

The Test-Optional Surge

Why, How, What's Next?

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The ACT/SAT Optional Movement— by the Numbers

- **997** accredited, 4-year institutions now will make admissions decisions about all or many applicants without regard to ACT/SAT scores
- **300+** test-optional, test-flexible and test-blind schools ranked in top tiers of their categories
- **Half of “Top 100”** national liberal arts colleges
- **250+** Common App. members test-optional
- **400,000+** visits annually to the lists at:
<http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>

“The Test-Optional Surge”-

(New York Times, 10/15/15)

- **105+ test-optional adoptions in past four years** since SAT “redesign” announced, fastest growth rate ever.
- **Many top-tier liberal arts colleges** from all parts of the U.S. (e.g. Austin, Beloit, Birmingham-Southern, Drake, Hiram, High Point, Kalamazoo, Ripon, Skidmore, Trinity, Wesleyan, Wofford, Whitman, Willamette, etc.)

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- **More national and regional universities** (e.g. Brandeis, Catholic U., Duquesne, George Washington, Hartford, Hofstra, Immaculata, Niagara, St. John’s, etc.)
- **Wave of public campuses** (e.g. Fitchburg State, James Madison, Montclair State, Rowan, Temple, SUNY Purchase, University of Delaware, Virginia Commonwealth, UMass. Lowell, Western Oregon, Worcester State)

A “Critical Mass”

Fiske Guide to Colleges 2018

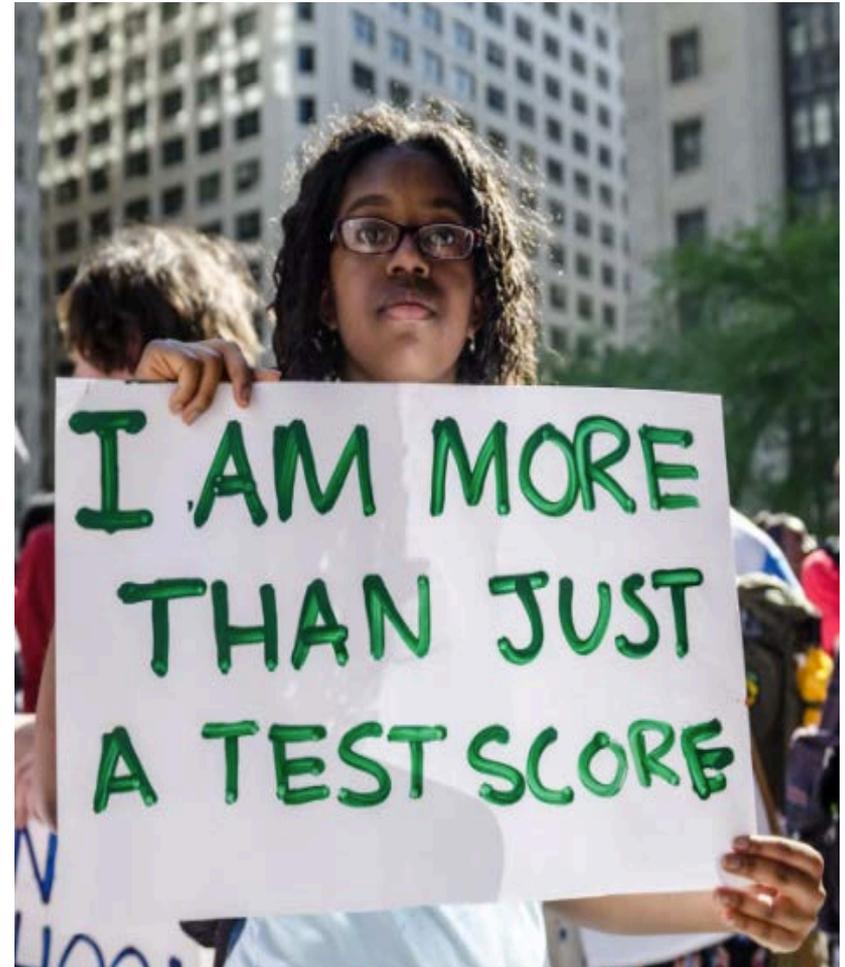
“Over the last few years, however, a critical mass has emerged of quality liberal arts colleges and major state universities that are test-optional or test-flexible in the sense that they offer applicants a range of options for the tests they take. There are now 100 such institutions covered in the *Fiske Guide*. For the first time, students who wish to avoid getting involved in the admissions-test rat race can do so while still enjoying a range of colleges and universities from which to choose.”

