

**OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL  
STRATEGIC VISION TASK FORCE  
FINAL REPORT**

December 2, 2016



**ILLINOIS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIC VISION TASK FORCE  
FINAL REPORT

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# FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIC VISION TASK FORCE

### I. COMMITTEE CHARGE

Interim Provost Feser provided the University High School Strategic Vision Task Force with its charge on 10 February 2016. Noting that Uni High “is widely recognized as an excellent school and an asset to the campus,” the charge letter goes on to address uncertainties with regard to “how Uni fits into the larger [University] structure and what the University sees as Uni’s mission.” The urgency of these issues, the letter observes, has been “heightened in recent years by severe financial pressures.”

Provost Feser asked the task force to “revisit both Uni’s mission and its funding model,” and “to help the campus shape a vision for Uni High and its future by doing the following:

- a. Propose a vision for the role and purpose of Uni High as a secondary school situated within a research-intensive university, while also considering its impacts on the local community.
- b. Propose at least one new financial/operating model that could be sustainable over the next two decades or more.”

Provost Feser issued a subsequent letter to “amend” the charge on 8 April 2016 in response to having “recently learned of a new development in the Champaign-Urbana secondary education landscape that has a direct impact on the work of your task force.” The new development reflected preparations in place for a new independent high school in Champaign that could be accepting students as early as fall 2017. Because the organizers of this new school, the Libman group, had approached the University with the possibility of partnership activities that would involve the use of University resources and potential collaborations with Uni, the amended charge asked the task force to include in the “financial/operational” component of its report a model that would assess the possibility of “a collaboration with the new school proposed by the Libman group.”

To address this charge, the task force met five times from April through June and four more times from August to November. Task force members brought a wide range of perspectives to each of the issues discussed. Each of them is addressed in this report. The report tries to be responsive to the varied vantage points expressed in our meetings without forfeiting entirely the need for baseline coherence. Very likely the report does not present precisely what any of the task force members would have produced on his or her own, and individual members have been invited to provide the Provost with dissenting opinions if they believe their vantage point has not been adequately taken into account.

### II. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Richard Wheeler, Chair  
Jeffrey Walkington, Director, University Laboratory High School  
Elizabeth Majerus, Uni Faculty Representative  
Sharlene Denos, Uni Faculty Representative  
Steve Michael, Uni Parent-Faculty Organization Representative  
Brent McBride, Child Development Lab  
Amy Ando, Agricultural and Consumer Economics  
Michaelene Ostrosky, Special Education

Timothy Stelzer, Physics  
Matthew Tomaszewski, Associate Provost for Capital Planning, *ex officio*  
Keith Marshall, Interim Associate Provost for Enrollment Management, *ex officio*

### **III. SUMMARY**

The Task Force concluded – though not with equal enthusiasm on the part of all members – that University High School is a significant asset to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Champaign-Urbana community. We are hopeful that despite the current dire financial straits of higher education in Illinois that the University will be able to sustain Uni as a public semi-autonomous high school for high achieving students.

We recognize that doing so will require cost-savings on the part of the school; a modest increase in the University’s contribution to the school’s operating budget; some increase in the funding currently provided by the families of Uni students; more aggressive efforts on the part of the school and its newly formed alumni association to solicit contributions from graduates and other supporters of Uni; and a cross-campus collaborative effort to address pressing infrastructure needs that will almost certainly exceed the financial resources of the school acting on its own.

We recognize that the function of Uni as a school for providing high-achieving students opportunities that prepare them well for success in college and for lives as educated citizens is crucial to its stature and competitiveness. We also believe, however, that this function must be better balanced with programs that emphasize the laboratory dimension built into the core concept of a laboratory school operating as part of a public research university. In this report, we identify potential developments at Uni that would meet this mission need.

In particular, we believe the mission should encompass a significant emphasis on a more forward-looking understanding of what is meant by “gifted” or “academically talented” students. The admissions process should include measures that identify intellectual quickness and agility in students who might not fit traditional definitions of “gifted,” which often reflect prior educational opportunities as shaped by social and economic status. While recognizing the complexity of this issue, we believe more wide-ranging and meaningful ways of identifying the capabilities requisite for academic success at Uni should address problems created by social and economic inequality, not simply perpetuate them. This shift will also require the development of tutoring/mentoring programs to assure that all admitted students have pathways to academic success at Uni.

If the school is to succeed in developing and sustaining a more robust engagement with its laboratory mission, however, we believe it will be necessary to establish a new governance structure charged with the responsibility for shaping the Uni mission and ensuring that Uni operations embody that mission.

We try in this report to address each of these areas.

### **IV. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

University High School of the University of Illinois began operations in 1921 in the building in which it still resides at the corner of Springfield and Matthews in Urbana. It was preceded by still earlier programs to provide secondary school education at the University of Illinois that began in 1876, just eight years after the Illinois Industrial University began instruction. These earlier ventures were formalized into the

Preparatory School in the 1890s, were reorganized as the Academy in 1903, and were then put on hold in 1911 when planning for University High School was intensified.

Uni was established as the laboratory high school for what was then the school of education. Exactly what it meant to be a laboratory high school was a debated and somewhat unstable concept from the first, with various components coming in and out of prominence over the decades of the school's existence: curriculum innovation, "model" school, teacher training, instructional experimentation, University liaison to high schools statewide. An early interest in providing superior instruction soon evolved into a commitment to provide strong preparation for college. Early in its history Uni came to focus on admitting and instructing high-achieving students with personal and family aspirations for successful college attendance.

The college prep and the lab school poles of the Uni concept have been in tension from the beginning and they remain in tension today. The lab school dimension was originally developed in order to serve the department/school/college of education. The College of Education decided to close Uni in 1983 because it had determined that the school was no longer central to its mission and thus no longer useful to it as a laboratory. Then, as now, there was little research interest in the College in issues focused on the instruction of academically gifted students in their high school years.

Many previous studies of Uni have addressed issues clustered around the "laboratory" mission of the school. Prior to 1983, when the College of Education elected to close Uni, these studies were chiefly focused on how the College was, or was not, effectively using Uni as its curriculum laboratory and teacher-observation site. The nature and intensity of the College's involvement in these areas had ebbed and flowed over the school's entire history.

For example, in 1961 College of Education Dean Alonzo Grace wrote in his annual report: "The University High School is no longer a resource for student or even organized observation. The University High School cannot be justified as a private school at public expense." Two years later, Governor Otto Kerner opened a conference arranged by Grace at the Illini Union to promote a project that would establish Uni as "a demonstration center for secondary school programs for gifted students in English, social science, mathematics, and science." In his remarks he stated: "University High School is increasingly recognized as the outstanding experimental school in the country."<sup>1</sup>

Although, when the College of Education decided to close Uni in 1983, there was little research interest in the College in issues focused on the instruction of academically gifted students in their high school years, there was considerable interest across campus in the continued operation of Uni. When the decision to close Uni was met with extensive protests, then Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Ned Goldwasser determined that Uni would remain open. Its administrative home would be the Office of the VCAA/Provost.

