

## Standardized Testing Under Scrutiny

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting shifts to remote instruction have accelerated discussions about changes to admissions criteria at both the UC and the CSU. The spring 2020 administrations of the SAT, ACT, and CAASPP testing were suspended due to Covid-19. Students graduating in spring 2020 were not heavily impacted since admissions decisions for fall 2020 were already completed. But these exam suspensions heavily impacted those students planning to graduate high school the following spring 2021. Those juniors were restricted from taking any of the standardized tests normally taken in the spring 2020. The UC and CSU were forced into suspending SAT/ACT requirements for both of the next two admissions cycles, academic years 20-21 and 21-22.

Coincidentally, in January 2020 two major reports were issued by the University of California; [\*Relationship of the SAT/ACT to College Performance at the University of California\*](#) and [\*Report of the UC Academic Council Standardized Testing Task Force \(STTF\)\*](#). These reports provided UC data regarding the correlation of testing scores and student success. The first study reported that “Models that combined both SAT/ACT and [High School GPA] HSGPA account for an additional 5 to 11 percent of the total variance of first-year GPA when compared to models that only use HSGPA scores. Similarly, combined HSGPA and SAT/ACT models account for an additional 3 to 11 percent of variance associated with UC graduation GPA when compared to models that only use HSGPA.” Based in large part on the data in this first study, the STTF report provided the following conclusion: “The Task Force does not recommend that UC make standardized tests optional for applicants at this time. UC should conduct additional research on the impact of going ‘test optional’ before deciding whether and how to implement such a policy.” The STTF study found that “Eligibility in Local Context” admissions provided increased diversity with the use of the SAT/ACT, and that eliminating the consideration of the SAT/ACT scores would lower the percent of underrepresented populations that would be admissible to the UC.

Despite these conclusions and the data, in addition to suspending the SAT/ACT requirements for 20-21 and 21-22 due to Covid-19, the [\*UC Regents on May 22, 2020\*](#) unanimously approved prohibiting consideration of these test scores from admissions decisions in 2023 and 2024. One UC Regent stated the finding in the STTF report that test scores were a better indicator of first year college GPA than high school grades to be “counterintuitive”. The full discussion and rationale can be accessed in the UC Regents’ [\*March 19 minutes\*](#), p 20-27.

The action of the UC Regents has put additional pressure on the CSU to address the use of standardized testing for admissions and placement in fall 2021 and beyond. For students entering in fall 2021 and fall 2022 the exam scores will not be used for admissions purposes. See the CSU memo, [\*COVID-19 Impacts on CSU Admissions Academic Years 2021-2023\*](#) regarding the details of this policy. Regarding multiple-measures placement, despite the general unavailability of standardized test scores, no changes have been made to the original systemwide criteria published in [\*Academic Preparation: Maximizing Student Success\*](#). Individual campuses may develop their own supplemental criteria to raise a student’s placement category, but they cannot lower the placement determined by the systemwide policy. SAT and ACT scores will be considered if submitted, but the expectation is that without these scores many more students will be classified as underprepared and needing additional support in general education mathematics and English courses.

For updates regarding admissions, placement and other topics related to academic preparation, see the CSU Chico EAP website at <https://www.csuchico.edu/eapapp/index.shtml> .