

# University of California Application, Admittance and Enrollment

## Executive Summary

In the spring of 2017, the University of California (UC) system publicly released admissions data by high school for the academic year 2012-13 through the academic year 2015-16. The California Charter Schools Association (CCSA) analyzed rates of college application, admittance, and enrollment to University of California colleges for high school graduates across California. The results demonstrate that California charter schools increased access to college for students and contributed to closing the college access gap for historically disadvantaged groups.

Specifically, this report finds:

**1** Charter schools provided more students access to University of California colleges than students served by traditional public schools (TPS), with an application rate of 33% compared to 24% at traditional schools in 2015-16.

**2** Charter schools helped students of color achieve higher rates of college application and admittance. At charter schools 33% of African American students applied to a UC compared to only 22% at traditional public schools. For Latino charter students the difference is even larger, with a 33% application rate compared to 17% (2015-16).

**3** Charter schools continued to make progress towards closing the college access gap between students from high and low-income backgrounds, making college an option for all. In charter schools that served a student body with 75% or more eligible for free and reduced-price meals, twice as many students (41%) applied to a UC, compared to only 19% at equivalent TPS (2015-16).

## Introduction and Data

The UC data provided application, admittance, and enrollment figures for high school graduates across the state. The data included 969 traditional public schools (TPS) and 207 charter schools as of the 2015-16 school year. This accounts for 96% of TPS with a 12th grade and 64% of charters with a 12th grade.<sup>i</sup>

While the percentage of charter schools included in the sample is lower, Figure 1 shows that the charter schools included in the UC data set are similar in student demographic characteristics to the universe of charter schools with a 12th grade.

**FIGURE 1**

Demographics of California Public Schools with a 12th Grade Compared to Schools with a 12th grade included in the UC Sample, 2015-16

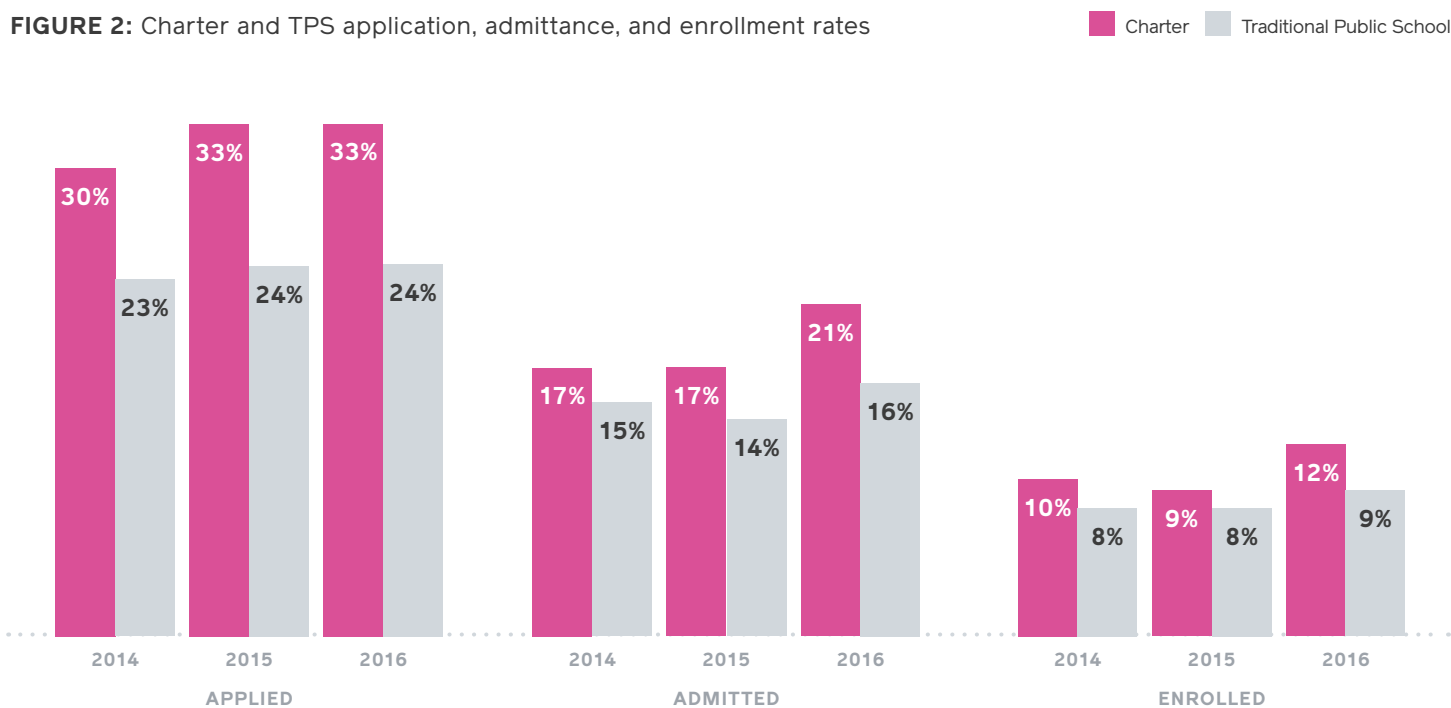
		Enrollment	African American	Latino	Asian	White	Low Income
Charters	Statewide	236,092	7%	49%	4%	31%	56%
	UC Dataset	179,595	8%	52%	5%	27%	58%
Traditional Public Schools	Statewide	1,627,680	6%	52%	10%	25%	53%
	UC Dataset	1,616,479	6%	52%	10%	25%	53%