A new governance model was put in place that included an advisory committee and the expectation that another academic entity would step up, or be assembled, to assume mission-oversight responsibilities previously exercised by the College of Education. Primary administrative oversight would be provided by an Associate VCAA (now an Associate Provost). Faculty staffing arrangements were stabilized. A regularized allocation from the Provost's office covered part of the operational budget. Arrangements

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<sup>1</sup> William Frederick Renner, "Perspectives of Decision: An Organization History of University High School of the University of Illinois," (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1981), p. 681.

were made to secure per-student funding from the state without Uni being subjected to the full set of state requirements. A voluntary family contribution program was put in place to assist funding. Understandings were developed with the Urbana and Champaign school districts about how many students it would be appropriate or acceptable for Uni to pull from those districts.

After the College's withdrawal from its responsibilities for Uni, however, ambiguities around the fundamental question of what is expected of a laboratory school deepened. University-based laboratories ordinarily operate in the service of faculty researchers conducting experiments. Absent the College of Education as the primary locus of research design, it was no longer clear whose laboratory the school was expected to be.

The question of what a laboratory school is, of what the expectations of Uni as a laboratory school should be, has never been fully resolved, not when it was being planned, not when it was a component of the College of Education, and certainly not since. What is it appropriate to expect of Uni with regard to what is often referred to as its laboratory mission? And what role does that dimension play in the overall mission of the school? What, for that matter, is the overall mission of the school? What justifies the existence of University High School within the larger purposes of the University of Illinois?

## **V. WHY UNI?**

The Task Force explored three questions that it found crucial to the rationale for the continued operation of Uni.

1. Does Uni provide robust educational opportunities for students with exceptional academic potential?
2. Does Uni contribute to the attractiveness of the Champaign-Urbana area for parents of school-age children, and in particular does it contribute to the University's recruitment and retention needs?
3. Does Uni as a laboratory school contribute to the overall mission of the University by conducting and disseminating research on curricula and instruction for gifted students, by serving as an outreach venue for University faculty generated grants, or through other lab mission activities?

1. Uni has traditionally been a high school that admits students who have shown exceptional academic promise. These students have needs that may not be met, and potential that may not be fully realized, in mainstream high school education. A primary purpose of our schools should be to ensure that exceptionally gifted students are given opportunities to recognize and develop their academic talent to the fullest. Gifted high school students go on to achievements of great importance to our society (e.g., Uni graduates include three Nobel Prize winners). Providing them with an educational environment that helps move them to the full development of their talents contributes to realizing their exceptional potential for problem solving and innovation. Many graduates with distinguished careers typically look back on their Uni experience as having been pivotal in their lives.

There is a range of opinion on just how strong and up-to-date Uni's academic offerings are. Uni provides a rigorous traditional and largely risk-averse curriculum for its students, with significant pockets of curricular innovation. The more traditional aspects of the school's instructional culture are reinforced by the attitudes of many parents, students, and teachers who believe the core mission of the school is to prepare its very bright students for admission to prestigious colleges. There are, indeed, those who believe

the school is too demanding academically, assigning too much homework to allow students to participate as fully as they might in other projects outside the curriculum.

Nearly all Uni graduates go on to colleges and universities of distinction, and who perform well at the college level, and well beyond it. Any school can be improved academically, and there certainly are areas in which Uni's instructional capacity is limited by the state of the facilities in which it is conducted. But on the whole, Uni is meeting its goal of providing a rigorous college preparatory curriculum and a nurturing environment in which highly talented students thrive in the facilitative company of one another.

2. Uni's relationship to the larger Urbana-Champaign community, including the public school systems in the area, has always been complex. There has long been unease in the relationship of Uni to the public schools in the area. One factor in this unease concerns the sub-freshman year at Uni, which pulls students out of the middle schools in the area before they complete that portion of their education. The decision of academically talented students to attend Uni instead of other local public schools pulls both them and their families out of a significant sector of public school education.

There is reason, however, to believe that the presence of Uni as an option for students with exceptional academic talents adds to the attractiveness of the community as well as the University, both for current residents and for potential residents considering a move to east central Illinois. For a micro-urban area deeply invested in the success of the innovative technology industry, in the robust development of the U of I-Urbana medical school, and in growth in the highly competitive health-care industry more generally, the presence of a school with Uni's reputation of excellence would appear to be a positive factor.

The presence of Uni as a school for academically gifted students appears to benefit the University. When the decision was made to keep Uni open in 1983, a key component of Vice Chancellor Goldwasser's decision was the support not only from faculty parents of Uni children but from department heads and deans concerned about what the closure of Uni would mean for their efforts to sustain faculty excellence. The perceived advantages of Uni as a high school destination for the children of some faculty, as well as the recruiting and retention benefits of such perceptions, have become significant parts of the justification for the continued operation of Uni. By providing an excellent education for its students at a cost to parents well below private school tuition, preparing them well for admission to selective colleges and universities, it is widely believed that Uni provides a benefit to the University's vital processes of recruiting and retaining key faculty. The University's current need to recruit aggressively to develop the new engineering-based medical school probably intensifies this dimension of support.

3. The third of these issues is more complex. The laboratory function has never consistently been the defining feature of University High School. And it is important to note that no high school could predictably and successfully provide its students with a superior education if it were entirely organized around the principles of a research laboratory. Because of its essential responsibility to provide excellent instruction, a "laboratory" school will always and necessarily relate to its lab mission differently from a lab in a university department of, say, biochemistry or electrical engineering.

Much of the intellectual excitement of Uni at its best derives from the inevitable tension between its lab school and instructional missions. It appears, however, that the lab-school component of this potentially productive polarity is not sufficiently robust. The operation of the school as an instructional laboratory had already declined substantially when the College of Education ended its role as administrative home

for Uni. No comparable linkage of Uni to an academic college has replaced the link lost with the cessation of the Education connection.

Uni faculty contracts stipulate: “In addition to their formal teaching load, teachers at University High School contribute to the lab mission of the school approved by the Employer.” Underwriting this lab school mission responsibility is compensation in the form of an approximately 20% reduction of the teaching load common in public high schools.

Without an engaged administrative home in an academic unit, however, there has been no sufficiently strong governance structure in place to ensure that this lab-mission obligation is met. Uni faculty are not regularly expected to conduct research on their own and disseminate it as contributions to an academic field. Research activity is not a factor in determining salaries or salary increases, nor is it expected as a condition of continued employment. Indeed, teachers who introduce experimental innovations into Uni classrooms will on occasion meet opposition from parents worried that any deviation from traditional curricula might endanger their child’s preparation for college admission tests.

That being said, there are notable examples of innovative teaching done at Uni. There is some independent research leading to publication in educational venues. There appears to be an increasing role at Uni to provide outreach capacity for federal research grants controlled by University faculty. And some University faculty are using Uni directly for research purposes.

The laboratory school mission should cover a broad range of activities. Our working understanding is not restricted to original research based on experimental classroom design, although such scholarship is certainly included in it. But many other classroom and extracurricular activities should be recognized as well as part of this mission. Participation in federal grants in which the PI is a university faculty member is one such activity. A few Uni faculty are actively involved in pedagogical research projects with faculty at Illinois, at other universities, and other high schools. Attendance at conferences to make presentations to other teachers is a valued form of disseminating findings. A book of pedagogical essays has recently been published by a well-respected peer-reviewed academic press, edited by two Uni teachers and including chapters from six Uni faculty members, and at least one other pedagogical book project is in the works. The Uni/WILL project currently in place, in which students research a topic of local interest and present their findings on public radio, is an excellent example of an activity that takes students into a range of experience not ordinarily part of the high school curriculum – a model project that could be readily used for dissemination through publication, presentations, or workshops.

