



The National Center for Fair & Open Testing

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for immediate release, Thursday, September 4, 2025

**OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
REMAIN ACT/SAT-OPTIONAL OR TEST-BLIND/SCORE-FREE FOR FALL 2026;**

More than 90% of ranked U.S. four-year colleges and universities will not require applicants for fall 2026 admissions to submit ACT/SAT scores according to a [new tally by FairTest](#), the National Center for Fair & Open Testing. That's a total of over 2,000 of the nation's bachelor-degree granting institutions.

"While a handful of schools have reinstated testing requirements over the past two admissions cycles for a variety of institutional reasons and in response to external pressures, ACT/SAT-optional and test-blind/score-free policies remain the normal baseline in undergraduate admissions," explained FairTest Executive Director Harry Feder. "Test-optional policies continue to dominate at national universities, state flagships, and selective liberal arts colleges. Decades of university research has shown that they typically result in more applicants, academically stronger applicants and admission of a greater social and intellectual cross-section of society."

He added, "High school students, parents, and counselors should understand that ACT/SAT scores will not be required by an overwhelming majority of undergraduate campuses for the foreseeable future. The introduction of the digital SAT and ACT will not change that reality because the revised test is not a better or fairer predictor of undergraduate success."

"The Trump Administration's recent decision to demand standardized testing, GPA, race and gender data from colleges to determine whether university admissions meet its definition of 'merit' should not impact the ability of colleges to determine that requiring SAT/ACT scores does not serve the school's interests in finding the best fit of qualified candidates for admission."

Akil Bello, FairTest's Admissions Testing Policy Expert Analyst revealed that for last year's admissions cycle (2024-25) only a little over half of all college applicants reported test scores as part of the admissions process (per Common App data), making the federal demand for score data problematic. "Colleges can only produce the data they actually possess."

Among well-known institutions whose test-optional policies continue at least through fall 2026 are Columbia, Emory, Princeton, the University of Chicago, the University of Southern California, and Vanderbilt. ACT/SAT scores will also not be required at such liberal arts colleges as Amherst, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Swarthmore, Wesleyan, and Williams. State higher education systems in most states, including Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon, and Washington, remain test-optional for current high school seniors and juniors. The entire University of California and California State University systems are permanently test-blind/score-free.

FairTest's frequently updated list of schools that do not require all or many applicants to submit ACT/SAT scores before admissions decisions are made is available free online at:

<https://fairtest.org/test-optional-list/>

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ACT/SAT-OPTIONAL & TEST-FREE UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION BY THE NUMBERS
2,088 out of 2,248 confirmed ranked four-year colleges test-optional or test-free for Fall 2026
160 schools require test scores for Fall 2026 (up from 154 for Fall 2025)