The UC dataset also provided disaggregated information for all subgroups<sup>ii</sup>, which allowed for comparisons of application, admittance, and enrollment rates for students of color. Due to redaction rules used by the UC system, schools with fewer than five UC applicants were not provided in the sample. As such, small high schools with fewer graduating 12th graders were largely excluded from the data explored in this report. When comparing the types of charter schools in the sample, charter schools that were part of a charter management organization (CMO) or network, rather than being a single site schools, were slightly overrepresented. Statewide, during the time period studied, 40% of charters with a 12th grade were part of a CMO, whereas 47% of sampled charter schools were part of a CMO. To see full counts of schools included in this analysis by charter characteristics, please see Appendix A.

## Statewide Picture

At the statewide level, charter schools increased access to higher education for all students. In 2016, 33% of charter graduates applied to UC schools, compared to 24% of TPS graduates. The same trend occurred for admittance and enrollment rates and has remained consistent between 2013-14 to 2015-16 (Figure 2). For a full table of student counts see Appendix B.

**FIGURE 2:** Charter and TPS application, admittance, and enrollment rates



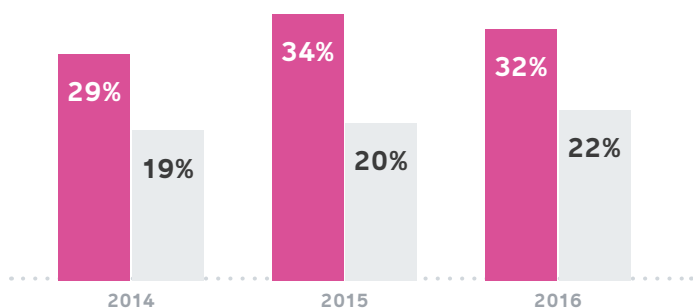
In CCSA's [previous report](#) from the 2012-13 academic year,<sup>iii</sup> the data provided by the University of California combined Latino and African American students into one subgroup. With the disaggregation of African American and Latino data, a more nuanced picture of performance emerged: both Latino and African American charter graduates applied to UC schools at higher rates than their TPS counterparts (Figures 3 and 4).

## Spotlight on Latino and African American Performance

Figures 3 and 4 show that at charter schools, application rates for both African American and Latino students were comparable to the average application rate for all students (application rates of 32% and 33% for African American and Latino students respectively, compared to 33% for all charter students statewide in 2016). This stands in contrast to TPS, where the application rates for students of color were slightly lower than the average for all students (22% and 17% for African American and Latino students respectively, compared to 24% for traditional public school students statewide).

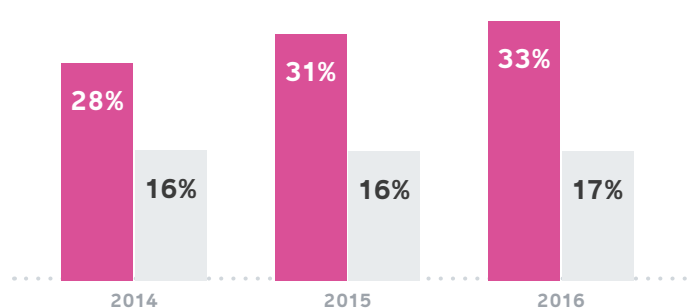
**FIGURE 3:** African American UC Application Rates

