College Admission Criteria in the United States: An Overview

Alberto F. Cabrera  
Professor & WISCAPE Senior Researcher  
Department of Educational Administration  
University of Wisconsin at Madison  
1025 West Johnson Street. Room 1250  
Madison, WI 53706  
E-mail: Cabrera@education.wisc.edu  
Tel: 608- 262-3771

Kurt R. Burkum  
Doctoral Student & Graduate Research Assistant  
E-mail: krb201@psu.edu  
Center for the Study of Higher Education  
The Pennsylvania State University  
400 Rackley Building  
University Park, PA 16802-3203

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The use of admission criteria to determine entrance eligibility to United States postsecondary institutions is as old as higher education is in the US. Their use can be traced back to 1635 with the creation of the first university, Harvard University. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of college admission criteria employed in the United States. In so doing, we will open our discussion with a synopsis of the US postsecondary education system and the types of degrees it offers; a review whose importance would become self-evident as one learns how admission criteria vary by type of postsecondary institution under consideration. This section will also describe the different pathways to a baccalaureate degree followed by American high school graduates. Then, we will document the different admission criteria used by American universities, their frequency of use, and their relative importance in screening out college applicants. To better understand the status of admission criteria, we will examine how admission criteria took root in the US Higher Education system. Next, the validity of select admission criteria will be examined in terms of two major collegiate outcomes: academic performance in college and degree completion. This will be followed by a discussion of the controversies over the use of college examination tests. Finally, trends affecting the current use of admission criteria will be addressed.

At this point, a disclaimer is appropriate. Our presentation is not a treatise on US college admission criteria. Such a challenge is beyond the scope of this document. Rather, we seek to provide a panoramic view of the use of college admission criteria in the US. It is our hope this picture would help lay a foundation upon which discussions of US College admission criteria can best be articulated.
US Postsecondary Education System: Pathways To A Baccalaureate Degree

In Fall 1999, 4,096 postsecondary institutions enrolled 14.8 million students in the United States (Chronicle of Higher Education, August 31, 2001). Of those postsecondary institutions, 2,151 were four-year colleges and universities, 1,276 were community colleges, also known as two-year institutions, and 669 were proprietary schools. Proprietary schools offer the degree of technician, with examples including: beautician, computer technician, and data manager. Universities can count some credits associated with technical degrees as college related credit if proprietary school graduates apply to college. In addition to offering technical degrees, community colleges offer two-year associate degrees. Examples of this degree include: associate nurse, medical assistance, and laser specialist. An associate degree is equivalent to two-years of college education; consequently, these credits can be transferred when the community college graduate enrolls in college. Finally, colleges and universities tender degrees at the Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. levels (see Table 1).

The use of college admission criteria is closely linked to the type of institution under consideration. While 97% of public four-year institutions require a high school diploma, only 83.7% of public two-year institutions do so. More striking is the use of an open admissions policy. Many public community colleges (62%) endorse open admission policies. This practice contrasts admission policies followed by four-year colleges and universities where only 7.5% have open admissions policies. The vast majority of four-year college and universities rely on admission tests and academic performance in high school to screen applicants (see Table 2).

Almost 60% of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education institutions upon high school completion\(^1\). Of those enrolled, 47% first attended a college or university, 41%

\(^1\) These estimates are based on an examination of the pathways to a baccalaureate degree followed by members of the 1980 high school sophomore cohort (Cabrera, La Nasa, & Burkum, 2001).
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opted for as 2-year institution, and 12% enrolled at a proprietary school. Of those who enrolled at proprietary schools, 9% eventually secured a four-year degree within ten years. Fifteen percent of those enrolling at community colleges eventually earned a four-year degree. In addition, 65% of those who started at a four-year institution secured a baccalaureate degree in ten years. Though the chance of graduating from college is highly conditioned by first-type of institution attended, academic preparation for college seems to exert a stronger effect. Even when students start their postsecondary education in community colleges, high school graduates highly prepared for college have a 30% chance to earn a baccalaureate degree (Cabrera, La Nasa, & Burkum, 2001).

