

General Legislative Action

At its special meeting on April 30, 2020, the Faculty Senate approved Class B Legislation to amend Student Governance and Policies, Chapter 101 (Admission). President Ana Mari Cauce has also approved the proposed legislation. This legislation removes standardized tests as a minimum requirement for admission to the University. The faculty was given the opportunity to submit written objections to its substantive nature, under the Faculty Code, Chapter 22, [Section 22-74](#) Senate Procedure: Class B Actions. There were four objections to this legislation.

Class B Legislation Student Governance and Policies Scholastic Regulations Chapter 101 (Admission)

Background and Rationale

The Faculty Council on Academic Standards recommends removing Scholastic Regulations Chapter 101.2.B.1.c and making related housekeeping changes in [Chapter 101: Admissions](#).

Undergraduate admissions holistic review at the University of Washington has been carefully crafted and revised over the past 15 years through a close partnership among the faculty, academic advisors, and the University's Undergraduate Admissions Offices. UW holistic review seeks to enroll an undergraduate class rich in the intellectual abilities, academic commitments, diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and talents that create a stimulating educational environment and promote desired learning outcomes.

Scholastic Regulations Chapter 101.2.B.1.c currently lists submission of standardized test scores (SAT/ACT) as a minimum requirement for admission to UW for students with fewer than 40 transfer credits. Chapter 101.2.C allows this requirement to be waived "when the applicant's high school and/or college scholastic records indicate a high probability of academic success." By eliminating mention of test score submission as a minimum requirement, we will better align scholastic regulations with best practices in undergraduate holistic admissions and encourage each UW campus to evaluate and choose among test-required, test-optional, or test-blind admissions policies.

The relevance of standardized test scores (STS) as one component in a multifaceted review of domestic freshman applicants has decreased as UW has gained experience with holistic review, and it is time to consider whether or not the benefits of STS outweigh their costs. At the Seattle campus, standardized test scores are currently required only of freshman applicants from the United States, but not for either international freshmen or transfer students with more than 40 credits. Thus, only about 2/3 of new undergraduates arriving on campus in 2018-19 had STS considered during their admission. All three student groups thrive at UW Seattle at comparable rates (see Table). A recent national study, [Defining Access: How Test-Optional Works](#) by Syverson, Franks and Hiss, found that colleges which recently converted to test-optional generally report an increase in applications from traditionally underrepresented groups upon changing to test-optional admissions, and no significant difference between graduation rates of students who do or do not submit scores.

The validity of using STS to evaluate college applicants has come into question on both a local and national level. Nationally, there is a high correlation between test scores and socioeconomic status (e.g., family income, parental education level); predicted first year college grades for specific STS vary widely among different demographic groups. Use of STS in admissions has the potential to perpetuate privilege if these factors are not taken into account.

Locally, when considered in combination with a contextualized high school record, STS add minimally to our ability to predict success at UW Seattle. An internal study of UWS students who enrolled as first-time-first-year students from 2008 to 2016 found weak to no correlation of STS with retention and graduation rates when other factors were also included (indeed, the STS correlation with four-year graduation rates was weakly negative). When considering first year grades, validity studies performed by the College Board found that while SAT scores added significant predictive value to high school GPA for students arriving at UWS in 2006 and 2012, they did not do so for the 2017 cohort, especially for Washington residents (see Figure). The difference between 2012 and 2017 was attributed to two significant changes: (i) the SAT was modified in 2016 to more closely reflect a standard high school curriculum, and (ii) UW has successfully exploited its growing history of holistic admissions to contextualize the high school record for most applicants.

At the level of the student, standardized tests place an academic, financial and psychological burden on many potential applicants to the University of Washington. Academically, participating in either free or commercial test preparation activities that can increase student's scores takes time and effort from other activities that are more relevant to a student's success at college. This includes not only their general high school curriculum and extra-curricular activities, but also preparing for advanced placement or international baccalaureate exams that can earn them college credit. Not all qualifying students are aware of or comfortable accessing fee waivers or disability accommodation for taking standardized tests, which places an undue financial and/or performance burden on these students. Even with a fee waiver and free online preparation materials, low income students may feel compelled to choose between taking time to prepare for a standardized test and time to earn money. Access to test sites can also be difficult for some students, requiring extra costs for lodging and transportation. This year, with the COVID situation, many test dates have been cancelled. High-stakes testing also can place a student under psychological stress, leading both to a poor exam performance that does not reflect their knowledge and abilities, and to reducing their resilience to other stresses. Finally, having test scores that are below reported UW averages can lead to some students choosing not to apply, even if the rest of their record is strong.

