

Christopher I. Rider
Ahmmad Brown

case 2-234-711
September 28, 2026

Building a Class at UC Oceanview (A)

On the second Tuesday in March 2026, with an emergency university system funding cut due to take effect in the next fiscal year, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Christine Dao closed the door to her corner office in Oceanview Hall, muted her phone, and opened the spreadsheet that would define the entering class. Eight thousand names, and 2,800 of them would have to come off the list before April 1.

University of California (UC) Oceanview—a selective public research university in the University of California system—had been notified the previous Friday that the California legislature had cut UC system funding by 18%.ⁱ For Oceanview, the arithmetic was immediate and severe: The incoming class, already admitted on paper, would need to shrink from 8,000 students to 5,200, a reduction of roughly 35%.

Dao had been in this office for six years, the last three as vice provost. In that time the campus had absorbed three smaller cuts, a hiring freeze, and a politically fragile tuition increase. None had felt like this one.

She had met at 3:00 p.m. that afternoon with five senior administrators around her conference table. Each had a position on how to reduce the incoming class. Each had a defensible logic. None of them agreed.

The Board of Regents would vote the following Tuesday. The provost expected a recommendation by Friday. Offer letters were scheduled to mail on April 1. The timeline was fixed. The decision—Who comes off the admissions list?—was not.

ⁱ UC Oceanview is a fictional University of California campus created for instructional purposes. The protagonist, the five administrators, and all dialogue are invented. The legal and policy context—including Proposition 209, *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2023), and the UC test-blind regime—reflects real conditions; however, the campus, the budget figures, and the characters do not.

Published by WDI Publishing, part of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

©2026 Christopher I. Rider and Ahmmad Brown. This case was written by Christopher I. Rider, Thomas C. Kinnear Professor and Associate Professor of Entrepreneurial Studies at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business, and Ahmmad Brown, Professor of the Practice at Tufts University, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. The case is fictional and prepared as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a situation. The case should not be considered criticism or endorsement and should not be used as a source of primary data. UC Oceanview, Vice Provost Christine Dao, the five administrators and their proposals, the budget figures, the admit-pool data, and all exhibits are fictional and do not depict any actual University of California campus, administrator, applicant, or admissions decision. California's Proposition 209, the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, the four-fifths rule, and the scholarship cited in the accompanying teaching note are real; their application to the fictional UC Oceanview is illustrative.