Test-Optional Admission--New England “Carrying Coals to Newcastle” ??

- Where the movement began
 - Bowdoin 1969
 - Bates 1985
 - Many more highly-ranked institutions including **two dozen top-tier** national liberal arts colleges and universities
- All told, **106** bachelor-degree granting institutions in the region have **test-optional** or **test-flexible** policies !
- In every New England state, **half or more of 4-year schools** do not require ACT/SAT scores from all or many applicants. The sole test-blind school in the nation is also in the region.

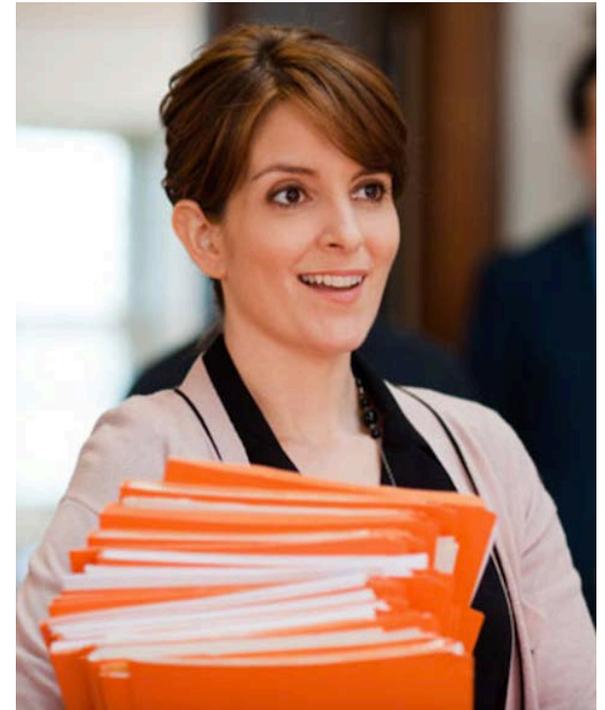
Why Test Optional ? – The Applicant’s Perspective

- Evaluation as “More Than a Score”
- ACT/SAT results “obscure my academic talents”
- Send “Enough is Enough” message to testing overkill
- “Cost” savings – financial and emotional
- FairTest lists available through online admissions sites, college guides, and counseling offices
- Social media, such as “College Confidential,” and word of mouth



Why Test Optional? – The Admissions Perspective

- Major research studies – “Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admission” and Crossing the Finish Line
- SAT Wars: The Case for Test-Optional Admissions and “Test Scores Do Not Equal Merit”
- “Turning the Tide” Harvard Univ. report
- Positive data and experiences reported by peer institutions
- Review of school’s mission, desired student body
- Internal, institution-specific research on predictive validity and disparate impact