■ Charter ■ Traditional Public School



**FIGURE 4:** Latino UC Application Rates

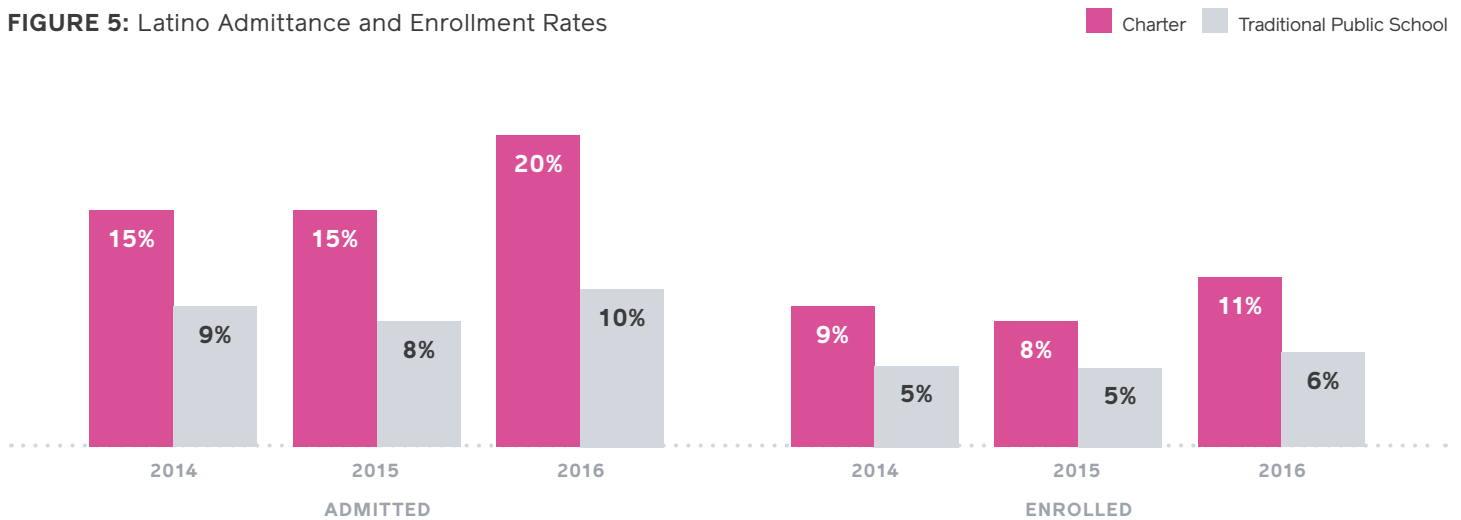
■ Charter ■ Traditional Public School



While the analysis of application rates helps to demonstrate whether or not high schools promote a college-going culture among their students, it is also important to consider admittance and enrollment rates, as these indicate whether students have met college academic admissions requirements. For both Latino and African American students, charter graduates were admitted at higher rates than graduates of traditional public schools. Latino students from charter schools also enrolled in UCs at higher rates than Latino students from

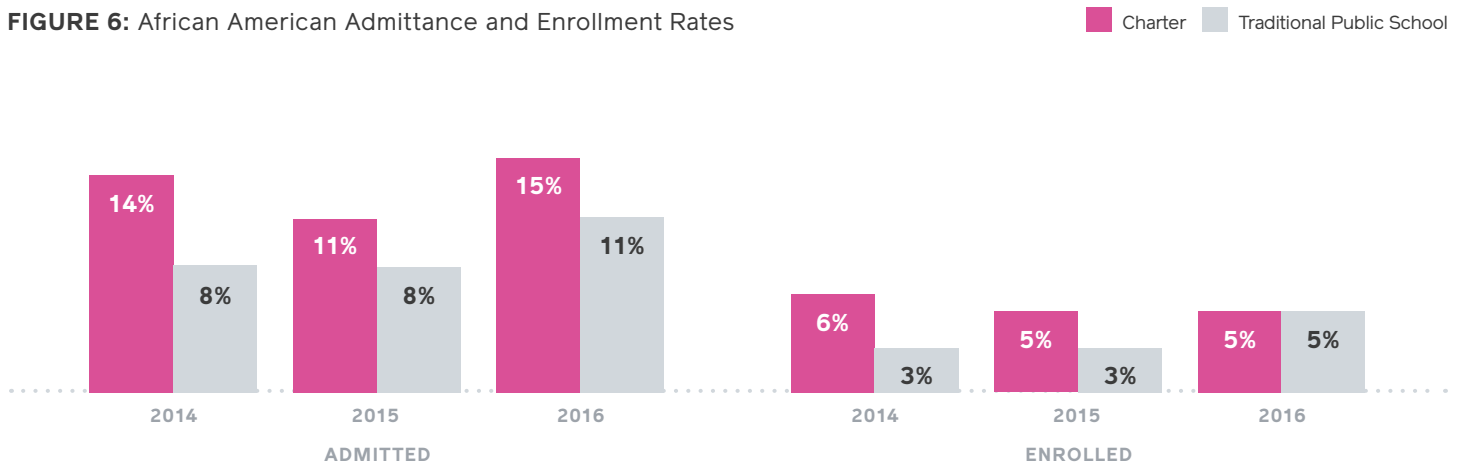
traditional public schools. Latino and African American admittance and enrollment rates differed substantially from each other. Latino charter students' admittance rates grew from 15% in 2013-14 to 20% in 2015-16, a higher rate of increase than in TPS (Figure 5). Latino charter students' enrollment in UCs also increased by a higher rate than TPS.

**FIGURE 5:** Latino Admittance and Enrollment Rates



African American students did not show the same growth in enrollment over time as Latino students and for African American students the drop off between admittance and enrollment rates is stark (Figure 6). At charter schools, African American enrollment between 2013-14 and 2015-16 remained stagnant at approximately 5%, despite achieving 15% admittance in 2016. In the same period of time, TPS enrollment grew from 3% to 5%.

