

***PERCEPTIONS AND OPINIONS OF UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ENTERING FRESHMEN:
The Impact of The Texas Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law***

by

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Introduction

This project is a complement to the many reports produced by The University of Texas at Austin Office of Admissions since the passage of HB 588, or the Texas Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law. (See <http://www.utexas.edu/student/research/reports/reports.html>)

The automatic admissions policy mandated by HB 588 has had a well-documented impact on enrollment at The University of Texas at Austin. In short, diversity levels for entering freshman classes since the fall of 1998 have met or exceeded diversity levels of the fall of 1996, the last year in which a classic admissions model involving affirmative action was used.

What has not yet been documented or studied are the perceptions and opinions of students admitted under top 10% rules. Did the law encourage top 10% students to apply to UT? What do UT students think about the top 10% law? Do they feel the law has had an impact, positively or negatively, on the makeup of the UT freshman class? Who do the students feel benefit most from the implementation of the automatic admissions law – and who is penalized? More globally, according to freshmen, what contributes to – and hinders – a successful application to UT?

This study also seeks to determine the extent to which UT freshmen were informed, while still in high school, about possible benefits of HB 588. During the legislative session of 1999, some Texas legislators were concerned enough about this issue to introduce SB 510, which requires public secondary schools to post notices outside of every administrative and guidance office on campus. The law also included official notification requirements. These notices inform students of how they might benefit from HB 588. SB 510 was passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor George W. Bush. At the time of this survey, the notices should have been posted at schools throughout Texas for well over one year.

The Approach

Because of time and expense considerations, this is a web-based survey. E-mails were sent to 7,052 freshmen enrolled in the fall of 2000. This included summer students continuing to the fall 2000. Each communication was tagged to identify the students' demographic, racial/ethnic, and other characteristics. The e-mails had a link to the web-based survey. A reminder was sent to non-respondents after one week. Another was sent after the second week, and the survey was shut down after a total of three weeks. This took place during late October and early November of 2000. A total of 1,172 students responded. Of that number, 944 students were admitted from Texas High Schools. That population (n=944), hereafter referred to as the "Survey" group, is the subject of this study since HB 588 and SB 510 deal only with Texas high schools.

All references to "top 10% students" include only those students who were assigned a class rank among a specific class size by their high school. These students are often called "explicit top 10%" students.

Limitations

Web-based surveys, of course, depend upon respondents reading an e-mail message and clicking on a link to the Internet. This introduces the possibility of what has been called the "web effect." These respondents may be more technologically savvy than their classmates, but the computer literacy required of the respondents was minimal.

Table 1 illustrates racial/ethnic and gender differences between the **Survey** group, all freshmen admitted from **Texas** high schools, and **All Enrolled** freshmen.

	SURVEY		TEXAS		ALL ENROLLED	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
White	634	67.16	3791	62.75	4145	62.13
Native American	8	<1.0	26	<1.0	28	<1.0
African American	23	2.44	232	3.84	243	3.64
Asian American	147	15.57	1092	18.08	1157	17.34
Hispanic	122	12.92	857	14.19	878	13.16
Foreign	10	1.06	3	<1.0	217	3.25
Unknown			3	<1.0	3	<1.0
Total	944	100.00	6041	100.00	6671	100.00
Male	375	39.72	2861	47.36	3211	48.13
Female	569	60.28	3180	52.64	3460	51.87

The Survey group represents 15.63% of the Texas group. More importantly, the Survey group resembles the Texas group. Whites are slightly over-represented while each minority group is slightly under-represented, but the differences are small. For example, the difference between Hispanic representation in the survey group and the Texas group is only 1.27%. African-Americans are more under-represented with 23 respondents from a population of 232 students. Great care should be taken when interpreting African-American responses.

Larger differences, however, can be found when comparing the proportion of top 10% students among the different groups. Table 2 illustrates the percentages of top 10% students among the populations. Top 10% students make up a larger portion of the survey group than the Texas group (+6.96%), which means that a larger portion of them were automatically admitted. Presumably, they may be more disposed to favor a top 10% policy. (Which is why some results below are a bit surprising.)

Also, the large number of top 10% students (See Table 2) suggests that the survey group is a higher performing group of students.

