

BOARD OF REGENTS BRIEFING PAPER

Handbook Revision, Requirements for Admission to the Universities

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

Existing Board policy includes university admission requirements (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 4*) in which students applying to a university must, among other criteria, take the American College Test (ACT) or the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) prior to admission. This provision is not applicable to transfer students or international students who have a separately defined set of admission requirements.

In ongoing national discussions about equity in access to higher education, the efficacy of standardized test scores in assessing college readiness, particularly for students of color, has come into question. Test score requirements are now commonly seen as barriers to access. In addition, select colleges and universities across the nation are replacing standardized test score requirements with alternate and more flexible or holistic review of admissions criteria ([College Board, 2020](#)). Likewise, UNLV and UNR recently discontinued the long-standing practice of utilizing standardized test scores to determine scholarship eligibility for incoming freshman.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools have had to re-evaluate the role that standardized tests play in their admissions process. In response to the concerns about the spread of COVID-19 and the global pandemic, starting in spring 2020 college entrance exam administrators postponed or rescheduled ACT and SAT exams. This resulted in limited opportunity for individuals to sit for the ACT or SAT exam, compounding the challenges that students of color already face in accessing higher education.

In consultation with the NSHE universities, System staff recommend removal of the standardized test requirement from the university admission criteria. Therefore, it is recommended that current Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 4*) be amended to remove the requirement for students to take the ACT or SAT exam prior to admission. Removing the requirement to take the ACT or SAT prior to admissions at NSHE universities essentially removes an unnecessary barrier to higher education that certain students face. The alternate admission pathway using standardized test scores will remain in place.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend the provision of Board policy (*Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 4*) to remove the requirement that students seeking admission to the universities “take” the ACT or SAT exam.

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

- National discourse continues to question the use of standardized tests for admission criteria recognizing the barriers these tests create for students of color.
- In light of the restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the opportunity to access ACT and SAT testing has diminished which has placed an unnecessary challenge on students seeking admissions and specifically to those already faced with barriers to higher education.

CHECK THE NSHE STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL THAT IS SUPPORTED BY THIS REQUEST:

- Access (Increase participation in post-secondary education)
- Success (Increase student success)
- Close the Achievement Gap (Close the achievement gap among underserved student populations)
- Workforce (Collaboratively address the challenges of the workforce and industry education needs of Nevada)

