

TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: UFS Equity, Inclusion & Diversity Committee and UFS Graduate Programs and Research Committee
RE: To Encourage SUNY to become the First Test-Optional System of Higher Education in the Nation
DATE: 180th Plenary, October 18-20, 2018
LOCATION: SUNY Binghamton

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS the SUNY Board of Trustees passed the *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy* in 2015 stating that “SUNY aspires to be the most inclusive state university system in the country”; and

WHEREAS the SUNY mission statement clearly states that “*The mission of the state university system shall be to provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population*”; and

WHEREAS scores on standardized tests (e.g. SAT, ACT, GRE) are poor predictors of student success in undergraduate and graduate programs and test scores more closely correlate with wealth than college readiness; and

WHEREAS the use of standardized tests in admissions has a particularly negative impact on underrepresented groups application and admission rates; and

WHEREAS almost 40% of NYS Public High School graduates are Black or Hispanic, yet their population of the student body in SUNY is only 24% and at Doctoral Degree Granting and Research Centers they represent less than 20% of the student population; and

WHEREAS Black and Latinx students are more concentrated in our less competitive four-year colleges and the community colleges creating a lack of diversity at our more competitive colleges; and

WHEREAS “the adoption of a well-executed test-optional admission policy can lead to an increase in overall applications as well as an increase in the representation of URM students (both numeric and proportionate) in the applicant pool and the freshman class”¹; and

WHEREAS SAT, ACT and GRE tests represent a financial burden for many students in pursuing degrees.

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY UFS recommends that the SUNY Chancellor advocate that all SUNY campuses become test free or test optional and that Campus Governance Leaders and Chief Academic Officers take the necessary steps to eliminate or make optional standardized test scores as a metric of evaluation for applicants to undergraduate and graduate programs across SUNY; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED for “standardized test optional campuses” that all admissions decisions be made prior to viewing test scores; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that if standardized test scores are used to evaluate applicants, campuses should justify their use and admissions criteria should account explicitly for the known systematics in scores as a function of gender, race, and socioeconomic status, and that cutoff scores not be used to eliminate candidates from admission or for eligibility to receive SUNY-wide, State-sponsored, and campus-based scholarships/fellowships and financial support.

BACKGROUND:

¹ Syverson, Steven T., Valerie W. Franks, and William C. Hiss. "DEFINING ACCESS: How Test-Optional Works." 2018. <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/defining-access-report-2018.pdf>

July 5, 2018 Letter from Governor Cuomo:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-issues-open-letter-suny-and-cuny-directing-them-maintain-diversity-and-inclusion>

Articles and literature on the ACT/SAT/GRE:

General criticism:

- Casey Miller & Keivan Stassun "A test that fails" *Nature* [510](https://doi.org/10.1038/nj7504-303a), 303-304 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nj7504-303a>
- Cecilia Capuzzi Simon "The Test-Optional Surge", *The New York Times* (October 28, 2015). <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/01/education/edlife/the-test-optional-surge.html>

Research Analysis on standardized tests negative effects on admissions:

- Jack Buckley, Lynn Letukas, & Ben Wildavsky, *Measuring Success: Testing, Grades, and the Future of College Admissions* Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore. 2017.
- Ezekiel J. Dixon-Román, Howard T. Everson, & John J. McArdle, "Race, Poverty and SAT Scores: Modeling the Influences of Family Income on Black and White High School Students' SAT Performance", *Teachers College Record* 115, 1-33 (2013). <http://www.tcrecord.org/content.asp?contentid=16925>
- Steven T. Syverson, Valerie W. Franks, William C. Hiss, *Defining Access: How Test-Optional Works*. The National Association for College Admission Counseling, Spring 2018. <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/Research/Defining-Access/>

Use of the GRE for admissions to biomedical graduate programs:

- Maggie Kuo, "Updated: Biomedical Ph.D. program at major research university drops GRE requirement for admission" *Science Magazine* Aug 17, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.caredit.aap7595>
- Joshua D. Hall, Anna B. O'Connell, & Jeanette G. Cook "Predictors of Student Productivity in Biomedical Graduate School Applications" *PLOS one* January 11, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0169121>
- Liane Moneta-Koehler, Abigail M. Brown, Kimberly A. Petrie, Brent J. Evans, & Roger Chalkley "The Limitations of the GRE in Predicting Success in Biomedical Graduate School" *PLOS one* January 11, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166742>

Resource links

A resolution by the American Astronomical Society for its members to limit the use of GREs in admission to graduate programs

- <https://aas.org/governance/society-resolutions#GRE>

NIH drops GRE score requirement for training grants

- <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-120.html>

ETS statement and commentary on use of GREs:

- www.ets.org/gre/institutions/scores/guidelines/board_guidelines.
- <https://www.ets.org/gre/institutions/scores/guidelines/>
- Scott Jaschik “An Unlikely Campaign to Move Beyond GRE Scores: ETS plans to discourage graduate departments from relying in excess on test scores in deciding whom to admit.” *Inside Higher Ed* June 6 2016.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/06/06/ets-plans-encourage-graduate-departments-de-emphasize-gre>

Biomedical programs that have dropped the GRE:

- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MYcxZMhf97H5Uxr2Y7XndHn6eEC5oO8XWQi2PU5jLxQ/htmlview>