**FIGURE 6:** African American Admittance and Enrollment Rates



The declining enrollment trend for African American students has not gone unnoticed by the UC system. Project EXCEL (Examining College Choice, Enrollment & Linkages), a collaborative of faculty at four University of California campuses conducted [research](#) into why “High-achieving African American students in California are not attending UC campuses” and are instead choosing to enroll at alternative higher education establishments.<sup>iv</sup> The research, which included a survey of 3,402 African American UC admitted students (Fall 2015), highlighted several key reasons deterring these students from enrolling after admission including:

- 1 Admissions Access
- 2 Campus Climate and Diversity
- 3 Affordability and Financial Aid
- 4 College Counselling in the K-12 System
- 5 Academic Offerings
- 6 Outreach Provided by UC Schools

While charters encouraged a higher percentage of their graduates to apply to UCs, and in turn a higher percentage were accepted, the mean grade point average (GPA) of these students on application and enrollment was lower (Figure 7). This lower average application GPA could indicate that charters promoted a college-going attitude for a more diverse range of students and encouraged those with a lower GPA who may otherwise have applied to CSUs, community colleges, or a non-collegiate post-secondary track, to pursue UC admittance (as discussed in CCSA’s “A Step-Up” 2016). The lower GPAs on enrollment might also suggest that charter students were, on average, applying to more accessible UC schools where GPA entrance requirements were not as high.

**FIGURE 7:** Charter and TPS average GPA on Application, Admittance and Enrollment to UC Schools

		Charter	TPS
2014	Application	3.62	3.69
	Admittance	3.86	3.90
	Enrollment	3.91	3.95
2015	Application	3.62	3.7
	Admittance	3.89	3.93
	Enrollment	3.89	3.97
2016	Application	3.65	3.7
	Admittance	3.85	3.89
	Enrollment	3.89	3.94

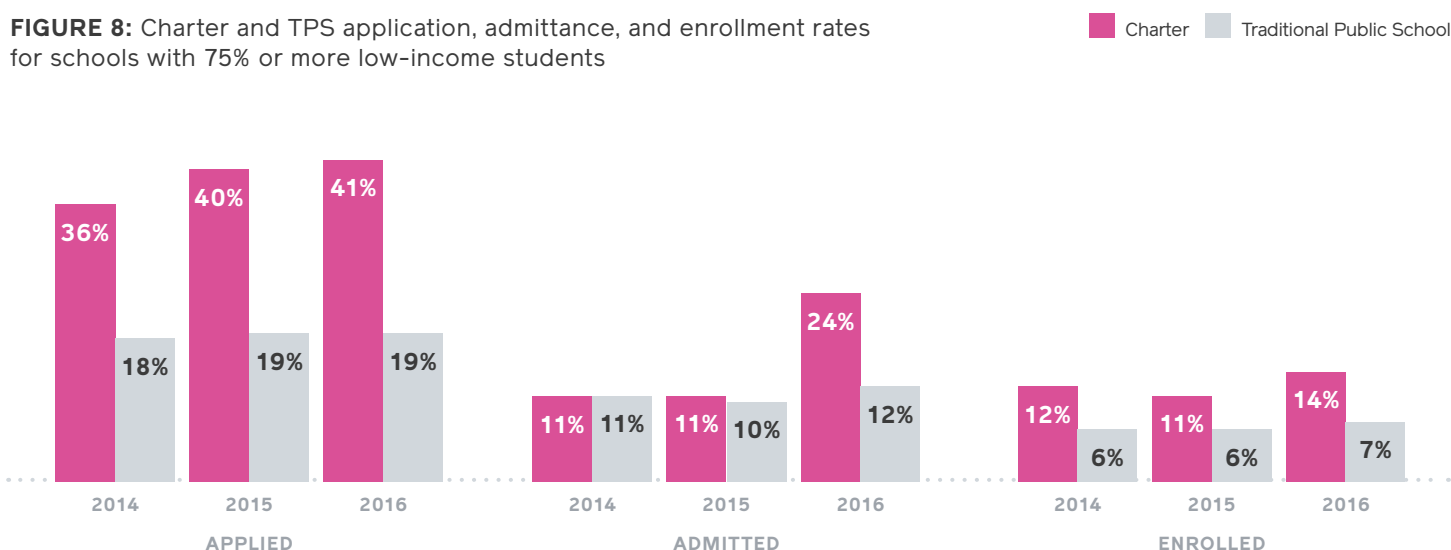
One survey participant commented on the lack of specific outreach to African American students by UCs compared to other schools as a deterring factor:

“For me, it felt like none of the UCs really made a point to try to get Black kids to enroll when comparing the efforts made by other schools. After looking at the demographics of the UC schools with most being 2% Black or less, it was very unsettling and really deterred me from wanting to enroll.”  
(Contreras et al, 2015)

## Income Differences

UC college application rates were higher in charters serving a large majority of low-income students (75% or more eligible for free/reduced lunch (FRL)) than in TPS with a similarly low-income student population. In 2016, for example, 41% of students at charter schools with a large majority low income population applied to a UC, compared to only 19% at equivalent TPS, more than double the rate (Figure 8). This is not a single year phenomenon; application, admittance and enrollment rates for charters serving 75% or more low-income students steadily increased at charters between 2014 and 2016. This trend also persisted in charter schools with a more socioeconomically diverse population. Charters with 50% or more FRL had an application rate of 37% compared to 19% at comparable TPS. At schools with less than 25% FRL (non-majority low-income), charters and TPS performed comparably.

**FIGURE 8:** Charter and TPS application, admittance, and enrollment rates for schools with 75% or more low-income students



As seen above, charters demonstrated success in boosting admittance and enrollment rates of their graduates compared to TPS graduates. To further understand how charters and TPS perform across the state, the next section of this report explores performance at the regional level.



