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Dear Friends,

Many of you have told me that you are concerned about the Top 10% Law and its effect on admissions at UT Austin. We're concluding the admissions cycle here on the 40 Acres, and I'd like to share some figures with you.

We received 29,626 applications for the fall 2008 freshman class. Our target enrollment for that class is 7,200. We have already admitted more than 9,100 Texas applicants who graduated in the top 10% of their high school class. Those figures clearly demonstrate the problem we face.

Of course, not all the Top 10% admitted students will attend UT. But we estimate that 81-85% of our freshmen from Texas high schools will be automatically admitted under the Top 10% Law, and it could reach 100% within the next two years. After all, last year's figure was 71%, so we've experienced a substantial increase in only 12 months.

The law penalizes many well-rounded students. Furthermore, we are unable to admit many students with extraordinary skills in music, art, mathematics, or leadership because we are required to select so many students according to a sole criterion, class rank. When our children come to us and ask for advice, we properly tell them to do well in school, but also to be well rounded by getting involved in their community. Then when they want to come to UT, they find out only one thing matters. That's a terrible message to send to our young people.

In addition, only one in four of our top 10% students is Hispanic or African American. We are running out of room to recruit minority students who, for example, are in the 15th percentile and who have other indices of leadership. We can do a better job diversifying our class if we have more flexibility. When the Top 10% Law was originally passed, about 41% of our Texas students came in under it. All we are asking is to return to that original model.

In testimony before the Legislature on many occasions, I have stated that if we granted automatic admission to half the freshman class and considered all admissions criteria for the other half, we could accomplish the goals of the Top 10% Law while building a diverse and well-rounded student body. In my travels across Texas, I will continue to try to educate the people of our state and our elected representatives about the effects of the Top 10% Law on educational opportunities at The University of Texas at Austin. I hope you will join me.

Thanks for all you do for the University.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bill Powers". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Powers
President
The University of Texas at Austin