

University of California must drop SAT, ACT scores for admissions and scholarships

Settlement marks the end of a lawsuit that was initially brought in 2019.

MAY 15, 2021 | MICHAEL BURKE

The University of California will no longer consider SAT or ACT scores in admission or scholarship decisions under a settlement reached Friday with students.

The university's Board of Regents committed last year to stop requiring the exams in admissions, but Friday's settlement puts to rest questions about whether the system would use the tests at all in scholarship or admissions decisions at any point in the future, even on an optional basis.

The settlement marks the end of a lawsuit that was filed in 2019 by students, community organizers and the Compton Unified School District. The settlement was praised by critics who say standardized tests are biased against low-income students, students with disabilities and Black and Latino students.

The historic settlement "marks an end to a sordid chapter in the history of the University of California. The Regents' stubborn insistence over generations upon usage of the SAT and ACT despite indisputable evidence that these exams only measured family wealth cost hundreds of thousands of talented students of color a fair opportunity to matriculate in their state's system of higher education," Mark Rosenbaum, one of the attorneys representing students in the case, said.

UC enrolls more than 226,000 undergraduate students across nine campuses. A tenth UC campus, UC San Francisco, has only graduate programs.

Last May, the UC Board of Regents voted unanimously to abandon the SAT and ACT in admissions and agreed to consider adding a new test by 2025. However, at the time, the university planned to permit its nine undergraduate campuses to give students the option of submitting test scores for fall 2021 and fall 2022 admissions decisions. Six of those nine campuses initially planned to go test-optional.

consideration of SAT or ACT scores while the lawsuit was ongoing.

The settlement reached Friday prevents any UC campuses from considering scores at all for fall 2022 through at least spring 2025 admissions decisions. According to the settlement, UC still has no plans to consider SAT or ACT scores after 2025.

The settlement also prevents UC from considering SAT or ACT scores when determining whether to award scholarships. Under the Regents' decision reached last May, the university had planned to consider those test scores for scholarship decisions through fall 2024.

UC can still consider SAT and ACT scores for less consequential purposes, such as course placement.

The university will also pay \$1.25 million in legal fees to the attorneys who represented students in the lawsuit, the settlement says.

This year, UC [saw a surge in applications](#) for freshman admission in fall 2021, receiving 203,700 applications, or about 32,000 more than last year. Experts attributed the spike in applications at least partially to the elimination of the SAT and ACT in admissions decisions.

“The makeup of this year’s applicants already show that students are no longer deterred from applying based on their inability to access standardized testing,” Marci Lerner Miller, another attorney representing students, said in a statement.

It is not clear whether UC will consider any standardized tests for admissions decisions in 2025 and beyond. A university committee earlier this year [encouraged UC to explore allowing in-state students to submit their 11th grade Smarter Balanced exams](#), the annual state standardized tests, for admissions consideration. But it is unclear whether UC will act on that recommendation.

If the UC does add a new standardized test for undergraduate admissions at any point in the future, the university must “consider access for students with disabilities in the design and implementation of any such exam,” according to the settlement reached Friday.

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▶ **Allen** 
4 months ago

SAT or ACT does not correlate that the rich tend to pass the test and the poor fail. Where are the statistics? Asians do well because we study hard for it. Those rich white, movie stars' children do not need to bribe the admission committee to get in. Blacks and Latin's parent must stress more on education for their children and make them study harder. It is in most Asian culture to do well ... [Read More](#)

Charles 
5 months ago

Omg utter nonsense! Scrap standardized tests because certain demographic score poorly, so it must be racist or discriminatory. So sad to UC's race to mediocrity.

Nancy Bischoff 
5 months ago

Do you know what happens when a kid already sent ACT scores? Can they still see them, despite legally being unable to use them?

Jessie Chen 
5 months ago

Is there any statistical evidence supporting the SAT scores and family wealth as a simple correlation? I have seen some bright poor kids do well in the exam while some rich kids cannot secure a high score. It is dangerous for a policy influenced by false statistical bias. Where are we heading as a state and nation?

▶ **Kirkster** 
5 months ago

This is simply wrong. If it is because the "these exams only measured family wealth cost hundreds of thousands of talented students of color a fair opportunity to matriculate in their state's system of higher education," first of all, if lack of the money to prepare for the exams is the problem, why not the state just use the \$100 billion state tax surplus to help the people in need! I am all for it!!! ... [Read More](#)

Stephine 
5 months ago

Yes it is rooted in eugenics and racism. Do some research since we are talking academics!

5 months ago

All these lawsuits and outcomes are so confusing. First it was test optional; now, if I read this correctly, test optional is no longer going to be a consideration and only the English portion will be an option for English placement.