**College Admission Criteria: Current Use, Importance, And Trends**

American colleges and universities employ multiple admission criteria when screening out college applicants. Since 1989, annual surveys by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) report that colleges and universities use at least 12 specific admissions criteria (NACAC, February 2001). Admission criteria include: ability to pay, samples of written essays, interviews, recommendations from high school counselors and teachers, and evidence of exceptional leadership skills (see Table 3).

Not all admission criteria carry the same weight in selecting college applicants. Of the 12 criteria, NACAC found four of them to be most influential.\(^2\) Those college admission criteria include: a) high school grades in college preparation courses, b) admission test scores, c) cumulative high school grades, and d) high school class rank. No other admission criterion was rated as having considerable importance by more than 40% of survey respondents for six or more of the 12 years covered.

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\(^2\) NACAC regards criteria as most influential if 40 percent of more of the college admission officers noted it for six or more of the 12 years covered by NACAC surveys.
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The relative importance of specific admission criteria changed between 1989 and 2000. During the last twelve years, between 78% and 82% of college admission officers have consistently rated grades in college preparatory courses to be of considerable importance. So too, has been cumulative high school grades, whose rating has remained between 42% and 43%. However, the relative importance of class rank in high school and admission tests have switched places over the last 10 years. The relative importance of class rank in high school has declined from 51% to 34%, while the relative importance of admission tests increased from 44% to 58% (see Figure 1).

A Brief History

When examining the use of college admission requirements over the last three centuries, four definite periods are evident. These four eras are: 1) subjectivity, 2) search for uniformity, 3) search for objectivity, and 4) the quest for a holistic approach to college admissions (see Table 4).

Between 1600 and 1800, admission criteria were rather subjective and institution-specific. For most of the 1700s, for instance, college presidents interviewed each college applicant. The interview tested the candidate’s knowledge of classical languages, specific readings, and moral character. The nature of the readings and definition of moral character differed from institution to institution, and from president to president. Religious denominational considerations and personal interpretations by the college president contributed greatly to the disparity in admission practices (Linn, 1993; Cremin, 1964).

The admission process and criteria employed changed during the last half of the 1800s as the number of college professors increased. Faculty members eventually relieved the college president of the responsibility of conducting the admission screening process. Unfortunately,
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college admission requirements became inconsistent as different university and academic
departments enacted their own admission criteria. As a result of this chaotic situation, most
typical nineteenth century college preparatory schools had to prepare their students to meet as
many admission standards as colleges and departments to which their students applied (Linn,
1993).

The search for alignment between high school curriculum and collegiate work
characterized the time between 1893 and 1900. In 1893, ten of the most important private
universities agreed to enact the same admission standards. They also recommended a common
curriculum all high schools should adopt to prepare students for college. The high school
curriculum was viewed as the main mechanism to ensure students possessed the abilities,
knowledge, and attitudes necessary to succeed in college. Six years later, the same universities
created the first accreditation agency, the North Central Accreditation (NCA). NCA was
entrusted with the responsibility of providing for uniformity of curriculum and standards in
higher education.

With the establishment of the College Entrance Examination Board (College Board) in
1900, the search for curriculum uniformity was soon complemented with uniformity in
admission criteria. Originally formed by 14 private universities, the College Board started to
formulate common admission criteria. These first college admission criteria took the form of
essays. In 1901, 973 college applicants wrote 7,889 papers for the first examinations
coordinated by the College Board. These examinations tested understanding of specific subjects
and were not intended to determine scholastic aptitude (Linn, 1993).

From the 1920s to 1960s, the search for objectivity joined the quest for uniformity in
admission criteria. During this time, admission tests gained recognition as the main tool to
accomplish such objectivity (Linn, 1993). The use of objective tests in college admissions was greatly facilitated by the extensive development of military testing during World War I. In 1925, the College Board decided to develop aptitude tests, which could provide an indication of a candidate’s ability to successfully perform collegiate work. A year later, the first Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was administered to 8,040 college applicants. The test, rooted in the IQ tests first developed by Alfred Binet, was “…designed to measure aptitude, or innate mental ability” (Gose & Selingo, 2001, A11). In the 1940s, the popularity of the SAT was secured when the University of California decided to require the test for all of its college applicants (Gose & Selingo, 2001). In 1959, the American College Testing Program joined the College Board in offering standardized objective tests. This test, known as the ACT, was designed to measure the level of verbal and mathematical skills deemed necessary to conduct college work. Unlike SAT, the ACT seeks to measure the extent to which the high school student has mastered college related skills and knowledge.

