

WHY TEST OPTIONAL MATTERS

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While we've communicated the nature and intent of the test-optional pilot program for freshman admission through our online resource (www.depaul.edu/emm/testoptional), we present further information in this special edition of Enrollment Matters. We are eager to engage in further conversations with members of the university community about this pilot program and I invite you to contact me directly if you have questions.

Our purpose in offering a test-optional alternative is to elevate in the admission process the best and fairest criteria for evaluating student potential, namely students' academic performance in a rigorous, college-preparatory program in high school. That has always been DePaul's primary criterion for freshman admission. This new approach seeks to encourage a wider range of high-achieving students to consider a four-year degree at DePaul, including very talented and promising students who may be disadvantaged by admission criteria that emphasize standardized tests.

The kind of students that may benefit from this admission alternative include students whose first language is not English; students who are first in their families to attend college; and students who do not have unfettered financial access to test preparation, coaching and multiple test-takings. Our experience shows that many of these students do very well at DePaul when given the opportunity, if there is evidence of their ability to succeed academically in high school.

While DePaul is in good company in offering a test-optional alternative, we are still an early adopter. As noted elsewhere in this issue, the value of a test-optional admission approach has been demonstrated in the experiences of Wake Forest University, Providence College, Bates College and other exemplary pioneers. There is a growing sensibility nationwide about the inherent limitations and liabilities of an overreliance on standardized tests in college admissions and I believe DePaul will surely be on the right side of history, as they say, when we look back years from now at this innovation. By adopting this approach early, DePaul's move will have a greater impact and will also serve as a model for other institutions concerned about how to bring such innovation to scale. Early adoption, of course, also entails some risk; hence, we are approaching this as a pilot program. However, these are risks worth taking in light of the growing constraints on educational opportunity for many promising students.

This move is not just a new admission strategy. A test-optional policy matters in broader and deeper ways. It reflects core values about what's important in higher education and grounds these values not in rhetoric, but in actual policy and practice. Our test-optional program underscores that what matters at DePaul is students' academic achievement and educational outcomes at the end of their college career, not just their profile at the outset. Rather than focusing on metrics that have become measures of prestige for highly selective colleges and universities, our pilot will contribute to the national conversation about using fairer and broader indicators of students' strengths and capabilities in admission decisions and keeping our primary focus on educational outcomes and attainment.

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Enrollment Matters, produced by DePaul's Division of Enrollment Management and Marketing (EM&M), is intended to provide the university community with pertinent information about activities and initiatives that improve and enhance DePaul's competitive market position and prominence.