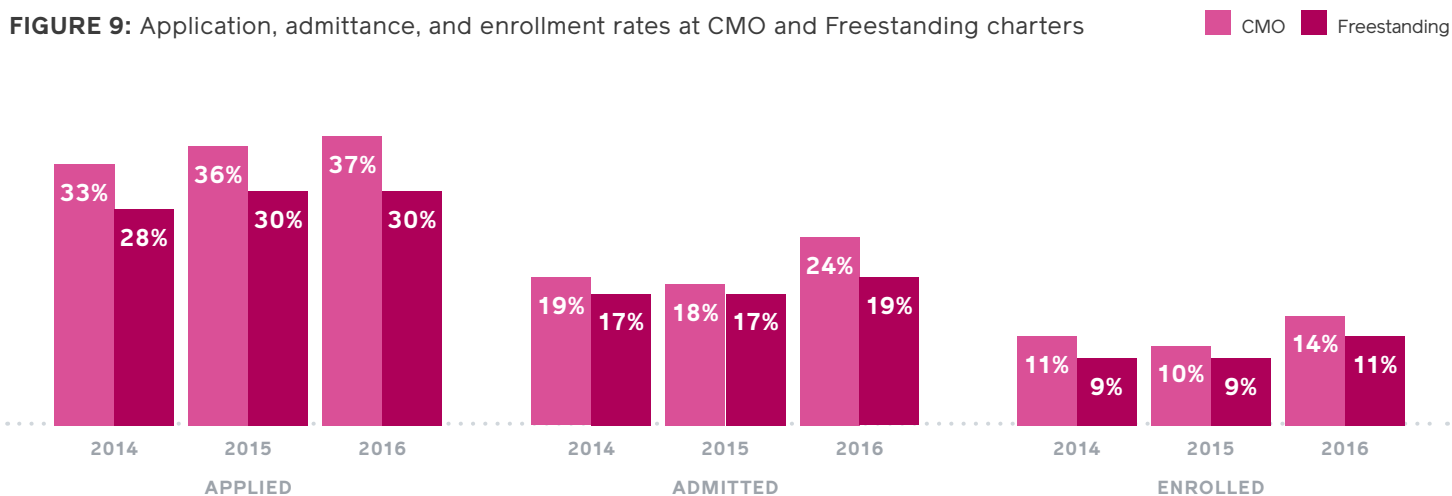
## Charter Characteristics

To further understand the charter school picture, three key charter characteristics were analyzed: autonomy, management model, and school age (maturity) at the state level. Autonomous charter schools (sometimes called “independent charters”) are directly funded, select their own board of directors, do not use the local school district’s collective bargaining agreement, and are likely to be incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Whereas, non-autonomous charter schools (sometimes called “dependent charters”) are indirectly funded, have an authorizer appointed board or are under a school district’s collective bargaining agreement, and are not incorporated as a 501(c)3.

Of the charter schools with available application data in 2016, 182 were autonomous and 33 were non-autonomous. The smaller sample size of the non-autonomous charters indicates that these results should be interpreted with caution (see Appendix A for specific counts of schools in each year). In each of the past three years, the autonomous schools were more successful at providing college access to their students. In 2016, 35% of autonomous charter applied to a UC, 22% were admitted and 13% enrolled. In comparison, at non-autonomous charters, 24% applied, 15% were admitted and 9% enrolled.

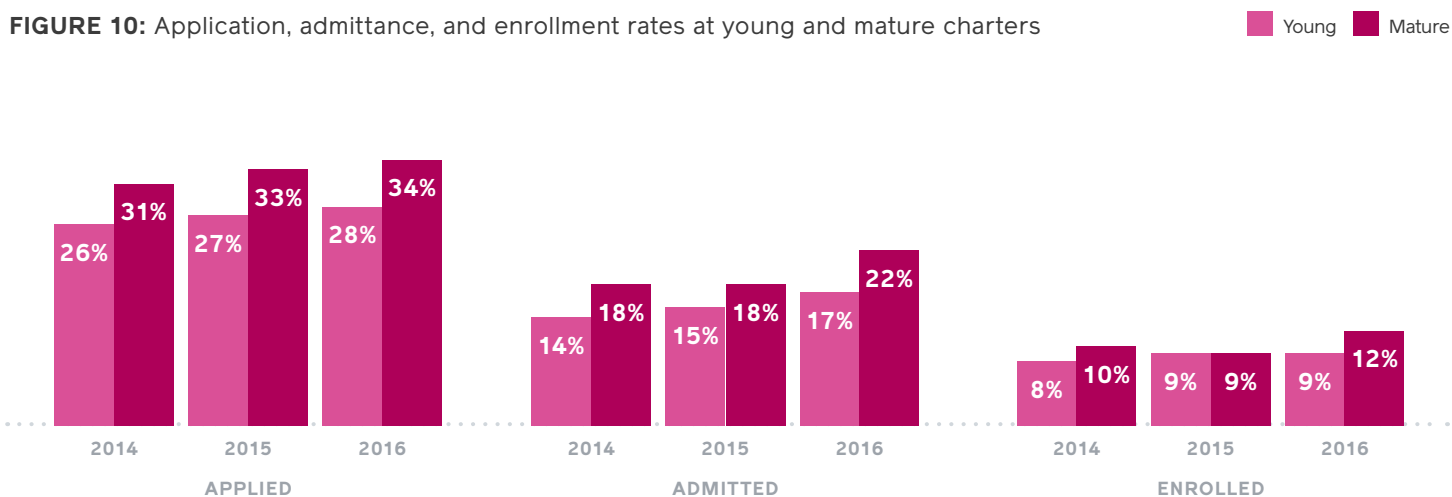
Charter schools can also be characterized as part of a Charter Management Organization (CMO) or as single, freestanding schools. Between 2013-14 and 2015-16 CMO charters steadily increased their application rates at the statewide level from 33% to 37%. Freestanding schools (those not part of a CMO) showed less growth, from 28% to 30%. The gap between CMO and freestanding schools narrows when looking at admittance and enrollment rates, so while CMO schools are encouraging more students to apply to UC colleges, a similar percentage of students from both CMOs and freestanding schools are accepted and enroll (Figure 9). Again, we see a drop-off between application and admittance rates, potentially suggesting that not all of these applications demonstrate an adequate level of preparedness for admittance.

