

Faculty Senate Admissions Committee Statement of Support for Extending Test Optional Policy Through Fall 2023

Faculty Senate Admissions Committee supports and affirms the efforts that Undergraduate Admissions has made to accommodate students applying without SAT or ACT scores for the Spring/Summer/Fall 2021 entry term(s). The current test-optional pilot for 2021 directly supports priorities 1 and 4 of UofSC's Strategic plan. Initial review of test-optional pilot practices suggests that UofSC would benefit from extending this policy through Fall 2023 to study student success and retention outcomes for two full cohorts. A one-year pilot does not afford the institution sufficient time and data needed to gauge the impact of test optional approach.

Test Optional Policy Extension Justification

Assessment will be improved with data from more cohorts.

- **Data from several cohorts are needed to gauge effectiveness.** An institution is unable to assess the true impact of test-optional practices without consideration of students' first year success and retention rates over multiple years.
- Preliminary estimate of class profile suggests that **test optional has NOT had an adverse impact on quality** of students admitted, as evidenced by current SAT and ACT score averages.

Restricted testing capacity is still an issue.

- COVID-19 continues to disrupt both in-class and national test administrations of the SAT and ACT. **For the class of 2022 and 2023, the College Board estimates that PSAT registrations are roughly half of what is projected in a normal, non-pandemic year.**
- The PSAT participation is a key tool used by many colleges to identify prospective students. It is also a key college planning tool used by high school educators and students. Fewer testing opportunities lead to narrower opportunities to identify prospective students.
- **Current high school juniors and sophomores need guidance on how to prepare** for applying to college sooner, not later. Access to testing centers is difficult, especially among populations of interest to UofSC, namely low SES, first-generation, and students of color who are historically over-represented in less-resourced communities.

Admissions operations and market position are improving.

- **Current test-optional admissions pilot is working.** A solid foundation for expanded holistic review exists. New models allow for considering students in absence of SAT or ACT scores.

- Approximately **two-thirds of 4-year institutions in the U.S. are test optional** for the 2021 cycle. **About half of all state flagships are permanently test optional** or have announced they intend to continue assessing the approach for an additional 1 to 5 years.
- **Students and the school counseling community are extremely receptive to this approach.** The test optional movement has resulted in **increased application volume** at many of the nation's state flagships and highly selective institutions, including UofSC.
- **Institutions that do not offer a test-optional route are at a competitive disadvantage.** The approach's popularity, combined with **increased likelihood of attracting more diverse populations** of interest to UofSC, suggest that continuing the practice can solidify the institution's commitment to access.
- **Communication and marketing plans for Class of 2022 and 2023 are underway.** The institution must communicate admissions requirements early and often to assist prospective students and the school college counseling community with college search planning. This includes updating UofSC digital and print marketing materials, all of which must be finalized in early spring 2020.

Unanimously Approved by Faculty Senate Admissions Committee on February 22, 2021