Standardized test scores do have some benefits and uses. For example, STS help renormalize a high school record when there is not a track record of students from that school; low scores can help identify students who are likely to need help to thrive in large introductory classes that include high-stress exams, enabling us to connect them with resources; STS are required for students to participate in NCAA athletics; STS play a role in national reporting for grants and academic rankings.

Enacting this change to the Scholastic Regulations will allow each UW campus to consider eliminating requiring standardized test scores for admission and enable such a change, should it be proposed and adopted. After weighing the local costs and benefits of STS in admissions, each campus could choose (a) to make submission of STS optional, (b) to eliminate their use entirely, or (c) to maintain the requirement of STS submission. Implementation of any changes would be determined separately on each campus after broad consultation with stakeholders. Due to the COVID situation, the STS requirement was suspended for 2021 admissions based on the last sentence of 101.2.C, which allows the Office of Admissions to waive the STS requirement for individual students. This legislation enables and endorses a longer-term decision on standardized test use.

The main actions of this legislation are to remove section 101.2.B.1.c, making standardized tests no longer a minimum requirement for admission to UW, and to remove the last sentences of 101.1.1.C.1 and 101.2.C, and the words "when required" from 101.12.A, which refer to 101.2.B.1.c. There are additional housekeeping amendments to this chapter, as well. Direct reference to the Faculty Council on Academic Standards is changed to refer to a designated faculty body, allowing for structural differences among the three campuses. Also, the Board of Regents admissions policy acquired a new number when it was amended in July 2019, and gender-neutral language is inserted in 101.1.C.1.

Chapter 101: Admission [relevant sections only]

1. Preliminary Statements and Definitions

A. General Policy

It shall be the general policy of the University to admit students whose educational backgrounds indicate their reasonable probability of success in a University program. A designated faculty body on each campus ~~The Faculty Council on Academic Standards~~ is responsible for the interpretation of this chapter and for the development of undergraduate admission policies that will achieve the goals outlined in *Board of Regents Governance*, Regent Policy No. ~~32-4~~, "Policy on Admission." The Council provides guidance to the Office of Admissions in the development of operating policies and procedures.

[...]

C. Undergraduate Application Process

- 1) A freshman or transfer applicant for admission shall be required to submit an application that includes an official transcript of ~~his or her~~ their record in high school and each college or university attended. ~~(Test score requirements are explained in Subsections 2.B.1.c and 2.C.)~~

[...]

2. Admission to Undergraduate Standing

A. Holistic Review

Undergraduate programs offered by the University lead to a bachelor's degree. Admission is competitive. In making admissions judgment, the University uses a holistic review process. This process considers such factors as high school grade-point average, courses taken, grade-point average in transferable college level course work, institution(s) attended, level of entry, scores on an acceptable admissions test ~~when required~~, areas of academic interest, and personal factors such as school and community service, leadership, overcoming adversity, and family educational and socioeconomic background. The relative consideration of these factors may differ between freshman and transfer applicants and among Washington State residents, non-Washington State domestic residents, and international applicants. The designated faculty body ~~The Faculty Council on Academic Standards~~ shall periodically review and approve the holistic review process for its campus.

B. Distribution of Enrollment

[...]

1) Freshman or Transfer Admission

The University shall consider for admission any applicant who meets the following minimum standards:

- a) Completion of a college preparatory course of study to include the following high school credits*
 - 4 high school credits of English;
 - 2 high school credits of a single foreign language;

- 3 high school credits of mathematics: algebra, geometry, and preferably trigonometry (a fourth high school credit of mathematical analysis or calculus is recommended for students preparing for majors in the sciences or engineering);
- 2 high school credits of science including one laboratory science course in biology, chemistry or physics;
- 3 high school credits of social science;
- 1/2 high school credit of the fine or performing arts; and
- 1/2 high school credit of electives taken from the above areas.

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Total 15 high school credits of college preparatory course work.

*One high school credit represents a standard full year of high school course work.

- b) A scholastic and personal record that indicates the applicant is adequately prepared to complete a degree at the University of Washington.
- ~~c) Submission of scores on an acceptable admission test such as the SAT or the ACT, unless the applicant has earned at least 40 reasonably distributed transferable quarter credits after high school graduation.~~

[...]

C. Additional Considerations

The University in its discretion may consider applicants for admission who do not meet the above requirements, but are able to submit additional evidence supportive of sufficient promise of benefiting from or contributing to the University's undergraduate programs. ~~Admission test scores may be waived by the Office of Admissions when the applicant's high school and/or college scholastic records indicate a high probability of academic success.~~

Approved by:
Faculty Senate
April 30, 2020