In other words, although what may be plausibly considered the laboratory mission of Uni has declined from what it has been in some eras, it has by no means vanished from the school. Providing an excellent high school education must be part of Uni’s core mission. Although that dimension appears to have crowded out much that could be seen as the school lab mission, there is a base to build on to strengthen the laboratory dimension of the school. It is not necessary for the school to transform itself into an institution in which all classes offered must be organized around an experimental design. But the school



should strongly encourage a significant shift toward more practices that involve the dissemination of knowledge acquired through pedagogical experimentation.

## **VI. MISSION- RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Lab mission definitions currently in operation at Uni are as follows:

*Develop curriculum – the design, crafting, and experimental use of curricula and supporting materials. And **disseminate** these curriculum materials.*

*Advance innovate pedagogical practice to academically talented students. And **disseminate** the instructional innovations.*

*Engage in professional service off and on the university campus.*

*Sponsoring conferences; offering workshops; directing in-service programs; giving papers and presentations; writing and publishing; cooperating with faculty colleagues in course and project development; serving as resource teachers or consultants; providing leadership to elementary and secondary schools and teacher education through professional associations; participating in university affairs; serving on committee, councils, and other university bodies; and participating in professional organizations.*

*Work in partnership with the UI on research opportunities.*

*Work in outreach with other schools and community entities.*

All these activities are appropriate to Uni’s lab mission, but a more narrowly focused range of lab-mission possibilities would likely encourage more consistent and coherent lab-mission-related efforts among Uni faculty. Areas of lab-mission focus will need to be responsive to teacher interests and capabilities as well as to changing needs, but would include particularly timely issues such as facilitating the success of gifted learners from underrepresented groups (see recommendations below) and creative approaches to solving such twenty-first century problems as income inequality, climate change, and global water insecurity.

Strengthening this dimension will require changes both internal to the school and in its governance structure. Internally, there will need to be created an administrative position that links Uni faculty and staff to research opportunities made possible by Uni’s relation to the University and to other external opportunities for projects that support the school’s lab mission. We recommend initially that this position, which would serve as a lab-mission coordinator and liaison to the faculty and staff of the University, become fifty percent or greater portion of the appointment of a Uni teacher well positioned to take on these responsibilities.

What is needed externally is a governance structure that ensures that such activities are built deeply into the culture of Uni and into expectations of Uni faculty and staff. This report addresses governance below.

The ultimate responsibility for clarifying Uni’s mission and ensuring that it is embodied in school operations will be a key responsibility of the new governance structure. This task force, however, provides the following provisional recommendations for measures that would restore the balance between

the prep school and lab school dimensions of Uni, improve relations with the community, and sustain the importance of Uni to the university:

- Eliminate the sub-freshman year Increase the size of the freshman through senior classes proportionately to keep overall enrollment roughly the same.
  - Although the “subbie” experience is considered by some to be crucial to the school, it represents a costly extension of an educational innovation that has never taken root anywhere else and has long out-lived its status as an instructional experiment. Only recruiting students to Uni who have completed the eighth grade will help address a sore spot in Uni’s relationship to local middle schools It will also have positive financial implications, which will be addressed later in this report.
  - Increase the size of the admitted freshman class with the goal of maintaining the overall enrollment at its current level. Over a four year period, each class from freshman to senior will have an additional fifteen students. Implications of this change must, however, be carefully studied. Increased annual admissions will have differential impacts on different areas of its instructional programs – with varying effects on teacher workload in those areas. It will be important to identify the appropriate distribution and class size of course sections in different disciplines. It must also be noted that this change would require pulling an additional fifteen students from local schools for each class year.
- Revise and update admissions practices to recognize a broader view of “giftedness” than is currently the standard in Uni admissions. Current scholarship on “gifted” students has developed a much broader understanding of how to identify students with special gifts than is possible with an almost exclusive reliance on test scores. This scholarship has also found that “gifted” students are not always students who have performed at the highest level in traditional educational settings. Many students who are recognized as “gifted” from this vantage point are not likely to match up well with current expectations for admission to Uni. Enhancements to the admissions process, which would require a more active seeking-out of “gifted” students, will be necessary. The expectation is that these enhancements will enable Uni to increase its enrollment of underrepresented minority students, and that this goal should be built into a revised admissions process.
  - Achieving this goal will demand shifting resources as well as changing expectations now dedicated to admission decisions at Uni. This shift will require a firm, clear commitment, and even so it will take some time to develop effective practices geared to meeting this goal. Within five years, however, it should be possible to meet a goal of admitting five (or more) students a year by way of this revised process. At that time consideration should be given to expanding this number, moving an enhanced admissions process focused on reaching students identified through a broader understanding of giftedness more toward the center of the school’s mission.
  - Bringing in students who represent this expanded range of academic promise will require the development of programs to ensure that these students are able to succeed. Tutoring and mentoring programs designed to identify, understand, and address the academic needs of this group of students would contribute significantly to Uni’s lab mission. The work of developing, sustaining, and promulgating these programs would be overseen and partially staffed by Uni teachers as a component of their required lab participation. This

work should be conceptualized and performed in collaboration with University faculty and staff who share the goal of increasing college-readiness for students whose backgrounds otherwise may leave them less prepared.

- Capitalize on the strengths of Uni in science and pre-engineering to develop programs that encourage female students to consider careers in STEM fields. Uni is well-positioned to conduct studies that explore the opportunities and obstacles that female students encounter in math-intensive fields and to develop programs that strengthen the opportunities and diminish the obstacles. This work should be done collaboratively with University faculty and staff who share the goal of increasing access for women to STEM fields.
- Establish a deeper integration of Uni instruction with the educational opportunities provided by the University. With careful planning, a substantial part of the senior year for Uni students could consist of University course work taken for Uni and University credit. Exploring the capabilities of highly talented secondary school students to participate in in University-level classes could become a key theme in Uni's lab school mission.
- The capacity of Uni to help with the recruitment and retention of key faculty of the University is an implicit but powerful component of the Uni mission, and the continued operation of Uni will require at least a modest increase in the support provided by the University. Uni's recruiting and retention contribution to the campus should be acknowledged in the school's admissions practices. Part of the per-class increase made possible by the elimination of the sub-freshman year should reflect discretionary decisions made by the Director of Uni in response to recommendations made by the Provost.
- Uni has more qualified applicants each year than it has places to offer. We recommend exploring the prospect of reserving up to ten spaces a year for fully qualified students who otherwise did not make the admissions cut but whose admission could help the University in its recruitment and retention efforts should help cement the good will of the University while sustaining the academic quality of the freshman class.
- For most families in America, high school is an experience shared among siblings. Shared participation by brothers and sisters in common classes, sports teams, and social activities is important to families for both practical and emotional reasons. And having siblings attend the same school builds loyalty for future alumni and development operations. Moreover, research has established that an important diversity is created by birth order of children within a family. For these reasons, admissions decisions should include some recognition or preference for siblings. How much recognition should be a subject for the Director and the Board (discussed below) to decide.