**FIGURE 9:** Application, admittance, and enrollment rates at CMO and Freestanding charters



The final characteristic analyzed was the age of the charter school, 0-3 years (“young”) compared to 4+ years (“mature”). Between 2013-14 and 2015-16, mature charters saw an increase in enrollment from 10% to 12%, younger charters saw a slightly lower increase from 8% to 9% over the same time period (Figure 10). While mature charters appear to have a higher percentage of students applying and being admitted, there is less overall difference for students enrolled in two of the three years shown. These results are surprising given that younger charter schools slightly underperform mature charters on academic performance data.<sup>v</sup>

**FIGURE 10:** Application, admittance, and enrollment rates at young and mature charters



## LAUSD Regional Glance

When comparing performance at the district level, of the seven school districts analyzed, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) had the highest number of high schools (schools serving a 12th grade) with 5 or more UC applicants (Figure 11). In 2015-16, LAUSD had 66 charter schools where at least 5 students applied to UCs, accounting for 32% of all charter schools in the UC sample. LAUSD had 105 TPS with at least 5 UC applicants, accounting for 11% of all traditional schools in the sample. As elsewhere in the study, schools with fewer than five applicants were excluded from this analysis. The large sample size of LAUSD made it the most reliable source of data for comparing charter and TPS performance.

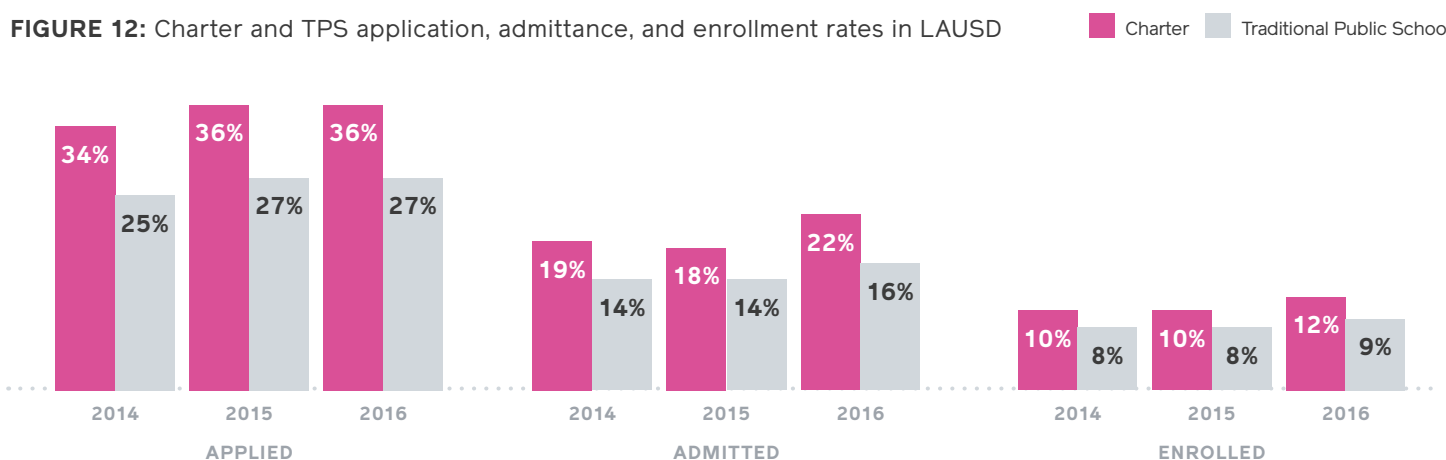
**FIGURE 11:** Number of high schools with 5 or more applicants, by district (2015-16)

District	Charter (#)	Sample (%)	TPS (#)	Sample (%)
Los Angeles Unified	66	32%	105	11%
Oakland Unified	12	6%	8	1%
San Diego Unified	10	5%	23	2%
Sacramento City Unified	3	1%	7	1%
Fresno Unified	5	2%	18	2%
San Francisco Unified	3	1%	10	1%
San Jose City	9	4%	17	2%

In LAUSD, charters consistently outperformed TPS on application, admittance, and enrollment rates between 2013-14 and 2015-16. In 2016, 36% of charter students applied to UCs, compared to 27% of TPS students. This reinforces the statewide picture of charters improving access to college for their students. Similar to the statewide trends, when looking at admittance and enrollment rates at both charters and TPS we see lower percentages than for application in LAUSD. This may indicate that both types of school systems need to examine their practice of preparing students for admittance to the UC system, to increase students' chances of successful applications. While we do not know if students who do not enroll in UC schools once admitted

chose to attend other post-secondary institutions, it is also of note that the percentage of charter and TPS students enrolled is persistently lower than the application rate (Figure 12).