Table 2 Percentages of Top 10% Students Fall 2000						
	SURVEY		TEXAS		ENROLLED	
	# Top 10	N-count	# Top 10	N-count	# Top 10	N-count
Numbers	576	944	3266	6041	3394	6671
Ratio	61.02%		54.06%		50.88%	

Table 3 provides more evidence that the Survey group is a higher performing set of students. A comparison of students by SAT score interval shows an under-representation of lower-scoring students (SAT < 1200) and an over-representation of higher scoring students (SAT > 1200).

Table 3 Survey Respondents, Texas Students, and All Enrolled Students by SAT Score Intervals Fall 2000						
	SURVEY		TEXAS		ENROLLED	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<900	14	1.48	129	2.14	139	2.08
900-990	35	3.71	271	4.49	294	4.41
1000-1090	101	10.70	730	12.08	765	11.47
1100-1190	184	19.49	1449	23.99	1582	23.71
1200-1290	278	29.45	1631	27.00	1846	27.67
1300-1390	191	20.23	1128	18.67	1278	19.16
1400-1490	117	12.39	543	8.99	594	8.90
1500+	24	2.54	160	2.65	173	2.59
Total	944	100.00	6041	100.00	6671	100.00

Because of these limitations, small differences in trends by racial/ethnic group, gender, and SAT score intervals should not be over-interpreted. Neither can sweeping conclusions be made using "borderline" data. But as we shall see, the students in the Survey group tended to be definite and cohesive in their responses to nearly all of the questions posed.

The Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of thirteen (13) multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question. For some, respondents were limited to one choice; for other questions, respondents could select multiple responses.

Each of the questions is treated below in much more detail. The survey can be reviewed at <http://dpdev1.dp.utexas.edu/adsurv/html/20009/Fall2000ttsurvey.html>

Results

The results throughout this report illustrate a freshman class that is surprisingly astute about the admissions process at the University of Texas. Whether automatically admitted or not, students understand what is important in the UT admissions process – both for top 10% and non-top 10% students. As stated above,

there were no significant areas of disagreement or variance in perceptions and experiences among the disaggregated subgroups.

Question 1: Did you graduate in the Top 10% of your graduating class?

The purpose of this question was to gauge the extent to which students were aware of their class ranking and its central role in the admissions process. Only 2.02% of the respondents answered that they did not know if they were in the Top 10% of their high school graduating class and almost all of them (15 of 19) were White. 66.31% of the students stated they were in the top 10%, which is slightly larger than the 61.02% who actually were. (Top 10% students were accurate 98.26% of the time compared to non-top 10% students who were accurate 79.02% of the time.) Some of the discrepancy may have come from students who, indeed, were in the top 10%, but were not ranked by their school (non-explicit top 10%). These students are not considered top 10% for purposes of HB 588. Regardless, the students were accurate in their responses to this question indicating that they appreciated the value of such a ranking. Each of the racial/ethnic groups answered in the affirmative about 65% of the time. Hispanic students, however, answered “yes” 78.15% of the time. Females were more likely to say “yes” than males (69.31% to 61.76% respectively).

White	65.30
African American	65.22
Asian American	65.31
Hispanic	78.15
Top 10%	98.26
Non-Top 10%	16.35
Males	61.76
Females	69.31
All Students	66.31

Question 2: While you were in high school did you know about the “Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law” in Texas?

Only 22 (2.33%) of the 944 respondents indicated that they had never heard of the Top 10% Law while in high school. Legislative attempts to “spread the word” through initiatives like SB 510 appear to have worked. There is little difference in the level of awareness among the different racial/ethnic groups.

The best-informed group was the Hispanic group (98.32%). The group with the lowest percentage was African American, but even this group had 95.65% indicating they knew of the law while still in high school. There was virtually no difference in the rate of affirmative responses among gender groups: 98.12% of males and 97.35% of females answered affirmatively.

Table 5	
Question 2: While you were in high school did you know about the “Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law” in Texas?	
Percentages of students answering “Yes”	
White	97.95
African American	95.65
Asian American	95.89
Hispanic	98.32
Top 10%	98.08
Non-Top 10%	97.00
Males	98.12
Females	97.35
All Students	97.66

Question 3: Do you feel like you have benefited directly from the Top 10% Law?

