



INSTITUTIONS WITH TEST-OPTIONAL ADMISSION PROVIDE INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT

With its decision to introduce a test-optional admission alternative for freshmen, DePaul joined the growing list of selective four-year colleges and universities. In fact, there are more than 875 schools across the country that have some form of a test-optional admission policy in which applicants need not submit ACT or SAT scores. (Visit <http://fairtest.org/university/optional> for a list of these schools.)

Since the release of the Bates data, institutions of various types have also altered their admission policies to provide test-optional routes for admission. We highlight here Lawrence University, Providence College and Wake Forest University who have successfully implemented similar admission policies.

Lawrence University in Wisconsin announced in 2005 that it would no longer require students to submit standardized test scores for admission. "Ultimately, [a student's] choice of courses and record of achievement over four years of high school provides a much better indication of their ability to survive the academic rigors of Lawrence than do the results of a three-hour test taken on some Saturday morning," said Steve Syverson, then dean of admissions, who is now the university's vice president for Enrollment. Syverson also served on the Commission on the Use of Standardized Tests in Undergraduate Admission, convened by the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC), that released an influential report in 2008. (For more information from Lawrence University, visit <http://lawrence.edu/admissions/about/testoptional.shtml>.)

In 2006, Providence College in Rhode Island introduced a four-year pilot program to stop requiring undergraduate applicants to submit SAT or ACT scores as part of the admission application. In the Winter 2007 issue of the Harvard Educational Review, the president of Providence College, Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., discussed the school's decision. Within the essay, Father Shanley explains, "While the college has always emphasized a holistic review of students' credentials for admission, there is mounting evidence that students and their parents, more than ever before, have become overly focused on improving standardized test scores. Furthermore, economically disadvantaged students are less likely to have the resources necessary to participate in test-preparation programs. This reality has created an inequity that reveals itself in the correlation between family income and standardized test scores." (To read the full essay, visit <http://bit.ly/ShanleyEssay>.)

A few years ago, Wake Forest University in North Carolina became the first among the top thirty national universities in the country (as ranked by *U.S. News & World Report*) to make standardized test scores optional for undergraduate admission. According to Wake Forest's president Nathan O. Hatch, "We must conscientiously preserve and offer opportunity to talented students of all economic and cultural backgrounds. I see [the test-optional provision] as a portal to opportunity—an alternate track for young people who are talented and would otherwise be denied the opportunity for the best education simply because they don't do as well on standardized tests." (For more on Wake Forest's decision, read <http://www.wfu.edu/magazine/2008.09/sat/>.)

The examples offered here are just a sampling of selective four-year institutions that now offer a test-optional route to admission. Institutions with test-optional policies have seen no adverse effect on academic quality or rankings, for which freshman test scores are only one small factor, and many have

succeeded in attracting more high-achieving students. Some other trends that adopters of test-optional admission policies have noticed include: a robust increase in applications in the first year, with about 20 to 30 percent of students applying as non-submitters; applicant pools that are more diverse in racial, ethnic and socioeconomic composition and in the range of expressed interests of study; and enrolled classes with significant increases in ethnic minority, low-income (Pell-eligible) and first-generation students.

Similar to these highlighted institutions, DePaul will engage in research during the test-optional pilot program to assess outcomes and evaluate the success of the program for students and the institution.

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