## **VII. GOVERNANCE**

The Task Force has come to believe that Uni's instructional work going forward is propelled less by mission than by inertia. Partly this condition reflects real ambiguities and uncertainties about what the mission of Uni is. Partly it reflects convictions about the merits of the status quo and its roots in past

educational history at Uni. Partly it reflects weaknesses in a governance structure not effectively designed to embed mission-defined purpose and innovation into the work of the school.

The 1983 report of the University High School Committee appointed by Vice Chancellor Goldwasser, “The Mission and Governance Structure of University High School,” came to a similar conclusion. That committee observed “that fundamental changes in the organizational structure of University High School are necessary if the school is to function as an active center for research and curriculum development, an outstanding college preparatory school, and a resource for the secondary school teachers of our state and nation.”

The 1983 committee proposed a two-part governance structure: an “internal governance structure” and an “external governance plan” to replace and improve upon the governance model organized around the now abandoned administrative connection to the College of Education. The internal structure would establish an advisory committee that would “advise and assist” the director in implementing and sustaining the school’s mission. Its membership would be drawn chiefly from university faculty. The external governance structure would be “placed in the campus administrative unit that is best suited to encourage broad faculty participation in the work of the school.”

The recommendations of this committee reflected an incisive analysis of some of the problems facing the school at that time. They did not, however, lead to the establishment of a sturdy governance structure empowered to provide effective direction. This committee envisioned active engagement of a “broad segment of the university faculty” dedicated to making Uni “an active center for research and curricular development, an outstanding college preparatory school, and a resource for the secondary school teachers of our state and nation.” Broad interest among university faculty, however, never materialized; the proposed Advisory Committee never really came together as a force to provide guidance; and the administrative location of the school within the office of the provost has not led to vigilant monitoring of the place of mission within the school’s operations.

We believe it is possible and necessary to integrate a lab school dimension more centrally into Uni’s operations. We believe Uni must develop a more innovative instructional program. We believe there is more potential than is currently realized for cooperation with University faculty in the disciplines taught at Uni. We believe that a sharpened lab mission growing out of, and consistent with, Uni’s commitment to serving high-achieving students would strengthen the school, would strengthen ties to the University, would enable Uni to contribute more extensively to other schools in the state, and would lead to important insights germane to a wide range of secondary education issues. We believe there is particular promise in a mission shift that would involve extensive efforts to identify and recruit to Uni students who do not fit the profile typical of the high-achieving students admitted to Uni but who possess the talents necessary to

succeed in that world when sufficient help from tutoring and mentoring programs is provided by the school.

We also believe that in order to move in this direction there must be a reimagined governance structure.

What attributes would that new governance structure need to have to make it effective?

- Members must have a clear understanding of, and strong commitment to, the mission of Uni as a school that provides a first-rate educational environment for academically gifted students.
- Members must have an understanding and commitment to a larger laboratory component of the school and to ties between Uni faculty and programs and University faculty and programs.
- Members must have a strong commitment to developing admissions policies and practices and academic support programs that will make the Uni experience available to a broader range of gifted students than currently is the case.
- Members must have a strong commitment to nurturing an innovative curriculum that will make Uni a leader in providing educational opportunities for academically talented students.
- There must be a range of expertise and experience among members that reflects the strengths of the University, the University's expectations for Uni, and the needs of the community Uni serves.
- Members must be able to make themselves available for at least quarterly meetings and to exercise due care in meeting their responsibilities to the school. In the initial year or two of the Board, more frequent meetings are likely to be necessary.

Suggested membership distribution:

- Total nine regular voting members, with staggered three-year terms.
- Two deans (or associate deans), including at least one from the College of Engineering or the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Three University faculty members
- Four more members, at least two of whom are not employed by the University
- No more than three members who are parents of students enrolled in Uni
- The Director of Uni, who would serve as an ex-officio non-voting member.

Formation of the Board:

- Members appointed by the Provost, after consultation with appropriate groups and individuals, including, once the initial Board is established, the membership of the Board.
- Members are eligible to serve two consecutive terms, but then must be off the Board for at least one year before serving again.

- The Board shall have a President selected by the membership (except that the President of the initial Board will be named by the Provost).
- Much of the work of the Board will be done by three committees (Governance, Finance, Academic Affairs), with each Board member serving on a committee.
- The President, after consultation with the membership, will appoint the committees.
- The President will serve as chair of the Governance Committee, and after consultation with the membership, will name the chairs of other two committees.
- The President and the chairs of the other two committees will form an Executive Committee.

Board Member responsibilities (adapted from “Legal Duties of an Independent School Board,” National Association of Independent Schools, PDF, [https://www.nais.org/Articles/Documents/Legal\\_Duties\\_of\\_An\\_Independent\\_School\\_Board\\_Sandra\\_Hughes.pdf](https://www.nais.org/Articles/Documents/Legal_Duties_of_An_Independent_School_Board_Sandra_Hughes.pdf)):

- Shape and articulate the school’s vision, mission, values and purpose.
- Work closely with the Provost to select the school director.
- Support the school head and annually assess his or her performance.
- Advise the Provost on the conduct of and University response to the director’s formal five-year review.
- Ensure effective organizational planning.
- Exercise budgetary responsibility and oversight, including annual approval of school budget.
- Determine, monitor, and strengthen the school’s policies, programs, and services
- Enhance the standing of the school in the University and in the community.
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.
- Recruit and orient new members and assess board performance.

The initial Board will have major responsibilities for refining the mission of Uni, establishing its own by-laws, and addressing issues that arise when a new governance structure is put in place. The Provost’s

selection of members for this first Board will be of great importance in establishing the new governance traditions that we believe are essential to Uni's future.

We realize that this new governance structure will not provide an administrative center within an academic unit, the faculty of which are charged with developing the laboratory mission of the school. That arrangement was ended with the College of Education ceased to be Uni's administrative home. We also recognize that Uni teachers cannot be expected to develop and instantiate a robust laboratory mission acting entirely on their own. We have tried to provide the outline of a governance model that – with some internal reorganization within Uni aimed at revitalizing the school's University connections, and with intensified engagement by University faculty from a range of fields interested in such issues as diversity-infused instructional excellence and the success of females in engineering and science – can re-imagine, implement, and provide the necessary support to ensure an appropriate lab mission focus at Uni.

## **VIII. UNI FINANCES**

An attached PowerPoint document presents the current state of Uni finances. This document identifies areas in which Uni faces serious financial stress.

- There is a recurring deficit.
- The operating budget is not adequate to sustain current operations and provide funding for instructional innovation, even minimal equipment purchases, or minor but significant maintenance investments.
- Major infrastructure issues include:
  - A core building that has long been deemed inadequate to provide state-of-the-art secondary school instruction and that has not been well-maintained
  - Loss of auxiliary buildings that have been condemned
  - Extensive deferred maintenance costs
  - Long range need for greater instructional space for classroom and laboratory use

We believe the first two of these issues – the recurring deficit and the inadequate operations budget – can be effectively addressed by the following measures:

- Staff reductions made possible by
  - the elimination of the sub-freshman year
  - more extensive use of University instruction for Uni students in their senior year
  - a thorough review of the school's staffing needs
- A modest increase of Provost funding for Uni

- A modest assessment on the academic colleges, which benefit from the presence of having Uni on campus
- More aggressive fund-raising (we are encouraged by the recent substantial gift from an anonymous donor for classroom renovation), including increased efforts to encourage current parents to meet or exceed recommended contributions to support Uni.