Interestingly, in a group in which 61.02% of the students were automatically admitted, only 48.40% indicated that they benefited from HB 588. This is more remarkable because, as stated above, the top 10% students were well aware of both their class rank and the law. Only 4.47% indicated they did not know if they benefited while 47.13% asserted that they did not benefit. Clearly, many students believe they would have been admitted to UT anyway. (See below.) On this question there are racial/ethnic differences:

Table 6	
Question 3: Do you feel like you have benefited directly from the Top 10% Law?	
Percentages of students answering “Yes”	
White	47.94
African American	39.13
Asian American	45.58
Hispanic	59.17
Top 10%	71.08
Non-Top 10%	12.84
Males	41.82
Females	52.73
All Students	48.40

There is a 20-percentage point spread between the group believing that they benefited the most (Hispanic) and the group feeling they benefited the least (African American). In addition, more than a 10-point spread exists between males (41.82%) and females (52.73%).

Question 4: Do you feel that your chances of being admitted to the University of Texas were hindered by the Top 10% Law?

Less than one third (27.42%) of the respondents believed that the Top 10% Law hindered their chances of being admitted to The University of Texas. Of course, that is not surprising since the survey population is of enrolled students. But among non-top 10% students the percentage answering “yes” was 60.49%. Males considered themselves more hindered than females (30.21% compared to 25.57% respectively). A racial/ethnic breakdown shows that African Americans answered “yes” more often than others:

White	28.48
African American	30.43
Asian American	25.85
Hispanic	21.49
Top 10%	6.27
Non-Top 10%	60.49
Males	30.21
Females	25.57
All Students	27.42

Question 5: Do you believe that you were admitted to UT because of the Top 10% Law?

The respondents clearly believe that they would have been admitted to UT whether or not the Top 10% Law was in place. Only 21.77% of the students answered “yes” and only 9.07% answered “don’t know.” Even among actual top 10% students who were automatically admitted the rate was only 30.31%. Interestingly, African Americans, the group considering themselves hindered most by the law (see Question 4), answered “yes” at a rate higher than any other racial/ethnic group.

White	20.19
African American	34.78
Asian American	23.97
Hispanic	25.62
Top 10%	30.31
Non-Top 10%	8.26
Males	16.67
Females	25.13
All Students	21.77

Females were more likely than males to believe they were admitted because of the Top 10% Law (25.13% and 16.67% respectively).

Question 6: Did you apply for admission to the University of Texas because of the Top 10% Law?

Only 11.46% of the respondents indicated that they applied to UT because of the Top 10% Law. African American and Hispanic students answered “yes” more often than the other racial/ethnic groups:

White	10.90
African American	17.39
Asian American	10.20
Hispanic	15.70
Top 10%	16.00
Non-Top 10%	4.36
Males	9.09
Females	13.03
All Students	11.46

While not conclusive, and considering the limitations stated above, the percentages appear to support the notion that HB 588 encourages minority students (when compared to the traditional majority) to apply to UT. Females also appear to be more likely to apply because of HB 588 (13.03% and 9.09% respectively).

Question 7: Place a check next to each of those factors that you think contributed to your being admitted to the University of Texas at Austin.

This question was followed by ten choices. The students were able to select more than one. The choices are listed in Table 10 below, which illustrates the rate of student selection.

Large percentages of students in all racial/ethnic groups selected class rank, high school grades, AP courses, and ACT/SAT scores. The only choice in which there were significant differences among the groups was racial/ethnic background. Nearly two-thirds of African American (65.22%) and Hispanic (62.30%) students believed that their racial/ethnic background contributed to their being admitted to UT. Only 1.10% of White students selected this choice. White (77.13%) and male (80.53%) students chose ACT/SAT scores more often than other students. It is not surprising that there is an observable relationship between the rate in which these groups selected ACT/SAT and the mean scores for the group.