During the last half of the 20th century, standardized tests were praised as an inexpensive mechanism to reliably assess college aptitude. The use of standardized tests was heightened by the tremendous growth in college enrollment after World War II. Standardized tests made it possible for college admission officers to efficiently and economically process thousands of college applications. Later, standardized tests in general, and the SAT in particular, fulfilled another role: a yardstick to measure institutional quality. This is evident from the annual *U.S. News and World Reports*, published since 1985 (see Table 5).

During the last few years, admission tests have been subject to increasing criticism to the point of questioning their validity as measures of college success (Adelman, 1999a, 199b; Hiss, 1992; Miller, 2001). Healy (1999) and Olivas (1997) have singled out the disparate impact on
minorities and low-income college students as another major drawback of admission tests (see Tables 6 & 7). In 1999, the U.S. Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights similarly warned universities that using standardized tests may be discriminatory since minorities’ scores, particularly African American and Hispanics scores, lag substantially behind those of Whites (Gose & Selingo, 2001).

The controversy over standardized admission test has been heightened by the President of the University of California system’s recommendation to stop requiring high-school students to take SAT I and to move away from admission processes using “…narrowly defined quantitative formulas and instead adopt procedures that look applicants in a comprehensive, holistic way” (Atkinson, 2001). Paradoxically, this action comes from the same institution that helped popularize the SAT almost 60 years ago (Gose & Selingo, 2001). President Atkinson’s decision represents the hallmark of a new era characterized by the quest of alternative college admission criteria to admission tests that can predicate success in college and beyond while warranting fairness in the process (Adelman, 1999b; Olivas, 1997; Gose & Selingo, 2001). The University of Texas at Austin and North Carolina’s public universities are considering dropping the SAT I as well. Similarly, Harvard University, MIT, and the University of Michigan are considering replacing the SAT with currently administered high school state exams.

**College Admission Tests: Types**

In the US, the SAT I and the ACT are the most widely administered college entrance exams, with over 2 million SAT I tests (Gose & Selingo, 2001) and 1.7 million ACT tests administered annually (ACT, 2001). Lesser used admission tests include a test of English comprehension (TOEFL) for individuals whose primary language is not English; the College

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3 TOEFL consists of four sections that separately test listening, structure, reading, and writing of English (http://www.toefl.org). In the 1999-2000 academic year, over 825,000 individuals took the test.
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Base which tests abilities in reading, literature, writing, math, algebra, history, social sciences, laboratory and field work; and various state entrance exams (e.g. Texas’ TASS).

The SAT I is the oldest college admission test. Begun in 1926, the SAT I was then called the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), initially an all-essay exam. Multiple-choice questions were introduced on the SAT in 1935, and by 1956, the exam was completely multiple-choice (Linn, 1993). The test was intended to be a guide for determining a student’s ability to perform college-level work. By the mid-1990s, the College Board, which administers the SAT, changed the acronym to SAT I and renamed it the Scholastic Achievement Test. Now, the test is simply called the SAT I as a proper name, not an acronym. According to the College Board, the SAT I “measures… verbal and math reasoning abilities” (College Board, 2001). Specifically, the Verbal section tests students’ ability to “understand and analyze reading, recognize relationships between parts of a sentence, and establish relationships between pairs of words” (College Board, 2001). The Math section tests students’ ability to solve problems using “arithmetic, algebra, and geometry” (College Board, 2001). For both sections of the SAT I, scores range from 200-800. The average for both sections is about 500 (College Board, 2001). Standardization, or scaling of scores, which ensures scores are on a fixed scale to allow for comparisons over time, did not begin until 1941.

The American College Testing Program first administered the ACT in 1959, and by the next year, all 50 states began using it (ACT, 2001). Originating from a variety of well-used secondary school tests, specifically the Iowa Tests of Educational Development, it was designed to test intellectual achievement in a variety of secondary school subject areas (ACT, 2001). As it stands today, the ACT consists of four sections, one each for English (usage & mechanics), Math (pre-algebra, algebra/geometry, & Trigonometry), Reading (social studies, natural sciences, &
arts/literature), and Science (science reasoning). Scores range from 1 to 36 for each of the four sections, and the composite score is the average of the scores on the four sections (Linn, 1993). Like the SAT, the test scores are scaled for making comparisons across time. In 2001, the average ACT composite score was 21.0, and only 1 in 12,000 scored a 36 (ACT, 2001).

