REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

REQUESTED ACTION

None. For information only.

SUMMARY

Along with co-presenters, Vice President Anny Morrobel-Sosa will provide an update on three items:

1. Student Telehealth Services Support
2. ACT/SAT Waiver Preliminary Data
3. UW System Office of Professional & Instructional Development

Presenters

- Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa, UW System Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs
- Dr. John Achter, UW System Interim Associate Vice President for Student Success and Student Behavioral Health Coordinator
- Dr. Ben Passmore, UW System Associate Vice President for Policy Analysis and Research
- Dr. Carleen Vande Zande, UW System Associate Vice President for Academic Programs & Faculty Advancement

BACKGROUND

As part of Governor Evers’ “Get Kids Ahead” Initiative, the UW System will receive a $5 million investment from American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to provide students better access to mental health supports when needed. This allocation of funds, which will be transferred to UW System Administration, will be used in a competitive bid process to procure telehealth services that will fill critical gaps in currently available on-campus services.
In 2020, due to COVID-19 related challenges, UW institutions suspended ACT/SAT requirements as part of the application process. A systemwide extension of the ACT/SAT test-optional policy was supported by all 13 UW institutions and approved by the Board of Regents at the December 2021 Board meeting (Resolution 11754) to include 2022 applicants/Fall 2023 Enrollees. Coupled with implementing the test-optional policy, a three-year study was launched in 2021 (to do what?) through the UW-Madison Student Success Through Applied Research (SSTAR) lab. A preliminary update on the SSTAR lab's data-driven research will be provided.

Annually, the systemwide Office of Professional & Instructional Development, housed within the Office of Academic Planning and Faculty Advancement, hosts a series of professional events. The Vice President will share an overview of the well-attended events.

ATTACHMENTS

(A) Memo from President Falbo on ACT-SAT Waiver Impacts
March 31, 2022

To: Regent Amy Bogost, Education Committee Chair

CC: Board of Regents

From: Interim President Michael J. Falbo

In December of 2021, the UW System Board of Regents (BoR) adopted a resolution suspending the ACT/SAT requirement through the 2024-25 academic year and directed the UW System’s Office of Academic and Student Affairs (OASA) to study the impact of the suspension with the request to provide the results of preliminary findings no later than 01 April 2022.

OASA engaged Student Success Through Applied Research (SSTAR) Lab at UW-Madison to conduct a long-term research study of the impacts of the ACT/SAT suspension policy as part of the admissions process on students and System institutions. The attached memo from Dr. Ben Passmore to Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa present the preliminary findings of the first year of a three-year study, and is summarized as follows:

As is pertains to UW-Madison, the ACT/SAT test-optional policy did not significantly increase diversity within the applicant pool. Furthermore, applicants submitting test scores were more likely to be admitted and come from traditional backgrounds.

Q1. Did test-optional admissions change the applicant pool?

**Preliminary Findings:** If testing requirements for admission are barriers to access, test-optional admissions have the potential to induce a higher rate of application of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. While test-optional admissions lead to increased volume in applications at UW-Madison, it did not lead to important changes in applicant characteristics compared to previous admission cycles.

Q2. Who submits test scores in a test-optional year?

**Preliminary Findings:** 63% of applicants submitted test scores during UW-Madison’s first test-optional year. Students who submitted a test were less likely to be female, Black, Hispanic, Pell-eligible, first generation, and more likely to come from higher-income neighborhoods and have higher high school GPAs. Furthermore, students submitting SAT or ACT test scores were more likely to apply for STEM and Engineering majors, as well as having completed more rigorous high school coursework.
Q3. How is differential test submission affecting admission decisions?

_Preliminary Findings:_ Students who chose to submit a test in their application to UW-Madison during test-optional admissions were 2 percentage points more likely to be offered admission compared to students who did not (represents a 3% increase from baseline).

As regards to all UW System institutions, the ACT/SAT has been cited as being useful in providing substantial utility per other areas including but not limited to; determinant for the awarding of merit aid, and provisioning of needed academic support for admitted students. The early research has inherent limitations due to data availability.

Q4. Do standardized test scores predict student success in college?

_Preliminary Findings:_ A one-point increase in ACTs is associated with 0.06 higher freshmen GPA (2% increase) and a 0.8 percentage point increase in first-year retention (1% increase). These results hold even when the models control for student SES variables such as EFC, Pell, and first-generation status.

The Office of Policy Analysis and Research continues to work to access dependable and quality applicant GPA data, information key to helping determine the predicative quality of the high school GPA when compared to the ACT/SAT.