**FIGURE 12:** Charter and TPS application, admittance, and enrollment rates in LAUSD



When looking at subgroup data, charters continued to outperform. The differences were most clear for Latino students, who in 2016 applied at a rate over 10% higher than TPS and had growth in enrollment from 9% in 2014 to 11% in 2016 (Figure 13). African American students performed comparably at charters and TPS but had application, admittance, and enrollment rates lower than Latino students or than traditional public schools overall.

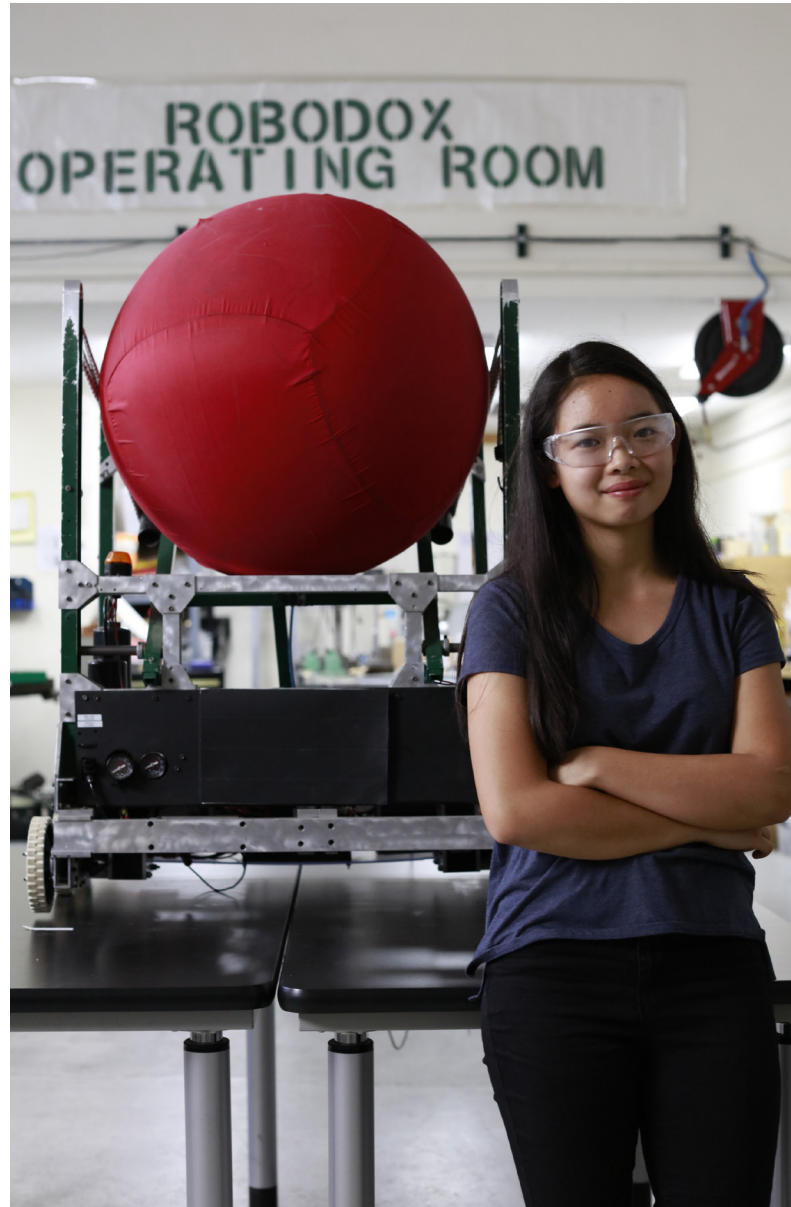
**FIGURE 13:** Latino and African American Charter and TPS application, admittance, and enrollment rates in LAUSD

		Latino		African American	
		Charter	TPS	Charter	TPS
2014	Application	29%	22%	25%	20%
	Admittance	15%	11%	11%	7%
	Enrollment	9%	7%	4%	3%
2015	Application	32%	23%	30%	24%
	Admittance	15%	11%	8%	7%
	Enrollment	8%	6%	4%	3%
2016	Application	33%	22%	23%	22%
	Admittance	20%	13%	9%	9%
	Enrollment	11%	7%	3%	5%

## Conclusion

CCSA's "A Step Up" (2016) report brought to light the successes of charter schools in promoting college readiness and access for their students. That report defined college readiness as access to colleges via completion of a-g curriculum. The data explored in this report allows us to further solidify this success with three additional years of UC college data. Not only were charters increasing access to University of California colleges during 2014 to 2016, they were also closing the college access gap for historically disadvantaged groups.

