



BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS (BOARS)

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WILLIAM JACOB, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Re: The Redesigned SAT Test

Dear Bill,

On June 27, the Board of Admission and Relations with Schools (BOARS) voted unanimously to adopt the redesigned SAT test as an acceptable University of California admissions exam effective for 2016 admissions, and to continue requiring the Essay section of the exam. BOARS made its decision after a careful review of the test's specifications and their alignment with past BOARS statements and principles, a lengthy discussion about the test with representatives from the College Board, and an analysis of the predictive power of the existing test and its Essay section.

On June 6, BOARS met with representatives from the College Board to discuss the redesigned SAT. Prior to the meeting, a BOARS subcommittee reviewed the specifications for the 2016 test against past BOARS statements and principles, including BOARS' January 2002 [Testing Principles](#) and a 2009 BOARS [report to the Regents on Admissions Tests and UC Principles for Testing](#) that discussed outcomes from the SAT Reasoning Test introduced in 2005, and the extent to which it aligned with the principles BOARS had articulated.

The College Board indicated that the new SAT will be administered for the first time in March 2016, and will have three sections—the Math and the Evidence-Based Reading and Writing sections will comprise the main three-hour test, and an optional 50-minute Essay section will also be offered. The College Board says it intends the new test to center on a smaller set of elements that matter most for college readiness and success and to use the test to promote a closer relationship between instruction and assessment.

BOARS expects the revised SAT to be a fairer test that is more closely aligned with BOARS' testing principles than the existing SAT, in that the new test will be more aligned with college-level expectations and high school curriculum. BOARS is pleased that the SAT, like the larger educational world, appears to be moving toward a greater emphasis on assessment of core competencies and away from tests that purport to assess "aptitude." In addition, the test will incorporate items that contribute to seven sub-scores that should help provide deeper context about student achievement and preparation.

The College Board indicated that, in its view, the Essay was not being used in admission decisions by enough postsecondary institutions to justify making it mandatory; however, BOARS believes strongly that the Essay component of the redesigned test should continue to be a requirement for admission to UC. In the new test, the Essay section will expand from 35 to 50 minutes, with three analytic scores reported. The new Essay prompt will ask students to analyze arguments on a topic rather than present their opinion. The Essay prompt will not change, and for the first time will be publically available.

BOARS' 2009 report to the Regents references a 2008 UCOP study showing that the SAT writing section, which includes an essay, is one of the best predictors of first-year UC GPA. In June of this year, BOARS reviewed an updated UCOP study that confirmed this. Specifically, the score from the writing section explained about 20% of the variance in first year UC grade point average; the score from the reading section explained 18%; and that from the math section 17%. Combined the three sections explained 23% of the variance in first year GPA.

Requiring the essay section on the new SAT will allow UC to continue receiving all the kinds of test information about the college-readiness of its applicants that it now does. But, more importantly, it will send a strong message that essay writing is an important component of college-level work. It will also be consistent with current policy, which states that ACT scores used to satisfy UC's testing requirement must include the score from its otherwise optional essay section. BOARS' views on the importance of writing are further discussed in a joint [Statement](#) the committee made with UCOPE in April 2014.

In addition, BOARS recommends that prospective UC students be allowed to submit scores from both the existing SAT taken before March 2016, and the redesigned SAT during the transition period.

In sum, BOARS believes that there is no perfect standardized admission test, and tests like the SAT and ACT should continue to be only one factor considered in the comprehensive review of admissions applications. However, the new SAT meets BOARS general objectives and principles for admissions tests and should be an improvement over the current exam. BOARS also applauds the College Board's efforts to increase the SAT's clarity and openness and its connection to high school curriculum. As the new test rolls out, BOARS will be committed to studying outcomes to ensure that it sustains predictive validity and does not carry a bias toward any group.

Sincerely,



George Johnson
BOARS Chair

cc: BOARS Members