This set of cost reductions and revenue increases should enable Uni to cover its own basic expenditures, support innovation, further develop its lab school mission, and address most infrastructural needs associated with the core Uni building.

Barring a spectacular advancement windfall, current cost estimates for the third of these issues – the long-range need for greater instructional space – substantially exceed any amount that could conceivably be raised through the current budget model.

The Task Force believes that the substantial infrastructural challenges looming in Uni’s future can best be met through collaborative arrangements with the University. The most promising avenue to pursue would involve building efforts to address Uni’s instructional needs into campus plans to build a large instructional building. One excellent site under consideration for that building is the block where the current Uni building is situated. When the two houses that have been serving as office space for Uni faculty, the decrepit Uni gymnasium building, and the parking lot immediately east of Uni are demolished, space that has long been assigned to Uni functions could be made available for broader campus use.

We believe sufficient classroom/laboratory space occupying a small part of a new instructional building located in that space would be sufficient to accommodate Uni’s instructional needs. The cost-sharing required for Uni collaboration in this project, which would include whatever credit can be leveraged by providing the space now serving Uni purposes, would be considerably smaller than the costs projected for a new high school building. The remaining Uni share could well become the focus of a successful advancement campaign.

A Uni presence in this campus instructional building would free up the current Uni building for faculty office use and some classroom work that does not require laboratory facilities. With this more limited use of the old building, maintenance costs would be decreased substantially. Such a presence would also contribute to deeper collaborative efforts with the campus discussed earlier in this report, including a fuller integration of senior year instruction into campus instructional opportunities.

## **IX. ALTERNATE MODELS**

Since Uni’s split from the College of Education in 1983, Uni High has operated as a public lab school situated in the Office of the Provost. While this model has been sufficient to meet minimal operating expenses most years, it limits Uni’s sources of income relative to other local schools. While Uni receives the same per-pupil General State Aid as local schools, it is not able to collect property taxes or participate in the county sales tax devoted to school facilities because it is not a school “district.” Private schools, on the other hand, do not collect these fees but are free to charge tuition. In short, the current model is problematic because Uni does not have access to the revenue streams other schools use to maintain,



upgrade or build new facilities. These facility liabilities, then, fall squarely on the University, which has largely neglected them for the past 40 years.

The charge letter from the Provost recognizes these limitations when it notes that “Uni’s traditional funding model of modest campus investment, moderate parent contributions, and strong reliance on GSA...appear no longer viable.” Further, it notes, “significant new investments from the campus are not a realistic long-term solution.” This task force was then asked to “propose at least one new financial/operating model that could be sustainable over the next two decades or more.”

The charge letter recommended the task force use the following framework as a starting point, but notes that the first option is the current unsustainable model and the last option is not viable because it requires significant investment by the campus.

- Austerity (the current model)
- Revenue enhancement
- Charter school (within Champaign or Urbana school districts)
- Independent school
- Private school within UIUC
- University-centric public

Several of the recommendations in this report are consistent with the “revenue enhancement” approach by either increasing revenue or decreasing structural costs. The remaining three models fall neatly into two categories: tuition-based and district-based.

***Tuition-Based Models***

Both the “independent school” model and the “private school within UIUC” model would reclassify Uni from a public lab school eligible for General State Aid (GSA) to a private school dependent on tuition.

Currently, Uni has four main sources of revenue that produced roughly \$3.4M in revenue last year.

	<b>FY16</b>
General State Aid (GSA)	\$ 1,819K
Provost’s Office	\$ 383K
Unrestricted Gifts	\$ 846K
Self-Supporting	\$ 416K

Becoming an independent or private school would result in the loss of all \$1.8M in GSA. An independent Uni would also lose the \$383K contribution from the Provost’s office, though a “private school within UIUC” might retain that contribution. It is also reasonable to assume that much of the \$846K in parent contributions would be lost as parents would assume that tuition should cover the operational costs of the school. What family giving did remain would likely be targeted at capital programs or educational

innovations. Finally, much of the \$416K in self-supporting revenue would be lost since we would not charge an \$800 registration fee on top of tuition.

The Uni administration’s best estimate is that roughly \$3M of the current revenue stream would no longer be available if Uni were a private or independent school. With roughly 330 students, tuition would have to be set at \$9,090 per year to match current revenue levels.

However, current revenue levels are woefully inadequate because 1) discretionary spending has been slashed to unsustainable levels, 2) Uni has a \$1.56M debt to repay, and 3) there are no sources of funds for building maintenance, renovation or expansion. Further, as an independent school or even a private school within the University (likely structured as a self-supporting auxiliary unit), Uni would have to assume many of the costs currently borne by the University such as building service workers, routine maintenance, utilities, budget/HR, legal counsel, IT support, etc. Realistically, these additional expenditures would total \$1M to \$2M a year, which would require tuition to be \$12,120 to \$15,150 per year.

A survey of local independent schools supports this estimate. As the table below reveals, the three independent schools with no religious affiliation (denoted with asterisks), and therefore no subsidy from the sponsoring faith, have tuitions between \$11,000 and \$15,800.

School	Grades	Enrollment	Tuition
Next Generation*	K-8	285	\$11,000
Countryside*	K-8	149	\$12,670
Holy Cross	K-8	316	\$4180 (parish member) \$5,700 (non-parish member)
St. Johns	K-8	185	\$3,850 (church member) \$5,100 (non-church members)
St. Matthews	K-8	416	
Judah Christian	K-12	500+	\$7,802
St. Thomas Moore	9-12	295	\$7,118 (Parish member) \$10,703 (non-Parish member)
Academy High*	9-12	200-400	\$15,800

This task force does not support a private or independent school model for Uni for two important reasons. Remaining a public school open to all academically talented students is at the core of Uni’s identity and mission. For 93 years Uni has been open and accessible to all talented students regardless of their family’s economic status and innumerable lives have been enriched by the affordable education Uni has provided. We continue to believe in the value of an open public education for all qualified students. Further, with the opening of Academy High the task force is skeptical that there is sufficient demand for two independent schools with tuition in excess of \$12,000 a year. Without further clarity about the potential market for such schools, shifting Uni to a private tuition-based model might introduce significant financial and existential risk.

***District-Based Models***

As previously noted, Uni’s funding model is limited in large part because it cannot access the tax-based revenue that is limited to schools organized as school districts. Organizing Uni as a charter school appears

to address many of Uni's issues by allowing it to align with a traditional school district while remaining a public school with considerable autonomy.

According to the National Charter School Resource Center, a charter school is defined as:

Charter schools are public schools operating under a "charter," essentially a contract entered into between the school and its authorizing agency. In addition to allowing the school to open, the charter allows the school with significant operational autonomy to pursue specific educational objectives. The autonomy granted under the charter agreement allows the school considerable decision-making authority over key matters of curriculum, personnel, and budget. Charter schools are often not a part of states' current districts and, therefore, have few if any zoning limitations. Therefore, students attend charter schools by the choice of their parents or guardians rather than by assignment to a school district. (Source: <https://www.charterschoolcenter.org/what-is-a-charter-school>)

This model appears to have many advantages. As a charter school associated with one or more of the local school districts, Uni may have access to critical funding for facility renovations by becoming part of a district that has property tax authority and making Uni eligible for its estimated \$200K per year share of the county sales tax. Further, it allows Uni to remain a public school and a well-crafted charter agreement would allow Uni to retain much of its autonomy over hiring, admissions, and curriculum.

