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for use with annual ACT scores, Wednesday, October 17, 2018

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING ACT DECLINES SHARPLY AS
MANY MORE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DROP ADMISSIONS EXAMS;
1020+ SCHOOLS ARE NOW ACT/SAT-OPTIONAL;
K-12 “TEST-AND-PUNISH” POLICIES DID NOT HELP “COLLEGE READINESS”**

The number of students taking the ACT college admissions exam plunged for the second year in a row, for the high school class of 2018. The decline -- more than 175,000 or 8% over the two-year period -- counters a long-term trend in which the ACT overtook the SAT in popularity, according to the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) (<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/ACT-SAT-Annual-Test-Takers-Chart.pdf>). FairTest Public Education Director Bob Schaeffer explained, “A portion of the drop-off likely stems from the rapid growth in students applying to test-optional colleges that do not require either the ACT or SAT.”

A FairTest analysis also reveals that average ACT scores within racial groups either dropped or stagnated over the past five years. Schaeffer concluded, “This provides additional evidence that K-12 test-and-punish policies pursued by the federal government and many states have not improved readiness for higher education, at least as measured by this exam.” Flat or declining scores have also been reported on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the SAT.

At the same time, a rapidly growing number of colleges and universities adopted policies to waive consideration of ACT/SAT scores for all or many applicants. A FairTest tally shows that more than 1020 bachelor-degree granting institutions are now test-optional (<http://fairtest.org/university/optional>). In the past five years, more than 130 schools eliminated or reduced their ACT and SAT exam requirements (<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/Optional-Growth-Chronology.pdf>), a pace of one every two weeks. FairTest’s test-optional list now includes more than 320 colleges and universities ranked in the top tiers of their respective categories by *U.S. News & World Report*. (<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/Optional-Schools-in-U.S.News-Top-Tiers.pdf>).

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ACT ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS TESTING VOLUME

Class of 2015	1,924,436
Class of 2016	2,090,342
Class of 2017	2,030,038
Class of 2018	1,914,817

Source *ACT, The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2015 - 2018*

2018 COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS AVERAGE ACT SCORES

	COMPOSITE SCORE	FIVE-YEAR SCORE TREND (2014 – 2018)
ALL TEST-TAKERS	20.8	- 0.3
African American	16.9	- 0.1
American Indian	17.3	- 0.7
Asian	24.5	+ 1.0
Hispanic/Latino	18.8	0
White	22.2	- 0.1
Females	20.9	0
Males	20.8	- 0.3

Source: ACT, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2018* and *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2014*