

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ADMISSIONS
(Final; Action)

AD.21.03 Implementation of a Test Optional Policy for the 2022 and 2023 Admissions Cycles

BACKGROUND

On June 17, 2020, the Senate Executive Committee approved, on behalf of the Senate, a test optional policy (optional reporting of SAT/ACT scores) for the Fall 2021 admission cycle (SC.20.35). The Admissions Committee would like to extend the test optional policy for the 2022 and 2023 admissions cycles for several reasons.

1. **Overwhelming support from the Senate for the 2021 cycle:** Based on the Senate survey that was conducted in 2020 for the 2021 cycle, there was overwhelming support for a test optional policy given the significant impact of COVID-19. Of the 114 responses received, 84% indicated outright support for the proposal. This was an important step toward supporting our prospective students and ensuring a fair evaluation process for the upcoming admission cycle.
2. **Limited access to college entrance exams nation-wide:** COVID-19 has continued to negatively impact the ability for high school students to access college entrance exams. As stated on the College Board website on February 17, 2021 (<https://pages.collegeboard.org/sat-covid-19-updates>),
 - a. "As schools continue to navigate uncertainties due to the coronavirus, the top priorities for College Board are the health and safety of students and educators."
 - b. "There is limited testing capacity in certain areas due to public health restriction and high demand."
 - c. "Test centers make individual decisions about whether to administer the SAT, and they may close before the administration, right up until test day."
 - d. "Please know that colleges understand that there are limited opportunities for students to take a college entrance exam due to COVID-19. Most colleges are not requiring a test score for the upcoming admissions cycle."
 - e. "To help students keep their college readiness skills sharp when many schools are closed or delayed in opening, College Board and Khan Academy® will continue to provide free resources online, including full-length practice tests and personalized learning tools." Despite these free online resources, COVID-19 has significantly inhibited the ability for students to properly prepare for college entrance exams.
3. **Data collection and development of a Task Force:** One of the unexpected outcomes of the 2020 Senate survey was the suggestion to create a Task Force to evaluate the

efficacy and fairness of entrance exams and the need for applicants to report scores beyond the 2021 cycle. Two additional years of outcome measures (student academic profile, diversity of the student body, student success) would provide the opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the impact of a test optional policy on student enrollment and performance. Extending the test optional policy for the next two cycles would allow a Task Force to make well informed, data-driven decisions about our long-term policy.

4. **Comparison with peer institutes:** Extending the test optional policy would be on par with our peer institutes. U California system is currently test blind/free for 2022-2024. Wisconsin, Virginia, Penn State and Michigan State have extended the test optional policy for the next two cycles. Rutgers, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska have extended the test optional policy for one cycle. U Michigan, Georgia Tech, U Texas, Purdue, Ohio State, Northwestern, Maryland and others are currently considering an extension.

RECOMMENDATION

The Senate Committee on Admissions recommends the Senate approve implementation of a test optional policy for the 2022 and 2023 admissions cycles. In addition, the committee recommends the Office of the Provost develop a Task Force to measure the impact of the test optional policy to make well informed, data-driven decisions about the long-term testing policy. It is important to clarify that the Committee is not proposing a permanent change, but simply an extension of current policy.

ADMISSIONS

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