



and a plan, if determined to be necessary, for phasing out the use of the SAT and ACT as a basis for admission. Specifically, this resolution:

- 1) Makes numerous declarations and findings, including:
  - a) The SAT tests reward costly test preparation rather than hard work and merit;
  - b) Wealthier students tend to do, on average, 400 points better than low-income students on the SAT;
  - c) Male students tend to receive much higher SAT math scores than female students, and slightly higher SAT writing scores than female students;
  - d) Students who generally do well in classes may test poorly in stressful conditions, such as testing to determine college entry;
  - e) The SAT emphasizes speed, quick recall, and time management over subject matter knowledge; and,
  - f) On average, White and Asian students do better than Black and Hispanic students.
- 2) Requests the Trustees of the CSU and the Regents of the UC conduct a study on the usefulness, effectiveness, and need for the SAT and ACT to determine student admissions.
- 3) Requests that the study include, but not be limited to, evaluation of norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced tests, test outcomes gaps based on ethnicity or income, test anxiety, test bias, and use of other multiple measures to determine student eligibility and qualifications such as Advanced Placement test results, International Baccalaureate (IB) test results, IB Diploma Programme completion, extracurricular activities, personal essays, teacher recommendations, submissions of creative works, and cumulative grade point average.
- 4) Requests that the study include recommendations and, if determined necessary, a plan for phasing out the use of the SAT and ACT as a basis for admission.
- 5) Requires the Chief Clerk of the Assembly to transmit copies of this resolution to the Trustees of the CSU, to the Regents of the UC, and to the author for appropriate distribution.

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, “recently, it was uncovered that wealthy parents are buying their children’s way into elite colleges and universities including two universities that are part of the University of California system. We all watched in complete disgust as the fraud committed in this recent college admissions scandal unfolded. California seems to be the epicenter of the

national scandal as 25 of the 33 families in the initial indictment are from California, and 10 of the 17 corrupt coaches and university officials were based at California colleges and universities.

This scandal not only undermines the public's trust in the college admissions process, but it further perpetuates the opportunity gap in our college system. Equally disturbing is the fact that qualified California students were undoubtedly squeezed out and denied admission. For every student admitted through bribery and fraud, there was an honest and talented student that was rejected.

The scandal also shed light on the many legal ways that wealth and social connections skew the college admissions process. This scandal, "Operation Varsity Blues," and the subsequent investigation resulted in dozens of bribery and fraud charges against wealthy parents willing to break the law to get their children into an elite university, including fraudulent testing practices with the SAT and ACT tests."

- 2) ***The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)***. The SAT is a commonly administered college admissions exams.

The SAT includes a Reading Test, Writing and Language Test, and a Math Test. There is also an option SAT Essay. According to the College Board, "In the Reading Test, students will encounter questions like those asked in a lively, thoughtful, evidence-based discussion." The Reading Test measures command of evidence, words in context, and analysis in History/Social Studies and in Science. The Writing and Language Test asks students "to be an editor and improve passages that were written especially for the test—and that include deliberate errors." The Writing and Language Test also measures command of evidence, words in context, and analysis in History/Social Studies and in Science. Finally, the Math Test "covers a range of math practices, with an emphasis on problem solving, modeling, using tools strategically, and using algebraic structure." The Math Test measures fluency, conceptual understanding, and applications. The redesigned SAT Essay "asks you to use your reading, analysis, and writing skills." The SAT is a timed, paper exam.

- 3) ***The American College Test (ACT)***. According to the ACT, The ACT Exam "test scores reflect what students have learned throughout high school and provide colleges and universities with excellent information for recruiting, advising, placement, and retention." The ACT contains four multiple-choice tests—English, mathematics, reading, and science—and an optional writing test. According to ACT, "these tests are designed to measure skills that are most important for success in postsecondary education and that are acquired in secondary education. The ACT English test measures understanding of the conventions of standard English, production of writing, and knowledge of language. The ACT mathematics test assesses the skills students typically acquire in courses taken through grade 11.

The ACT reading test measures reading comprehension. The ACT science test measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences. The optional ACT writing test is an essay

test that measures writing skills taught in high school English classes and entry level college composition courses.” The ACT is a timed, paper exam.

- 4) **Test optional policy study.** *Defining Access: How Test-Optional Works*, a 2018 study that offered data from 28 colleges and universities and 955,774 applicants over multi-year periods for each of those institutions, found that tests often fail to identify talented applicants who can succeed in higher education - and that applicants who opt not to submit scores are in many cases making wise decisions.

Among the findings from the sample studied:

- a) The years following adoption of a test-optional policy saw increases in the total number of applications - by an average of 29 percent at private institutions and 11 percent at public institutions.
- b) While the degrees varied, institutions that went test optional saw gains in the numbers of black and Latino students applying and being admitted to their institutions.
- c) About one-fourth of all applicants to the test-optional colleges opted not to submit scores. (All of the colleges studied consider the SAT or ACT submitted by applicants.)
- d) Underrepresented minority students were more likely than others to decide not to submit. Among black students, 35 percent opted not to submit, did not, while only 18 percent of white students did not submit. (Women were more likely than men to decide not to submit scores.)
- e) "Non-submitters" (as the report termed those who didn't submit scores) were slightly less likely to be admitted to the colleges to which they applied, but their yield (the rates at which accepted applicants enroll) was higher.
- f) First-year grades were slightly lower for non-submitters, but they ended up highly successful, graduating at equivalent rates or -- at some institutions - - slightly higher rates than did those who submitted test scores. This, the report says, is "the ultimate proof of success."

As noted by the Assembly Higher Education Committee, “More than 1,000 universities across the country, and nearly 100 higher education institutions in California, have adopted policies that either do not require test scores to be submitted, or have otherwise de-emphasized the use of standardized tests by making admissions decisions "test optional" or "test flexible." Nineteen of CSU’s 23 campuses are included in the list of 100 California institutions referenced above. These campuses have a policy that may require SAT/ACT scores, but only the scores are considered when minimum grade point average and/or class rank is not met.”

- 5) **UC task force.** The UC has formed the Standardized Testing Task Force to evaluate “whether the University and its students are best served by our current testing practices, a modification of our current practices, another testing approach altogether, or perhaps even no testing at all. The goal of the Task Force is to develop recommendations for implementation in UC undergraduate admissions...” The Task Force has been asked to focus on the following questions:
- a) How well do the UC current standardized testing practices assess entering high school students for UC readiness?
  - b) How well do the UC current standardized practices predict student success in the context of our holistic, comprehensive review process?
  - c) Should UC testing practices be improved, changed or eliminated?
  - d) Do standardized testing assessments fairly promote diversity and opportunity for students applying to UC?
  - e) Does UC’s use of standardized tests enhance or detract from UC academic eligibility for high school students?

The scope of the Task Force is the full range of standardized tests used by UC for undergraduate admissions, but focus will likely be directed to SAT and ACT tests. ***The committee may wish to consider*** whether this resolution is premature, given the UC’s task force.

- 6) **Related legislation.** AB 751 (O’Donnell, 2019) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to approve one or more nationally recognized high school assessments that a local education agency may, at its own discretion, administer in lieu of the grade 11 Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment, commencing with the 2021-22 school year. AB 751 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

## SUPPORT

Public Advocates  
San Francisco Unified School District

## OPPOSITION

None received

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