The partner school district or districts may be attracted to such an arrangement because Uni could serve as the honors program for their district(s) and allow the district(s) to include Uni's highly successful graduates in their district numbers. In short, it would become a "crowned jewel" of the district(s) rather than a source of irritation.

It does appear, however, that there are dimensions of charter school regulations that would be hard to reconcile with traditional Uni values. A prominent feature of Uni over the years has been its reliance on teachers with considerable subject matter expertise, often including masters and doctorates, but without state teaching certification. Charter school regulations require 75% of teachers be certified. Our understanding is that charter schools may not have selective admission, so the traditional Uni focus on academically talented students may be lost. And it is not clear that in the final analysis there would be economic benefits for Uni in redeveloping itself as a charter school.

## **X. THE AMENDED CHARGE**

In response to the Provost's amended charge letter, the Task Force met with planners of a new, private high school – now named Academy High School --in the Champaign-Urbana area. The Task considered collaboration possibilities that would draw on the resources of both Uni and the new private school, which is set to open by admitting freshmen and sophomore students for fall 2017.

The chair of the Task Force and the Associate Provost with oversight of Uni met with leaders of this group twice, and the Associate Provost engaged in several other communications with them. The Task Force invited them to a meeting and met with them by a phone connection. After considerable discussion, the Task Force did not see at this time any opportunities for developing collaborations with

the leaders of Academy High School that would contribute positively to Uni academically or financially. This does not, of course, and is not meant to, rule out prospects for such collaboration at a later time.

## APPENDIX A ANDO LETTER OF DISSENT

I am a member of the Provost's Task Force to consider the mission and funding model for UIUC's University Laboratory High School. I cannot fully support the Task Force's final report, and thus am submitting this letter of dissent.

I do applaud the committee for its attempt to elevate diversity and the "lab mission" in its vision for a future Uni. It should be noted that the current instantiation of Uni already tries to increase diversity and that Uni teachers already have lab mission work written into their contracts, yet Uni enrollment remains disproportionately white and privileged and little meaningful lab mission work occurs (with laudable exceptions coming from a few teachers, including those who served on the Task Force itself). Nonetheless, the school would be a better asset to the university and the community if a change in governance could accomplish what previous efforts have not.

However, I take issue with some of the foundations of the report and the priorities it embodies.

Several of the foundations of the report are based on little or no sound empirical evidence. The finding that "University High School is a significant asset to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Champaign-Urbana community" is based, implicitly or explicitly, on notions that (1) "gifted" students gain a better education if they attend an elite selective school like Uni rather than the non-selective public schools they would otherwise attend, and (2) Uni has major value to the university because its existence makes it easier to recruit and retain faculty.

With regard to the first notion, no research is available to indicate specifically whether attending Uni instead of the public high schools in Champaign and Urbana yields significant benefits to students. The evidence on the actual value of elite high school education is decidedly mixed. A recent study of a particular set of charter schools in Boston did find that they were effective in improving student outcomes, even erasing the racial gap in achievement (Angrist et al. 2016). However, other papers that use similar careful methods to control for confounding factors (regression discontinuity design, propensity score matching) find minimal benefits, if any, for students of attending prestigious "exam schools" in New York and Boston, such as Stuyvesant High School (Abdulkadiroglu et al. 2014) or for students of attending top tier instead of good quality nonselective high schools in Chicago (Allensworth 2016). Abdulkadiroglu et al. (2014) conclude baldly, "while the exam school students in our samples typically have good outcomes, most of the students would likely have done well without the benefit of an exam school education." The second notion is based on anecdotes of cases where the existence of Uni has helped to recruit or retain faculty with young or high school aged children. However, there are simply no concrete measures of how important Uni is for recruiting and retaining outstanding faculty at the University of Illinois.

But those are quibbles. Even if we assume that the small set of Uni students did have somewhat better outcomes than if they attended the non-selective public schools, and that some faculty would not come here in the absence of Uni, those facts alone would not justify the presumption that it is a priority for the University of Illinois itself to provide an elite high school education to

a small number of “gifted” (and thus, in our inequitable nation, largely privileged) students in our community without serious concern for the damage done by Uni to our diverse local public high schools. On the contrary, we have a moral imperative not to undermine public schools that are open to all children, and the university’s mission aligns with that imperative. As Chancellor Jones said in his email on October 3, 2016, “We need to find ways to make [his] story possible for everyone” and “when questions around social equity and social justice are forcing fundamental reevaluations of everything from our admission policies to our investment strategies, we have an opportunity to demonstrate different paths forward.”

We are a public research land-grant university. Our mission is to do research, to provide broad access to excellent college education, and to engage in outreach to improve public well-being. Thus, University of Illinois engagement with high school education should at least not damage the public schools around us. Currently, that is not the case. Uni currently enrolls disproportionately white and privileged students (Benmamoun 2016). This pulls those students and their active and well-resourced families out of our very diverse public high schools, depriving Uni students of experience with diversity and contributing locally to the dangerous national trend of re-segregation of secondary schools that undermines public high school education (see Appendix). Society needs strong public schools to promote social justice, to provide opportunities for success to children who are not currently labeled as gifted, and to foster understanding across heterogeneous groups of our future citizens. The recent election and its aftermath underscored the racial rifts in our society, and how critical cross-racial understanding will be for its future.

The suggestions made in the report do not go far enough to ensure that any future version of Uni High is in fact a net contributor to high school education for all children in our area. If the University of Illinois continues to support a self-contained elite high school for advanced students, the documentation that governs the school should have a prominent and unequivocal statement that Uni must be managed such that the local public high schools themselves affirm that Uni is beneficial rather than detrimental to them, with the understanding that this would probably mean both reducing the maximum enrollment in Uni of students that would otherwise attend any given public school and providing valuable resources and services to the other schools through its lab mission work.

If local high-school quality is a concern for faculty recruiting purposes, or if we genuinely care about social justice in the quality of education, other options are possible. First, the University of Illinois would do well to engage further with the local public high schools in Urbana and Champaign and help improve the experience of students in those schools. This could, for example, involve providing library access to honors students, matching students selected by high school administrators to opportunities to work in campus research groups, and streamlining access to selected Illinois classes for ambitious local high school students. Urbana, Central, and Centennial high schools provide good educations for students of all abilities and backgrounds (see last figure in the Appendix), and many more students in our community – and even children of our faculty – will attend those public schools than Uni. Urbana High School has extensive AP class offerings and just won a national award for excellence (a School of Opportunity award from the National Education Policy Center). Central and Centennial high schools have extensive

AP offerings as well, and students from all three of those high schools go on to highly competitive colleges and universities every year. There are low-cost models for such partnerships with local public high schools at many other universities (Indiana University is a nearby example) that the University of Illinois could adapt for its own use.