	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Class Rank	82.18	73.91	82.31	88.52	78.67	84.89	82.42
HS Grades	89.12	82.61	89.12	90.16	83.73	92.79	89.19
AP Courses	75.71	69.57	69.39	63.11	70.67	74.34	72.88
Essays	63.88	56.52	57.14	45.08	57.60	61.34	59.85
ACT/SAT	77.13	60.87	66.67	63.11	80.53	68.89	73.52
Racial/Ethnic Background	1.10	65.22	24.49	62.30	17.60	12.65	14.62
HS Counselor	7.73	8.70	10.88	18.03	10.13	9.31	9.64
HS Coursework	51.58	60.87	53.06	47.54	50.67	51.67	51.27
Financial Need	3.79	26.09	8.84	23.77	6.67	8.61	7.84
Being Willing To Attend A Summer Session	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0

Table 11 below looks at Question 7 and breaks it down by separating those students who were, in fact, explicit top 10% students, and those who were not. The students in this survey are very astute when it comes to what the university considers for admission. For example, non-top 10% students are correct when responding that grades, AP courses, essays and ACT/SAT scores contributed to their being admitted to UT.

	Explicit Top 10% Students	Non-Top 10% Students
	%	%
Class Rank	98.44	57.34
HS Grades	95.14	79.89
AP Courses	73.96	71.20
Essays	53.99	69.02
ACT/SAT	69.79	79.35
Racial/Ethnic Background	15.97	12.50
HS Counselor	7.99	12.23
HS Coursework	51.56	50.82
Financial Need	9.20	5.71
Being Willing To Attend A Summer Session	<1.0	<1.0

Question 8: Place a check next to the one factor that you think contributed most to your being admitted to the University of Texas at Austin.

This question is like Question 7, but through the use of "radio buttons" the students were allowed only one choice. This had the effect of forcing students to prioritize. Table 12 illustrates the rate of the answer "yes" to each of the choices for all students and for each racial/ethnic and gender group. Again, the respondents in each of the groups chose class rank far more often than any other choice. For the entire group, 45.78% answered class rank, but that is still far below the 61.02% who were automatically admitted through HB 588.

	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Class Rank	45.80	43.48	46.58	48.74	37.30	51.32	45.78
HS Grades	20.76	17.39	18.49	16.81	15.95	22.40	19.85
ACT/SAT	20.60	8.70	17.12	11.76	28.65	13.05	19.21
HS Coursework	5.71	4.35	6.16	6.72	6.76	5.11	5.76
AP Courses	3.33	4.35	4.79	4.20	4.86	3.00	3.74
Essays	3.33	0.00	6.16	3.36	3.24	3.88	3.63
Racial/Ethnic Background	0.32	21.74	0.00	4.20	1.89	0.88	1.28
HS Counselor	0.16	0.00	0.00	1.68	0.81	0.00	0.32
Financial Need	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.68	0.54	0.00	0.21
Willing to Attend a Summer Session	0.00	0.00	0.68	0.84	0.00	0.35	0.21

Table 13 below illustrates differences in responses between explicit top 10% students and non-top 10% students. A plurality of non-top 10% students believes their ACT/SAT scores got them admitted to UT.

Table 13
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:
Question 8: Place a check next to the one factor that you think contributed most to your being admitted to the University of Texas at Austin.

	Explicit Top 10% Students %	Non-Top 10% Students %
Class Rank	65.62	14.56
HS Grades	18.85	21.43
ACT/SAT	9.42	34.62
HS Coursework	2.62	10.71
AP Courses	1.40	7.42
Essays	8.24	0.70
Racial/Ethnic Background	0.70	2.20
HS Counselor	0.35	0.27
Financial Need	0.17	0.27
Willing to Attend a Summer Session	0.17	0.27

Question 9: If you knew about the Top 10% Law how did you find out about it?

Eleven choices followed Question 9. They are listed below in Table 14. When the choices are considered in isolation, White students are more likely to have obtained information about HB 588 from the news media and parents/relatives. Hispanics relied more heavily on university representatives, notices and posters at school, and their high school counselor. When compared to their peers, Asian Americans obtained their information from friends, attending college nights, and using the UT website.

Somewhat disturbing is the low rate of positive responses by African American students in the categories HS Counselor and HS Teacher (47.83% and 26.09% respectively compared to a whole group average of 68.11% and 43.54%). Table 15 shows differences between explicit top 10% and non-top 10% responses. The greatest differences are in the choices HS Teacher and College Night; non-top 10% students were more likely to have chosen those options.