A final report on the will be provided in April 2024.
March 25, 2022

To: Dr. Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Vice President OASA

Fr: Dr. Ben Passmore, Associate Vice President

Re: ACT/SAT Test Optional Policy – Preliminary Evaluation Findings

Background:
In December of 2021, the UW System Board of Regents (BoR) adopted a resolution suspending the ACT/SAT requirement through the 2024-25 academic year. Coupled with the ACT/SAT suspension, the BoR directed the UW System’s Office of Academic and Student Affairs (OASA) to study the impact of the suspension. OASA engaged Student Success Through Applied Research (SSTAR) Lab at UW-Madison to conduct a long-term research study of the impacts of the ACT/SAT suspension policy as part of the admissions process on students and System institutions. Initiating the study with the SSTAR Lab, OASA set the following guiding objectives:

1. Determine the degree to which the ACT/SAT score accurately predicts the academic achievement of UW students;
2. Evaluate the long-term consequences of permanently suspending the standardized test score requirement or going test-optional;
3. Identify if there are other means of measuring a student’s academic readiness for college that could be used in place of a standardized test score; and
4. Understand national trends and context among other universities.

The Board of Regents requested preliminary results be provided by April 1, 2022, with final reporting and potential recommendations submitted in April of 2024.

Below is a summary of the preliminary findings as well additional context of the work carried out by SSTAR, led by Drs. Viviana Rodriguez and Nicholas Hillman, over the last two years of the ACT/SAT suspension across the UW System institutions.

Context and Preliminary Findings:
The suspension of the ACT/SAT as an admission requirement need be considered within the context of broader policy changes in the application and admission process across the UW System. Additional application-specific changes include:

- The majority of the UW institutions (excluding UW Madison, UW La Crosse and UW Eau Claire) waiving their application fee beginning in the Fall of 2021 and extending the waiver again in Fall of 2022
- A relaunched UW System Electronic Application (eApp) providing a more applicant-friendly process or applying to multiple UW institutions

The aforementioned application policy changes coupled with the suspension of the ACT/SAT requirement, has helped deliver an unprecedented surge in applications with substantial growth in underrepresented and disadvantaged populations.

Recent enrollments have also been impacted by admission rates exceeding 90% for the 12 UW institutions (excluding UW Madison). The historically high 90% admission rate complicates efforts to isolate a single initiative such as test-optional policies on admissions.
UW Madison: The Early Contextual Subset

UW Madison’s previous two-year application and enrollment trends provide greater context for consideration, per the elimination of the ACT/SAT requirement and the sustaining of the application fee as well as the lack of cross-institutional utilization of the eApp involving UW Madison.

Four initial research questions have framed preliminary findings, with the first three specific to UW Madison. Presented below, the initial findings are a summary of data findings derived from research conducted by SSTAR and shared with the Office of Policy Research and Analysis.

Q1. Did test-optional admissions change the applicant pool?

Preliminary Findings: If testing requirements for admission are barriers to access, test-optional admissions have the potential to induce a higher rate of application of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. While test-optional admissions lead to increased volume in applications at UW-Madison, it did not lead to important changes in applicant characteristics compared to previous admission cycles.

Q2. Who submits test scores in a test-optional year?

Preliminary Findings: 63% of applicants submitted test scores during UW-Madison’s first test-optional year. Students who submitted a test were less likely to be female, Black, Hispanic, Pell-eligible, first generation, and more likely to come from higher-income neighborhoods and have higher high school GPAs. Furthermore, students submitting SAT or ACT test scores were more likely to apply for STEM and Engineering majors, as well as having completed more rigorous high school coursework.

Q3. How is differential test submission affecting admission decisions?

Preliminary Findings: Students who chose to submit a test in their application to UW-Madison during test-optional admissions were 2 percentage points more likely to be offered admission compared to students who did not (represents a 3% increase from baseline).

Based questions 1-3 as it relates to preliminary UW Madison applicant information, the ACT/SAT test-optional policy did not significantly increase diversity within the applicant pool. Furthermore, applicants submitting test scores were more likely to be admitted and come from traditional backgrounds.

A fourth research question was applied to applicants of all UW System institutions. The ACT/SAT has also been cited as being useful in providing substantial utility per other areas including but not limited to; determinant for the awarding of merit aid, and provisioning of needed academic support for admitted students. The early research has inherent limitations due to data availability.

Q4. Do standardized test scores predict student success in college?

Preliminary Findings: A one-point increase in ACTs is associated with 0.06 higher freshmen GPA (2% increase) and a 0.8 percentage point increase in first-year retention (1% increase). These results hold even when the models control for student SES variables such as EFC, Pell, and first-generation status.

Looking ahead, OPAR is working to access dependable and quality applicant GPA data, information key to helping determine the predicable quality of the high school GPA when compared to the ACT/SAT.

Please note, this memo represents preliminary findings and neither represents a summary nor recommendations per UWSA or SSTAR. A final report will be provided in April of 2024.