Second, if the University of Illinois wants to continue high school academic programs for advanced students, it could do so in a form that works with local schools rather than pulling students out of them. MIT, for example, has a program called NuVu that provides instruction based on “multi-disciplinary, collaborative projects” for students who remain enrolled in schools nearby (<https://cambridge.nuvustudio.com/>). Such a program would provide innovative educational experiences for talented public-school students in Urbana-Champaign. Its impact on faculty recruiting could be very large since all ambitious students could take part. It would strengthen rather than harm the local public schools, and indeed help them to fend off cream-skimming from the new private high school that will open next year in Champaign. Furthermore, that kind of program would have lower capital and operating expenses than Uni because it would not be attempting to serve all the functions of a complete high school.

The Task Force report advocates for a vision of Uni that makes only modest improvements in the contributions of the University of Illinois to the broad public good through engagement with secondary education. It may be time for the University of Illinois to see beyond the status quo and to find a “different path forward.”

Submitted by: Amy W. Ando, Professor  
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Angrist, Joshua D., Sarah R. Cohodes, Susanb M. Dynarski, and Parag A Pathak. 2016. Stand and deliver: Effects of Boston’s charter high schools on college preparation, entry, and choice.” *Journal of Labor Economics* 34(2): 275-318.

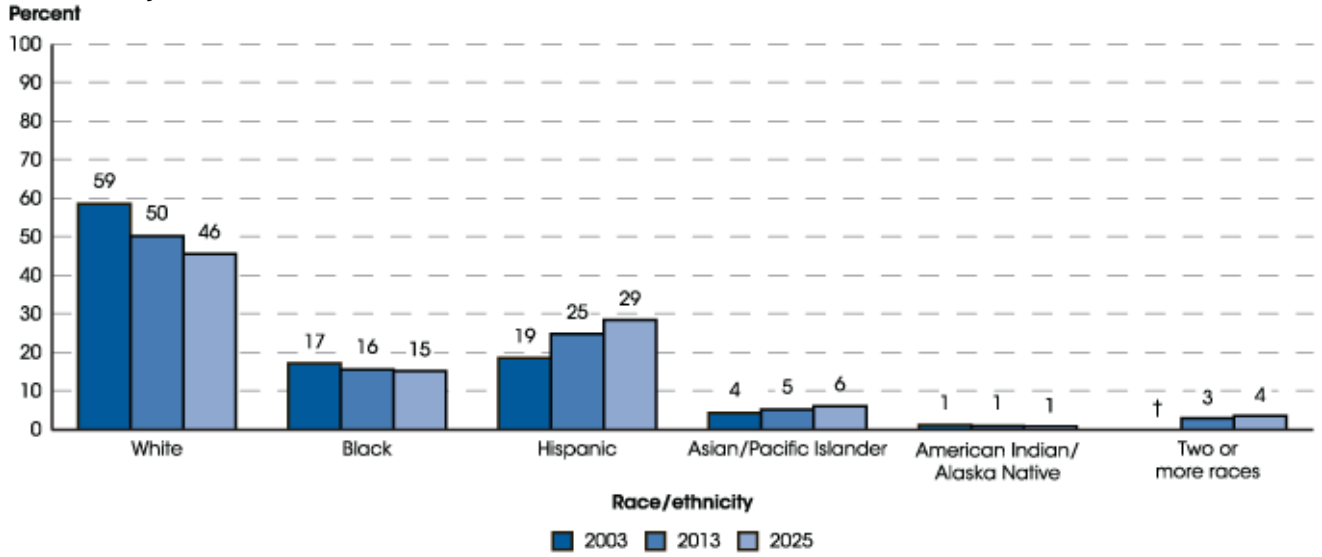
Benmamoun, Nora. 2016. “Uni’s lack of socioeconomic diversity is a problem.” *The Gargoyle*. <https://gargoyle.uni.illinois.edu/?q=articles/2016/01/09/unis-lack-socioeconomic-diversity-problem>.

**Data Appendix**

- Public schools in the US are becoming majority-minority as the number of white students in them falls in both absolute and percentage terms.

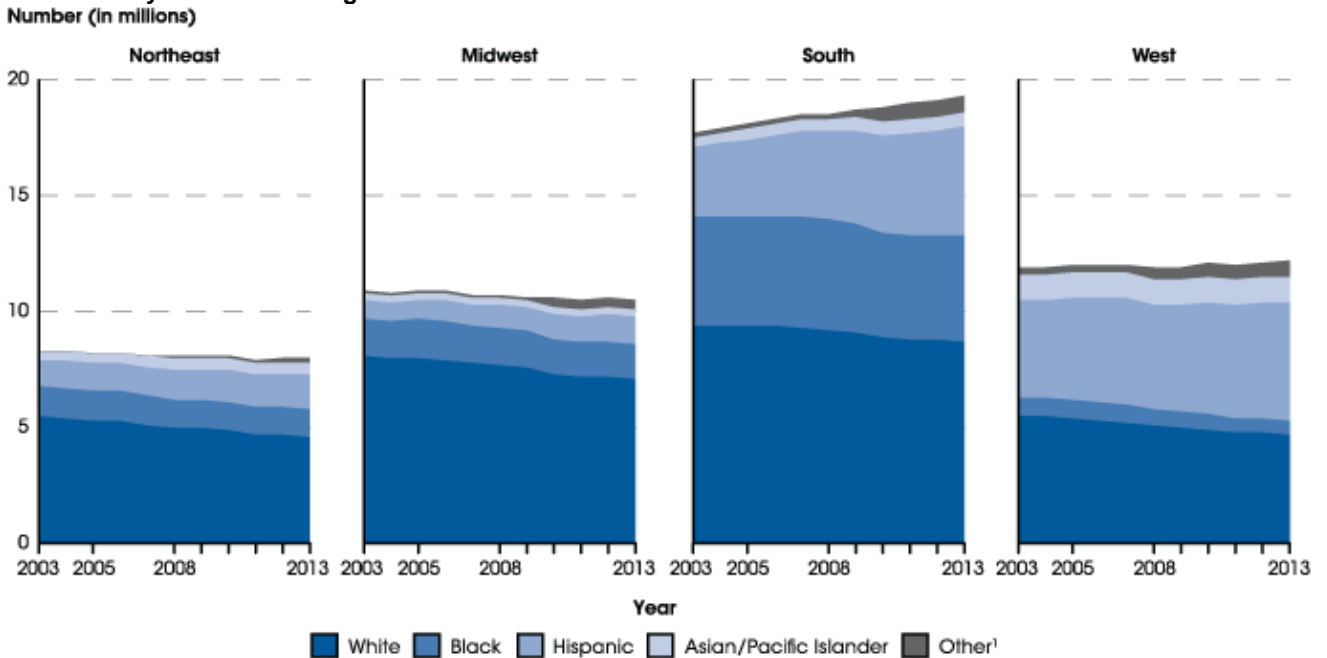
Figures taken directly from [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_cge.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cge.asp) include 2025 projections.

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity: Fall 2003, fall 2013, and fall 2025**



† Not applicable.