Table 14							
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:							
<i>Question 9: If you knew about the Top 10% Law how did you find out about it?</i>							
	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
News Media	36.44	26.09	24.49	31.15	35.20	31.99	33.26
University Representative	15.77	17.39	23.13	31.97	17.07	21.27	19.60
Notice Posted at School	30.76	30.43	23.81	37.70	31.20	30.93	31.04
Parents/Relatives	47.79	13.04	30.61	22.95	38.67	41.65	40.47
Friends	60.41	26.09	63.27	48.36	58.40	59.23	58.90
HS Counselor	68.61	47.83	61.90	74.59	64.80	70.30	68.11
HS Teacher	44.64	26.09	42.18	42.62	44.27	43.06	43.54
Poster at School	20.50	21.74	13.61	30.33	20.53	21.44	21.08
College Night	18.30	17.39	23.81	21.31	20.00	19.86	19.92
UT Website	10.73	8.70	13.61	7.38	11.20	10.54	10.81
I did not know	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0	<1.0

Table 15		
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:		
<i>Question 9: If you knew about the Top 10% Law how did you find out about it?</i>		
	Explicit Top 10% Students	Non-Top 10% Students
	%	%
News Media	31.60	35.87
University Representative	18.06	22.01
Notice Posted at School	31.60	30.16
Parents/Relatives	38.19	44.02
Friends	55.73	63.86
HS Counselor	69.62	65.76
HS Teacher	39.93	49.18
Poster at School	22.05	19.57
College Night	17.36	23.91
UT Website	9.90	12.23
I did not know	0.69	1.09

Question 10: Place a check next to the group you feel benefits most by the Top 10% Law.

Students were allowed to choose from sixteen choices, which are listed below in Table 16. In this question the respondents could make more than one selection. The affirmative rates were fairly consistent among the different groups.

The respondents believed that HB 588 benefits African Americans and Hispanics more so than other racial/ethnic groups (though not by much), as well as poor students and students with low SAT scores. African American and Hispanic students are more likely to believe that foreign students benefited from HB 588 (which could be true only if the foreign student graduated from a Texas high school).

Table 16
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:
Question 10: Place a check next to the group you feel benefits most by the Top 10% Law?

	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Males	15.62	17.39	14.97	21.31	15.20	17.05	16.31
Females	16.88	13.04	17.01	26.23	16.80	18.63	17.90
Texans	62.15	65.22	65.31	68.03	62.13	64.50	63.56
Non-Texans	3.31	0.00	2.72	3.28	2.67	3.53	3.07
Foreign Students	3.47	8.70	2.72	5.74	4.00	3.69	3.81
US Citizens	10.57	8.70	10.20	9.02	10.67	10.37	10.49
Whites	16.88	30.43	19.05	15.57	17.60	17.57	17.58
African Americans	22.56	43.48	25.17	23.77	21.07	24.78	23.31
Asian Americans	16.25	21.74	19.73	18.85	17.87	16.70	17.16
Hispanics	23.66	34.78	24.49	31.15	23.47	25.48	24.68
The Wealthy	11.36	17.39	14.29	11.48	10.93	12.65	11.97
The Middle Class	17.35	30.43	19.05	24.59	17.33	20.04	18.96
The Poor	25.71	26.09	25.85	31.15	25.07	26.71	26.06
High SAT Scores	11.83	13.04	15.65	13.11	11.47	13.53	12.71
Average SATs	32.02	26.09	26.53	32.79	28.80	32.34	30.93
Low SATs	48.74	30.43	48.98	54.10	50.13	47.63	48.62

Table 17 below illustrates the same selection rates by students broken down by whether or not they were explicit top 10% students. Explicit top 10% students are more likely to believe that HB 588 benefits the middle class (22.40% compared to 13.59% of non-top 10% students). They are also more likely to believe that students with average or low SAT scores benefit from HB 588.

Table 17 The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To: <i>Question 10: Place a check next to the group you feel benefits most by the Top 10% Law?</i>		
	Explicit Top 10% Students	Non-Top 10% Students
	%	%
Males	16.84	15.49
Females	18.75	16.58
Texans	68.06	56.52
Non-Texans	2.78	3.53
Foreign Students	3.13	4.89
US Citizens	10.59	10.33
Whites	17.01	18.48
African Americans	24.48	21.47
Asian Americans	15.97	19.02
Hispanics	26.39	22.01
The Wealthy	12.33	11.41
The Middle Class	22.40	13.59
The Poor	27.60	23.64
High SAT Scores	11.28	14.95
Average SATs	34.03	26.09
Low SATs	51.91	43.48

Question 11: Place a check next to the group you feel is penalized most by the Top 10% Law?