**College Admission Tests: Controversy**

Long considered as one of the most influential public university systems in the US, the University of California system’s new policy of eliminating the use of SAT I, if implemented, would most likely reshape the way public universities screen out college applicants (Selingo, 2001). In fact, President Atkinson’s comment that the SAT test is “distorting educational priorities” encases and magnifies more than a decade of criticisms towards admission tests.

The argument for the use of standardized tests (SAT and ACT) has been their ability to measure preparation and readiness for college in an objective manner. The fact that these objective tests are easy to apply, score, and compare across all students adds to their advantage in relation to alternative college admission criteria; an advantage which has been welcomed by college admission officers facing thousands of college applications every fall. The use of standardized tests as a mechanism to ensure public accountability on the part of state legislators and public officers has added to their popularity.

Criticisms of objective admission tests are multiple. Some find a weak connection between the SAT and what is taught at the high school level. At best, the SAT is seen as a global measure of learned abilities that are influenced ‘…as much as by the nature of the household dinner-table conversation as it is by formal school instruction’ (Adelman, 1999a, p. B4). Others note the limited scope of abilities and competencies standardized tests measure. Critical thinking, appreciation for arts, and sophisticated problem solving skills are just a few
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competencies a three-hour paper and pencil paper can hardly capture (Miller, 2001). Still, others note standardized testing has negative consequences for elementary and secondary schools when used for accountability purposes. Schools start diverting from curriculum to “teach to the test,” defeating the main objective of accountability: enhancing readiness and preparation for college (Adelman, 1999a; Miller, 2001).

Of all the criticisms, the poor validity of admission tests as predictors of success in college is the most compelling. Two college success measures are most often used: college GPA and degree completion.

Table 8 summarizes correlations between end of the first-year college grade point average and standardized tests and measures of performance in high school for two public universities and the colleges and universities affiliated with the College Board. In all three cases, the admission tests explain a small percentage of the total variation in college GPA. Performance in high school was as good as or better than either the SAT or ACT as a predictor of success. The University of Houston reports the highest degree of association for its Freshman Class of 1988; in which the ACT accounted for 26% of the variance. In other words, 74% of how well students performed in college has nothing to do with what the ACT measures. Research conducted by the College Board (Burton & Ramist, 2001) supports this observation. The SAT accounted for only 13% of the variation in college GPA. In other words, 87% of performance in college was not captured by the test. The College Board noted that the highest correlation was obtained when high school performance measures and SAT are combined. This evidence is used to recommend the continued use of the SAT as a valid predictor of college achievement, by combining the SAT and high school performance (Burton & Ramist, 2001).
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Table 9 summarizes correlations between degree completion and standardized tests and measures of performance in high school. Like GPA, the percentage of variation explained in degree completion by standardized test scores is small. A study of students at Utah Valley State University indicates that only 9% of the variance in degree completion is explained by the ACT (Beecher & Fischer, 1999). Similarly, Burton & Ramist (2001) report that SAT accounts for only 11% of the variance in degree completion. In short, approximately 90% of degree completion is unaccounted for by these admission tests. The combination of SAT and performance in high school was even less predictive of degree completion, accounting for only 8% of the variance (Burton & Ramist, 2001). Clearly, the use of admissions tests as a predictor of degree completion leaves much to be desired. The College Board itself admits “the most important factor is [the] high school transcript … SAT scores are intended to [be] supplement[ary]” (College Board, 2001).

While the College Board recognizes the low correlation between SAT scores and college GPA and college graduation, it imputes this low correlation to what it describes as “statistical artifact[s]” (Burton & Ramist, 2001, p. 12). Restriction of range in SAT scores, differences in grading stringency and differences in college course offerings among universities are seen as some of the culprits for these lower than anticipated correlations. Researchers for the College Board argue that if these artifacts were removed, the true correlation between SAT and measures of college success increases (Bridgeman et al, 2000; Burton & Ramist, 2001).

