



Is Test-Optional Admissions Enough? (No)

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Part of this presentation is based on work I have written with Dr. Kelly Rosinger. The citation is below.

Baker, D. J., & Rosinger, K. (2020). Test optional offers benefits but it's not enough. *Education Next*, 20(3).

Retrieved from <https://www.educationnext.org/test-optional-offers-benefits-but-not-enough-forum-should-state-universities-downplay-sat/>

Older Research on the Effect of Test-Optional Admissions

- Three research studies find little effect of test-optional policies on increasing Pell grant recipients or Black, Latinx, or Native American students in the admitted class or those who enroll
- These studies focus on some combination of the following
 - Private, highly selective liberal-arts colleges
 - Analyze a short span of years which restricts outcomes
 - Compare the test-optional institutions to all four-year institutions in the US

Articles

- Belasco, A. S., Rosinger, K. O., & Hearn, J. C. (2015). The test-optional movement at America's selective liberal arts colleges: A boon for equity or something else?. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 37(2), 206-223.
- Saboe, M., & Terrizzi, S. (2019). SAT optional policies: Do they influence graduate quality, selectivity or diversity?. *Economics Letters*, 174, 13-17.
- Sweitzer, K., Blalock, A. E., & Sharma, D. B. (2018). The effect of going test-optional on diversity and admissions: A propensity score matching analysis. In J. Buckley, L. Letukas, & B. Wildavsky (Eds.), *Measuring success: Testing, grades, and the future of college admissions* (pp.288-308). JHU Press.

Newer Research on the Effect of Test-Optional Admissions

- Study currently under review for publication looks at the most recent adopters of test-optional admissions & compares them to institutions that are statistically similar
- This more recent study finds an increase of Black, Latinx, and Native American students and, to a lesser extent, Pell grant recipients at institutions that adopt test optional admissions

Article

- Bennett, C. T. (2020, March). Untested admissions: Effects of test-optional policies on undergraduate selectivity and diversity. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Association for Education Finance and Policy*.

Is this a silver bullet? (No)

- The variation in the research findings reinforces that adopting test-optional admissions is not a silver bullet
- There are several other factors that can create inequity in college admissions including access to or knowledge of:
 - Advanced high-school coursework
 - Prep for college interviews
 - Review for college essays
 - Feeder high schools

Issue for the Entire Institution

Important Note: Not everyone feels that they will be welcome at certain types of institutions so while we today focus on admissions challenges, if an institution appears hostile to certain students, there is little the admissions office can do to convince the students to enroll

COVID-19 and Test-Optional Admissions

- Cancellation of the vast majority of testing from January to June 2020
- Prior academic performance traditionally measured using the most recent term
- Several states require students to take a college entrance exam as a requirement to graduate high school
- This will be a rapid shift for institutions that are resource-strapped and dealing with several other major concerns

What to Consider? (Practitioners)

- The summer needs to be spent creatively thinking through how to obtain lists of students if testing agencies have been relied on previously
- Review process typically shifts to either placing the weight for the college entrance exam on grades in some fashion or spreading it evenly across all other areas (likely will be dictated by whether holistic review or mechanized review is used)
- Decouple merit aid and scholars programs from exam scores (summer can start these conversations)

What to consider? (Policymakers)

- Waiving college entrance exam score requirement for graduation in the interim
- Creating a statewide database of changes in secondary school grading
- Creating a statewide database of unemployment or infection/hospitalization rates for areas of the state