This data set did not provide information on whether students reenrolled after their first semester (persistence rate) or whether they went on to graduate from college (completion rate), which limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the study. While charters promoted college access, we cannot say with this data alone whether students were adequately prepared for the rigorous academics and the culture of college life.



## Methodology and Limitations

The University of California redacted data for schools with fewer than five applicants. Furthermore, admittance and enrollment numbers for fewer than three students at a school were also redacted. Therefore, schools with fewer than five students applying to a UC school were excluded from the analysis. This aligns with prior UC analyses conducted for CCSA's 2016 [“A Step Up”](#) report.

Admittance and enrollment rates were calculated as “percentage of graduates” as opposed to percentage of applicants, again this is consistent with prior methodology and allows for direct comparison with previously reported data.

We use the “number of graduates” variable from the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) cohort outcome data file available from the California Department of Education (CDE) as the denominator for the college application, acceptance, and enrollment variables in this report. This data is redacted for subgroups with less than 11 students. As a result, in some cases the denominator may be slightly lower than the true value. Several schools were missing graduate

numbers in this file despite having UC applicants. In these cases, we used the number of UC applicants as a proxy for number of graduates, which again may result in a denominator slightly lower than the true value.

Despite accounting for 37% of all charter schools across the state in 2016 (119 schools), Independent Study/Combination schools account of only 29 (13%) of 215 charter schools in the UC Sample. Independent Study schools are those in which instruction in which students and teachers are separated by time and/or location, and interaction occurs via computers and/or telecommunications technologies.<sup>vi</sup> Combination schools offer a blend of classroom-based experiences and independent/online study. Due to redaction rules utilized by the University of California, we cannot discern whether the remaining 90 Independent Study schools had no UC applicants or whether their number of applicants was below 5 and therefore redacted. For this reason, making comparisons between the classroom-based and nonclassroom-based site types would be inappropriate.

### Schools with UC Applications

Relevant to All Figures

	Traditional Public Schools	Charter Schools
2014	1,007	187
2015	1,017	197
2016	1,024	215

### Charter Schools with UC Applications

Relevant to Figure 13

	Young	Mature
2014	16	171
2015	13	184
2016	13	202

### Charter Schools with UC Applications

	Autonomous	Semi-Autonomous	Non-Autonomous
2014	152	7	28
2015	162	7	28
2016	178	4	33

### Charter Schools with UC Applications

Relevant to Figure 12

	CMO	Freestanding	Network
2014	89	70	28
2015	93	78	26
2016	100	35	30

# Appendix B

## Student Counts

### Students Included in UC Analysis

Relevant to Figures 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8

		All Students			African American Students			Latino Students		
		Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled
2014	Charter	6,498	3,774	2,099	494	238	98	3,009	1,630	912
	Non-Charter	78,786	50,025	27,924	3,064	1,273	539	25,148	13,987	7,632
2015	Charter	7,435	3,944	2,165	562	177	77	3,637	1,740	922
	Non-Charter	80,614	48,749	26,917	3,372	1,283	504	26,645	13,710	7,496
2016	Charter	8,220	5,207	2,942	514	251	83	4,259	2,550	1,436
	Non-Charter	82,122	55,910	31,055	3,678	1,822	838	28,308	17,231	9,228

### Los Angeles Unified School District Students included in UC Analysis

Relevant to Figures 10 and 11

		All Students			African American Students			Latino Students		
		Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled	Applied	Admitted	Enrolled
2014	Charter	5,605	1,707	948	225	95	36	1,596	834	473
	Non-Charter	3,106	3,084	1,845	340	116	58	3,758	1,991	1,165
2015	Charter	3,001	1,770	977	264	70	34	1,943	887	472
	Non-Charter	1,770	3,001	1,727	385	109	55	3,950	1,865	1,028
2016	Charter	3,544	2,302	1,286	189	75	22	2,167	1,291	720
	Non-Charter	2,302	3,544	2,039	372	156	76	3,897	2,250	1,251



- <sup>i</sup> As described in this section, the lower percentage of charter schools in the UC data is due in part to the smaller size of charter high schools, leading to the redaction of data.
- <sup>ii</sup> University of California. Admissions by source school. Retrieved from:  
[www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/admissions-source-school](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/admissions-source-school)
- <sup>iii</sup> California Charter Schools Association. (2016) A Step Up: How Charter Schools Provide Higher Levels of California Public University Access. Retrieved from [www.ccsa.org/CollegeReadiness\\_Web\\_Single\\_FNL.pdf](http://www.ccsa.org/CollegeReadiness_Web_Single_FNL.pdf)
- <sup>iv</sup> Chapman, T., Contreras, F., Comeaux, E., Hudson, M., Martinez, E., & Rodriguez, G. (2015). Investing in California's African American Students: College Choice, Diversity & Exclusion. San Diego, CA: Report Prepared for The University of California Office of the President. Retrieved from: [http://iurd.berkeley.edu/research/EXCEL\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](http://iurd.berkeley.edu/research/EXCEL_Report_2016.pdf)
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