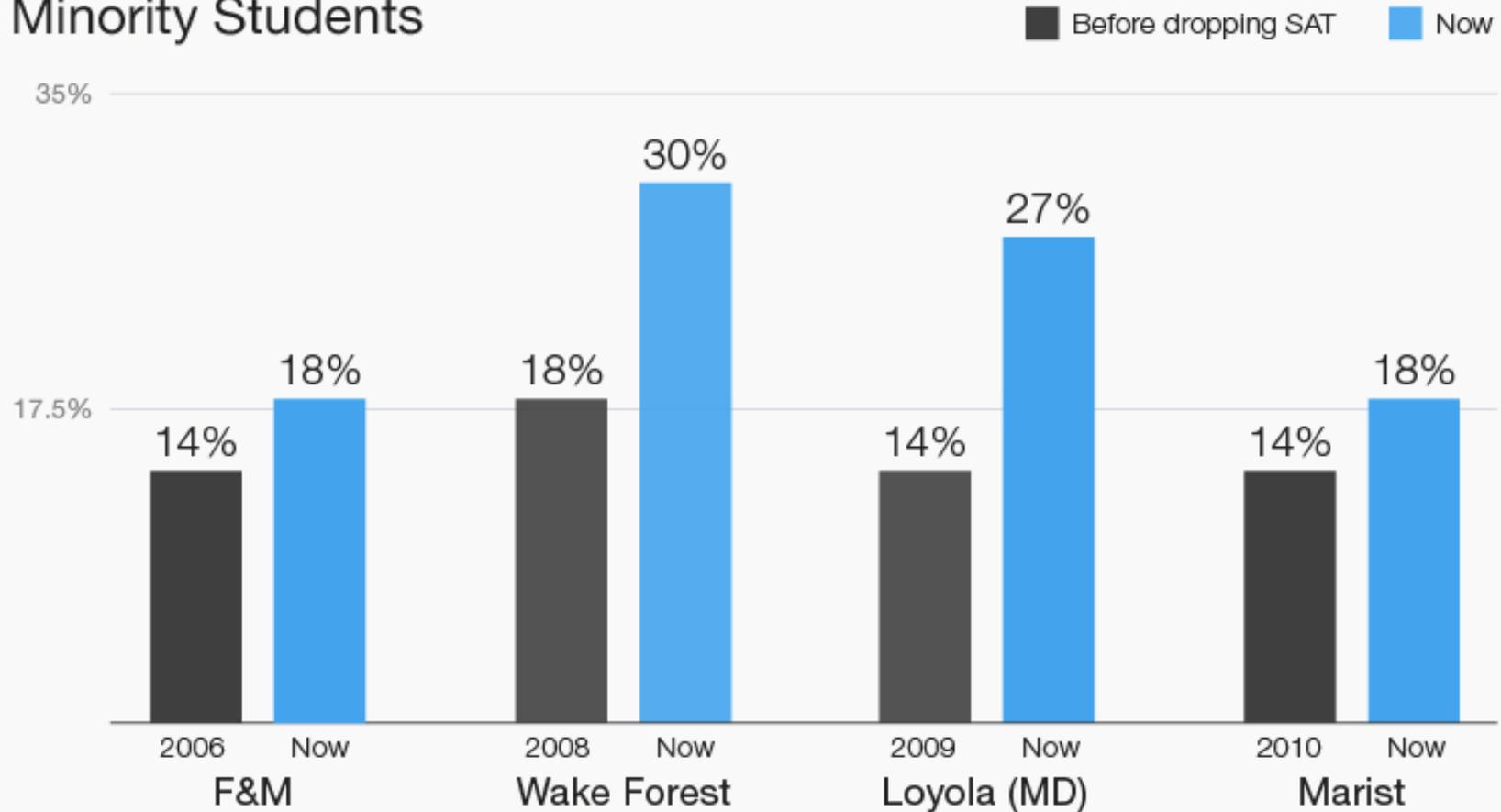
Results of Test-Optional Policies

- **More applicants**, often many more
- **Academically stronger** applicant pool (HSGPA, class rank, etc.)
- **More diversity** of all sorts (race, first generation, geography, academic interests, learning differences etc.)
- **“[N]o significant differences”** in **undergraduate success** between test-score submitters and non-submitters (per “Defining Promise”)



Evidence of Test-Optional Impact on Diversity

Minority Students



Impacts of Recent ACT/SAT Changes

- Redesigned tests **no better predictors** than old exams
- Many **long-standing biases not addressed** (gender, race, income, first language)
- Scores still **susceptible to test prep** “steroids”
- **Ongoing scandals** (global cheating, scoring delays, test administration foul-ups, high costs and “un-profits,” concordance confusion, whistleblower claims, customer-service “arrogance,” etc.)

as a result:

**Many more test-optional announcements
in the pipeline**

Test Defenders' *Myths*

- *Dropping admissions exam requirements improves U.S. News rankings.*
- *ACT/SAT create a “level playing field” for applicants from diverse backgrounds.*
- *Test scores add significant value to admissions office prediction equations.*
- *More data is always better.*

for more information:

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Please be sure to fill out the session
evaluation at:

neacrao.org/feedback/

Thank you!