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## 81 percent of UT's admission offers go to top 10 percent grads

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The University of Texas at Austin reserved a record 81 percent of its fall admission offers this year to students guaranteed a spot on campus under the state's top 10 percent law.

School president William Powers is using those 2008 figures which mark a 10 percent jump from last year to renew his criticism of the decade-old law that he believes is as an obstacle to student diversity.

Powers said Wednesday that admission offers at UT-Austin will be soon be exclusive to high-ranking graduates unless lawmakers give admission officers more flexibility in choosing students.

"Only about one in four students admitted under the top 10 percent law is African American or Hispanic, so there's a natural limit if we don't have discretion in who we can go after," he said. "It's a capacity problem."

Currently, Texas students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class are guaranteed admission to the state university of their choice. UT-Austin has complained for years that the law limits its ability to recruit a well-rounded student body.

But changing the law has been a tough sell for Powers. The university's minority enrollment is higher now than any time in the decade since lawmakers enacted it.

UT-Austin had just over 37,000 undergraduate students last fall. Of those, 6,700 were Hispanic and 1,700 black.

The top 10 percent law was adopted after a 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision made affirmative action illegal in Texas college admissions. In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed that decision, allowing universities to use race as one of many decision-making factors.

Democratic Rep. Helen Giddings, who co-authored the top 10 percent law, credits the measure with drawing more students from urban and rural schools.

"We cannot back away from making sure that these universities reflect the population of the state," she said.

The current law primarily affects UT-Austin and, to a lesser degree, Texas A&M University in College Station.

Information from: Houston Chronicle, <http://www.chron.com>

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