

## **NEW: UT task force recommends smaller student population**

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For years, the University of Texas at Austin has held the distinction of being the country's largest single-campus college.

Now, a panel wants to shed that image.

On Monday, a task force at UT recommended the university reduce its student population, hire more faculty and pursue a change in the law that would limit the number of incoming freshmen it could admit under the top 10 percent rule.

The panel also endorsed the university's proposal that race and ethnicity be included among the factors in the school's admissions process.

"At stake is our ability to offer Texans educational programs comparable with the best in America, but in an affordable, public context," UT President Larry Faulkner said in a prepared statement.

The 19-member Task Force on Enrollment Strategy was appointed in 2002 to recommend a plan for managing enrollment at the university, which last fall had 51,426 students. UT, widely considered one of only two public flagship institutions in Texas, has struggled over the years to lower its enrollment.

Among other things, the panel called for a five-year plan that would reduce enrollment to 48,000 — a course of action deemed essential if the university is to achieve its goal of becoming one of the nation's top three public universities.

"The task force has explored a number of size scenarios and has concluded that no substantial growth should occur unless key strategic constraints and goals are observed," the report said. "Growth of the size of the student population should not proceed at the expense of the quality of the educational experience."

Additionally, the task force recommended that the university hire 170 more faculty members to lower the ratio of students to teachers on campus. UT's current student-to-faculty ratio is about 21 to one, which is higher than it is at peer institutions, where ratios don't exceed 19 to one, the report noted.

To establish greater control over its incoming freshmen classes, the panel also recommended the university pursue legislative changes to the state's Top 10 Percent Law, which grants automatic admission to the college of choice to students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class.

Last year, more than 65 percent of UT's incoming freshmen class was enrolled under the top 10 percent rule. The task force recommended a change in the law that would allow UT to cap the percentage of students it automatically admits to 60 percent.

Other recommendations included proposals that would provide incentives to students who take larger course loads so that they graduate on time and requirements that students take at least 15

semester hours of credit to qualify for the honors program and certain scholarships.

Faulkner said he would ask the university community to comment on the report in the next 45 days.

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