &quot;Spells&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Spells&quot; beginning after 1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of enrollees in prior year</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.534***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th grade enrollment</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.533***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in suburban area</td>
<td>0.540***</td>
<td>0.504***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in rural area</td>
<td>0.896</td>
<td>0.864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in town or mid-sized city</td>
<td>0.898</td>
<td>0.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of URM students</td>
<td>0.791***</td>
<td>0.805***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of FRPL students</td>
<td>1.513***</td>
<td>1.422***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Alamo region (San Antonio)</td>
<td>0.678**</td>
<td>0.757*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Capital region (Austin)</td>
<td>0.215***</td>
<td>0.338***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Gulf Coast region (Houston)</td>
<td>0.704**</td>
<td>0.709**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Located in Metroplex region (Dallas)</td>
<td>1.281**</td>
<td>1.221*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopwood (1997)</td>
<td>0.825*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.B. 588 Years (1998+)</td>
<td>0.674***</td>
<td>0.578***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell Began in 1990</td>
<td>0.127***</td>
<td>0.206***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.215***</td>
<td>0.272***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

• Strong effects on increasing representation of high schools that traditionally sent few enrollees.
• Transparency matters!
• Effects may be increasing over time as high schools begin to have a sending tradition.