

States with Automatic or Guaranteed College Admissions Policies

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Issue

Which states have guaranteed admission policies for their state universities? What is the eligibility criteria under these policies? Are these policies established in statute?

Summary

This report uses research from the [Education Commission of the States](#) (“the Commission”), a nonpartisan organization created by states that tracks and reports on state education policy.

According to the Commission, there are currently at least 12 states that guarantee admission to their state universities for certain eligible students. Three states (Colorado, Illinois, and Texas) have guaranteed admissions policies established in statute. Nine states have programs or initiatives established by their state Departments of Education or Board of Regents, through policies or regulation. Additionally, California has an admissions policy that prioritizes admission to eligible students, but admission is subject to availability and students are subject to university enrollment limits.

Generally, students must have graduated from a state public high school, have a certain class rank, and have attained a certain ACT or SAT score to be eligible for a state’s guaranteed admission program.

States with Guaranteed Admission Policies

Arizona

Under an Arizona Board of Regents [policy](#), each Arizona state university may guarantee admission to undergraduate students who are state residents and meet certain requirements, including demonstrating academic competency in certain subjects and (1) ranking in the upper 25th percentile of their high school graduating class or (2) having a 3.0 minimum cumulative grade point average.

California

The University of California [statewide guarantee](#) offers the top 9% of California high school graduates admission prioritization to any University of California (UC) campus if space is available. The UC system uses an [admissions index](#) to determine a student's UC GPA by converting their ACT or SAT scores to a UC score, which is then matched to their UC GPA.

Colorado

Under Colorado [law](#), the Colorado State Board of Education and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education was required to establish the criteria to create a [Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Endorsed Diploma](#) that guarantees admission to all open-access and moderately selective institutions, and provides students with priority consideration for admission to selective institutions.

The [criteria](#) includes student readiness in Math and English Language Arts, completion of an [Individual Career and Academic Plan](#), demonstration of [21st Century Skills](#), and mastery of academic content in three content areas.

Florida

The Florida Department of Education's [Talented Twenty Program](#) guarantees admission, within space and fiscal limitations, to a University System of Florida institution if a student (1) graduates from a Florida public high school in the top 20% of their class and (2) completes the 18 required high school units listed in state regulations ([Board of Governors Rule \(6.002\(2\)\(c\)\)](#)). A student must also submit ACT or SAT scores (no minimum score required).

Illinois

Illinois recently passed a [bill](#) (Public Act 101-0448) creating a four-year pilot automatic admission program for in-state public higher education institutions, with the exception of the University of

Illinois, Illinois State University, Governors State University, Northeastern Illinois University, and Chicago State University. This law requires them to automatically admit first-time freshman students who were in the top 10% of their graduating class no more than two years before the academic year in which they are applying. Students must also complete the minimum college preparatory curriculum requirements and attain the required ACT or SAT composite scores.

The bill also requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to increase these institutions' outreach efforts to academically high-performing Illinois high school seniors who are most likely to be eligible for automatic admission, and to provide them with information and counseling on financial assistance and other opportunities.

Idaho

The Idaho State Board of Education's [Direct Admissions Initiative](#) proactively offers admission to public high school seniors to the state public higher education institutions. Students with (1) a GPA equal to or greater than 3.0 or (2) an SAT math and reading score multiplied by GPA equal to or greater than 2,835 automatically receive notification of admission to any of the state's eight public colleges and universities. Students who do not meet one of those benchmarks are admitted to any of the state's six public colleges and universities that offer associate or certificate programs. Once a student is accepted, they must complete an admission application and begin applying to the institutions of their choice.

Iowa

The Iowa State Board of Regents [guarantees admission](#) to high school students who score at least 245 on a Primary Regent Admission Index (RAI). The RAI is calculated using the student's ACT composite score, high school GPA, and the number of high school courses completed in core subject areas. Students who meet the minimum requirements will qualify for automatic admission to the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the University of Northern Iowa.

Kansas

Kansas state [universities](#) follow the Kansas Board of Regents [Qualified Admissions](#) criteria to automatically admit students who graduate from a state public high school. Four universities (Emporia State University, Pittsburg State University, Fort Hays State University, and Wichita State University) require a 1060 SAT score or a cumulative 2.25 GPA; Kansas State University requires a 1060 SAT score or 3.25 GPA; and the University of Kansas requires (1) a 1060 SAT score and a 3.2.5 GPA or (2) a 1160 SAT and a 3.0 GPA.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning established [criteria](#) that guarantees certain high school graduates admission to state public universities (Board of Trustees Policies and Bylaws § 602(B), page 95). Students must have completed a [College Preparatory Curriculum](#) (specified numbers of units of academic and elective courses) with (1) a minimum 3.2 GPA; (2) a minimum 2.5 GPA and rank in the top 50% of their class with an ACT score of at least 16; or (3) a minimum 2.00 GPA and an ACT score of at least 18.

Missouri

The Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development established [Admissions Selectivity Categories](#) to admit students to its public four-year higher education institutions. The institutions decide which selectivity category to use.

Highly selective institutions require students to have attained a combined percentile score (the sum of their high school percentile rank and the percentile rank attained on the SAT or ACT) of 140 points or greater, and students with an ACT score of 27 or greater (or equivalent SAT score) are automatically admitted.

Selective institutions require students to have attained a combined percentile score of 120 points or greater, and students with an ACT score of 24 or greater (or equivalent SAT score) are automatically admitted.

Moderately selective institutions require students to have attained a combined percentile score of 100 points or greater, and students with an ACT score of 21 or greater (or equivalent SAT score) are automatically admitted.

Montana

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education guarantees student admission to a four-year state university if certain [requirements](#) are met, including completion of the Regents' College Preparatory Program and demonstrated proficiency in mathematics and writing. Students must also attain a certain composite score on the ACT or SAT (ranging from 20-22 on the ACT or 1050-1120 on the SAT, depending on the institution), a high school GPA of at least 2.5, or a ranking in the top 50% of their graduating class.

South Dakota

South Dakota's [Proactive Admissions Initiative](#) guarantees certain students general admission to the state's public universities and technical institutes. This applies to students who earned a Level 3 or 4 on their 11th grade Smarter Balanced test in English and math or composite ACT score of 18 (certain degree programs and majors may have additional requirements).

Texas

Texas public higher education institutions (with the exception of University of Texas-Austin; see below) are required by statute to automatically admit high school graduates who graduated in the top 10% of their class ([Education Code § 51.803](#)). Students must have (1) completed a distinguished level of achievement under the Foundation High School Program or the Recommended or Advanced High School Program, (2) completed a comparable curriculum from a non-public Texas high school, or (3) satisfied college readiness benchmarks on the ACT or SAT.

Under the law, the University of Texas-Austin must automatically admit enough students to fill 75% of available state resident spaces prior to notifying state school officials the class rank that high school juniors are required to attain to be automatically admitted. For the summer and fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022, students are required to be in the top 6% of their class by the end of their junior year to qualify for automatic admission (Education Code § 51.803(d)).

The law also requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to increase these institutions' outreach to academically high-performing high school seniors who are most likely to be eligible for automatic admission, and to provide them with information and counseling on financial assistance and other opportunities.

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