The same sixteen choices were offered to the students as were offered in question 10. Table 18 illustrates the affirmative response rates. Interestingly, Whites, African Americans, and Asian Americans consider themselves penalized the most by HB 588. The same was true among males and females who considered themselves penalized more than the opposite sex. African Americans were most hesitant to believe that students with high SAT scores were penalized (13.04%).

Table 19 shows that non-top 10% students are more likely to feel that students are penalized by HB588; they were more likely to have checked nearly all of the choices listed.

Table 18
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:
Question 11: Place a check next to the group you feel is penalized most by the Top 10% Law?

	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Males	5.36	0.00	2.72	3.28	6.13	3.51	4.56
Females	3.15	0.00	0.68	4.10	2.67	3.16	2.97
Texans	4.73	0.00	3.40	4.92	4.80	4.39	4.56
Non-Texans	56.94	43.48	55.10	63.11	53.60	59.40	57.10
Foreign Students	36.28	21.74	38.78	45.90	35.47	39.19	37.71
US Citizens	5.52	0.00	5.44	6.56	5.07	5.80	5.51
Whites	16.56	0.00	9.52	11.48	14.93	13.88	14.30
African Americans	8.52	34.78	12.93	6.56	10.40	9.14	9.64
Asian Americans	5.99	0.00	6.80	3.28	6.67	4.92	5.61
Hispanics	8.52	26.09	13.61	8.20	9.87	9.67	9.75
The Wealthy	13.09	4.35	10.20	9.02	13.07	11.07	11.86
The Middle Class	11.36	17.39	7.48	6.56	10.67	10.02	10.28
The Poor	11.04	26.09	16.33	12.30	11.47	13.01	12.39
High SAT Scores	33.75	13.04	29.93	27.05	34.93	29.35	31.57
Average SATs	19.40	4.35	17.69	12.30	16.00	19.16	17.90
Low SATs	14.83	17.39	17.01	14.75	11.47	18.10	15.47

Table 19
The Percentages of Students Selecting Given Choices To:
Question 11: Place a check next to the group you feel is penalized most by the Top 10% Law?

	Explicit Top 10% Students	Non-Top 10% Students
	%	%
Males	3.65	5.98
Females	1.91	4.62
Texans	2.95	7.07
Non-Texans	61.46	50.27
Foreign Students	40.10	33.97
US Citizens	5.56	5.43
Whites	12.33	17.39
African Americans	7.29	13.32
Asian Americans	3.99	8.15
Hispanics	7.29	13.59
The Wealthy	11.81	11.96
The Middle Class	7.29	14.95
The Poor	10.24	15.76
High SAT Scores	31.60	31.52
Average SATs	11.63	27.72
Low SATs	13.37	18.75

Question 12: How would you describe the high school you graduated from?

Table 20 lists the six available high school descriptors presented to students. Whites and Asian Americans clearly considered their high schools to be more competitive than their African American and Hispanic classmates. Hispanics are much more likely to characterize their high school as serving poor families.

Table 20 also supports a belief that middle class representation is significant among UT African Americans; 60.87% described their high schools as serving the middle class.

Table 21 shows a large difference between explicit top 10% and others when given the choice to characterize their schools as “very competitive.” Non-top 10% students were much more likely to describe their school that way (70.65% compared to 48.26% of the top 10% students). There is also an observable difference when given the chance to describe the financial status of the families served by their high school. Non- top 10% students are more likely to choose “mostly wealthy” and less likely to choose “mostly poor.”

	White	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	Males	Females	All Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very Competitive	60.25	56.52	53.74	45.08	52.27	60.11	56.99
Somewhat Competitive	35.02	26.09	40.82	38.52	39.73	33.92	36.23
Not Competitive	5.52	13.04	7.48	15.57	8.80	6.33	7.31
Families are Mostly Wealthy	22.71	26.09	19.73	12.30	19.20	22.67	21.29
Families are Mostly Middle Class	53.15	60.87	46.94	48.36	45.07	55.54	51.38
Families are Mostly Poor	5.21	13.04	5.44	24.59	10.13	6.68	8.05

	Explicit Top 10% Students	Non-Top 10% Students
	%	%
Very Competitive	48.26	70.65
Somewhat Competitive	42.36	26.63
Not Competitive	9.90	3.26
Families are Mostly Wealthy	14.76	31.52
Families are Mostly Middle Class	60.07	37.77
Families are Mostly Poor	10.76	3.80

Question 13: Do you feel you would have been admitted to the University of Texas without the Top 10% Law?