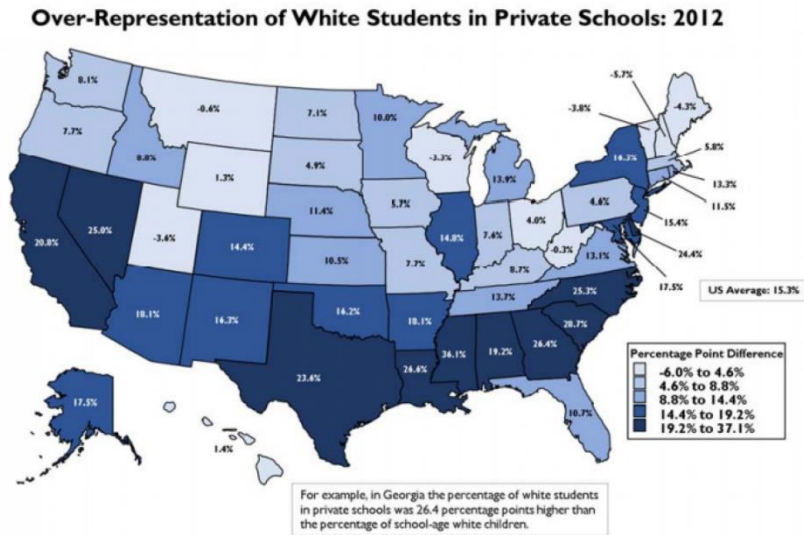
**Figure 2. Number of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by region and race/ethnicity: Fall 2003 through fall 2013**



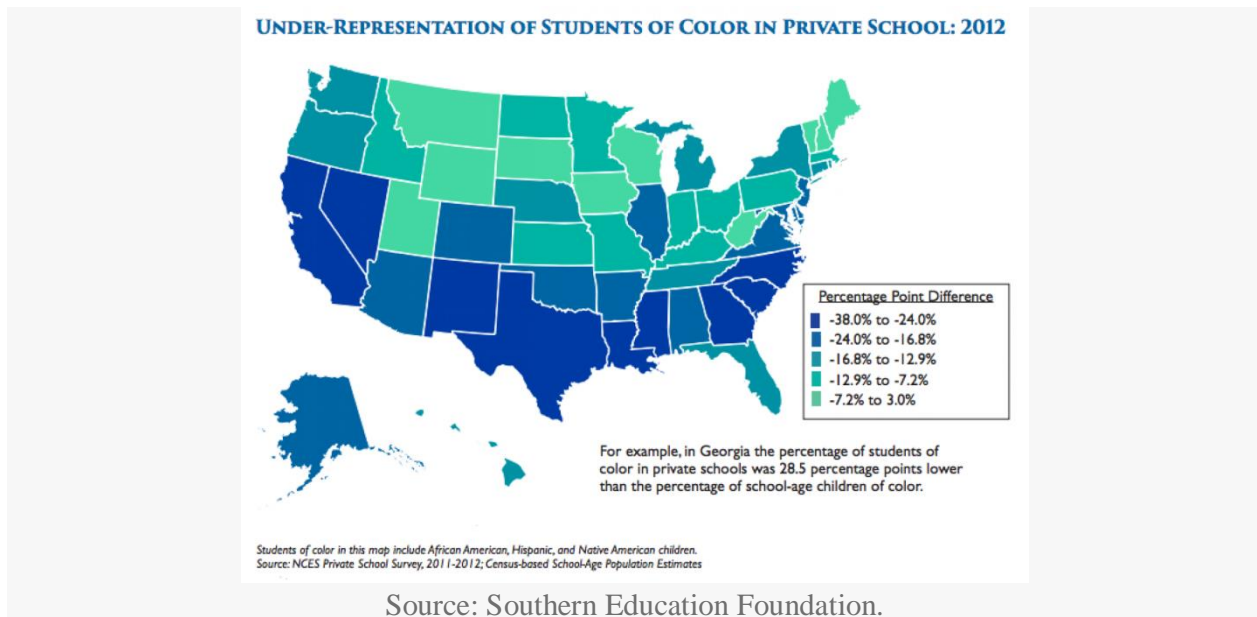


- Part of that demographic shift is driven by the fact that private schools enroll disproportionately large numbers of white students. It's not clear what roles wealth inequality, preference, and discrimination play in this pattern.

Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/03/29/the-overwhelming-whiteness-of-u-s-private-schools-in-six-maps-and-charts/>



Source: Southern Education Foundation “Private school enrollment in the south and the nation,” March 2016



Source: Southern Education Foundation.

Source: Southern Education Foundation “Private school enrollment in the south and the nation,” March 2016

- The non-selective public high schools in Champaign and Urbana reflect the national pattern in disproportionately high representation of students who are African American or Latinx. **Note:** The comparison below is imperfect because city level racial composition data is not quickly available for years between the decennial censuses or for populations specifically of school age people.

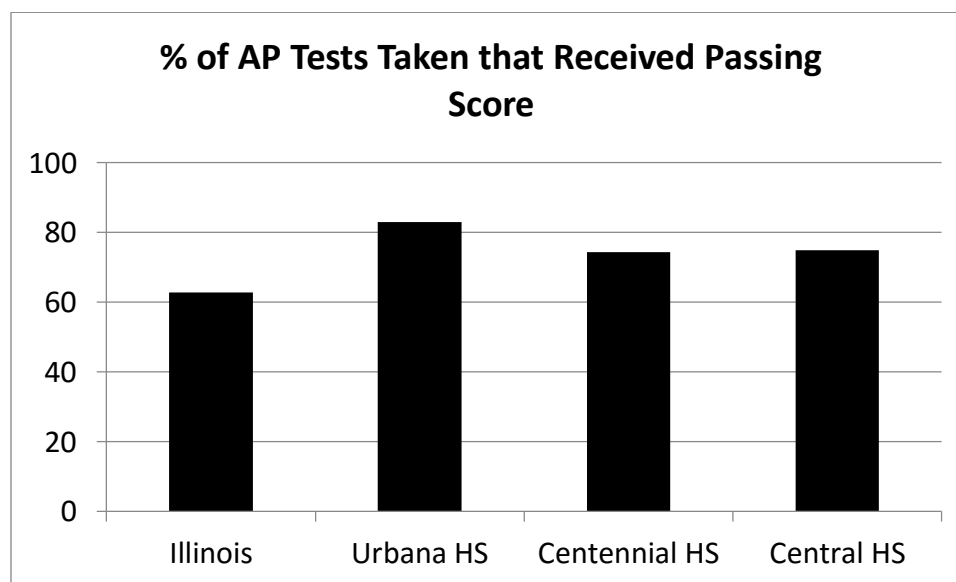
### Racial Composition of Populations of Urbana, Champaign, and Their High Schools

	Urbana <sup>b</sup>	Urbana HS <sup>a</sup>	Champaign <sup>b</sup>	Central HS <sup>a</sup>	Centennial HS <sup>a</sup>
% White	57.7	42.5	64.8	47.6	44.5
% Black	16.3	37.3	15.6	31.3	34.1
% Hispanic	5.2	8.6	6.3	9.4	7.0
% Asian	17.8	3.5	10.6	7.2	9.2
% other	3	8.1	2.7	4.5	5.2

<sup>a</sup> Source: 2015 Illinois School Report Card

<sup>b</sup> Source: 2010 U.S. Census

- All three public high schools in Champaign-Urbana encourage diverse students to take AP classes and tests. Statistics indicate that students in these schools who take those tests pass at higher rates than students in the state of Illinois overall.



Note: Data are from AP tests taken in 2015. A test is counted as “passing” if it receives a score of 3, 4, or 5. Numbers extracted from <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/daywatch/ct-ap-results-schools-charts-htmlstory.html/?k=2i0k04>.