The vast majority of the respondents (85.20%) feel like they would have been admitted to the University of Texas with or without the Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law. Hispanics and African Americans are slightly less confident, but even then, the “yes” answer rate is very high (81.82% for African Americans and 78.33% for Hispanics).

White	87.18
African American	81.82
Asian American	82.31
Hispanic	78.33
Top 10%	81.82
Non-Top 10%	90.46
Males	88.47
Females	83.04
All Students	85.20

Question 14: Do you have any comments you would like to make about the admissions process at the University of Texas? (Open-ended response)

(Note: Direct quotes below by students should be read in the context of a very informal e-mail communication. Therefore, [sic] is not used and the comments below do not reflect the writing skills of UT students.)

Most open-ended questions produce ambiguous student responses. Quantifying the responses was difficult and unscientific. And of course, since the survey did not require a response, analysts must take into consideration the self-selected nature of the respondents: This is a summary of a self-selected portion of a self-selected population.

The interpretation, however, was made easier by the clear consistency and preponderance of the responses. The single observation that overwhelmed all others, by a margin of nearly four to one, was that the Top 10% Law failed to take into consideration the competitive nature of disparate high schools. In one form or another, a plurality of the respondents to Question 14 voiced disapproval of the law and were very quick to argue what they considered its injustices.

This rule is sort of like communism: it spreads the unfairness evenly around the population.

I was screwed because of that stupid law because my graduating class only had 22 people. Most of the people I know in the business college (the college I didn't get into) had an SAT 100-200 point lower than me, but they get a spot and not me? What a pathetic joke!

Any idiot can get into this school just because they went to a school that was hardly competitive and didn't prepare them for college. Other students who come from college prep schools, where the environment is much more competitive, may not have been in the top ten percent of their class,

but are better educated and better prepared for college than many others accepted into this school under top 10 %.

A significant number of students, however, supported HB 588 and were complimentary of the admissions process. Many of the students drew a distinction between what HB 588 mandated and how the University implemented it. Supporters of the measure appreciated how the bill reduced anxiety.

This piece of mind is priceless.

The top 10% rule eliminates a lot of anxiety about getting excepted into the college of your choice. Also, I feel that it benefits those who work hard during high school.

I got in, and I didn't graduate in the top 10%, so I see nothing wrong with it.

Many students thought being in the top 10% of a high school graduating class was meritorious *per se*.

I think it is a very good idea, and a reward for a good accomplishment. Graduating in the top 10% of a high school class is not easy, and should be rewarded.

But more students thought matriculates should be admitted on "merit" alone, though none actually defined what they meant.

A number of students commented that the university was too lax in its admissions standards, and as a result too many students were on campus. Most of the students making that comment specifically cited the Top 10% Law as the culprit. Many of them suggested the automatic admission of the top 5% of high school graduates instead.

Some of the students who identified themselves as provisionally-admitted students had very harsh words for that program. While a few were thankful for having the opportunity to "prove" themselves, about twice as many students did not see provisional admission as an opportunity or a second chance, but as an obstacle -- even punishment.

As surprising as any information to come out of this survey is the support students voiced for the use of college admissions tests -- the ACT Assessment and the SAT I. Students understood correctly that for the past few years the ACT/SAT has been de-emphasized in the UT admissions process. Their anecdotes about "friends" with high SAT scores who did not get admitted to UT, and their indictments of the Top 10% Law, were reminiscent of comments made about the ACT/SAT before it was de-emphasized.

When Texas colleges and universities utilized classic admissions models (before HB 588), which depended heavily on the use of ACT/SATs, comments were often heard that those instruments were unfair because they excluded otherwise qualified students. Today, the same comments are being made about the Top 10% Automatic Admissions Law, and will likely be made about any method used to admit -- and not admit -- students.