In spite of numerous statistical reports seeking to make a strong case on behalf of the validity of the SAT (e.g. Bridgeman et al., 2000; Burton & Ramist, 2001; Camara & Echternacht, 2000; Camara & Schmidt, 1999), their intended audience remains skeptical. Of particular relevance in this debate is the increasing number of research reports suggesting
alternative ways for standardized tests. In examining the degree completion patterns for a whole
generation of high school graduates, Adelman (1999b) demonstrated that the quality and the
intensity of the high school curriculum was the best predictor of college success. He noted that
students who took high school math courses beyond Algebra II were more prone to take
Advanced Placement courses, be admitted to college, and earn a four-year degree within 11
years. Complementing Adelman’s study, Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) and Cabrera, La Nasa,
and Burkum (2001) found strong preparation for college facilitated high school completion,
applying for college, transferring from community colleges to universities, and attainment of the
baccalaureate degree as well. Hiss (1993) examined the effects of the policy adopted by Bates
College, a private institution located in Maine, of making SAT score reporting optional. Hiss
found no statistically significant differences in college GPA between SAT submitters and SAT
non-submitters.

Admissions Options: Adjustments and Alternatives

Debates over the legal standing of using race as an admission criterion (Greve, 1999;
Olivas, 1997), in combination with eroding public and political support for using race-based
affirmative action in college admissions (Bernal, Cabrera, & Terenzini, 2000), have sent
administrators and policymakers scrambling to find race-neutral ways to continue established
institutional missions of equity and diversity. The search for these alternatives has been
heightened by the declining college participation rates experienced by African Americans and
Hispanics, a trend particularly troublesome in California (see Table 10).

These alternative methods of college admissions include: a) class-based affirmative
action, b) strivers and merit-aware index (Goggin 1999; St. John, Hu, Simmons, and Musoba,
Class-based affirmative action suggests socioeconomic status (SES), rather than race, be used as the cornerstone for new affirmative action and equal opportunity programs. In essence, this approach argues for considering socioeconomic status in college admission decisions (Kahlenberg, 1996). Since race and ethnicity are seen to correlate strongly, class-based admission policies are viewed as a conduit to address both ethnic and economic considerations simultaneously. In spite of the best hopes of the proponents of class-based admission policies, Bernal, Cabrera, and Terenzini (2000) found this policy inappropriate to increase college participation rates of minorities. After examining the effects of this admission policy among three cohorts of high school graduates, they found class-based admission policies would benefit White applicants most. In short, race-based admissions policies ignore two facts: a) socioeconomic status is weakly correlated with ethnicity; and, b) the majority of lowest SES individuals are White.

Strives and the merit-aware index adjusts a student's scores on standardized tests in relation to the average score of his or her high school. Basically, these admission practices seek to compensate for disadvantages by giving preference to those students whose observed high school academic performance or SAT score is above what would have been predicted due to the type and quality of high school the students attended (St. John, et al., 2001; Adelman 1999a). While a series of simulation studies using these alternative admissions criteria has been conducted, no institution has implemented these criteria as an alternative admission policy (St. John et al., 2001). Moreover, the new president of the College Board has not endorsed such alternative practices (Gose & Selingo, 2001).
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A number of states have implemented admission policies using high school graduation rank as the primary college entrance criterion. For example, Texas admits to any Texas state system university all Texas high school students who graduate within the top 4 percent of their high school graduating class. The Florida university system admits all Florida residents who graduate in the top 20 percent of their graduating class.

Like the Florida and the Texas admission plans, the California plan puts heavy emphasis on high school ranking; however, the California plan stresses curriculum that prepares students to academically succeed in college by creating a two-tier college admission system. Those graduating within the top 4% are guaranteed admission to a four-year institution. Those graduating with the top 4% and 12.5% are conditionally admitted if they maintain at least a 2.4 GPA during a two-year course of study at a California community college. While Texas and Florida claim their admissions policies have helped to increase or at least maintain minorities’ college participation rates, evidence as to the effect of these policies is wanting. In California, it is clear that low numbers of high school graduates would be eligible for college entrance, even with the second tier (see Figure 2). Only 11% of all Californian high school graduates graduate within the top 12.5% of their high school class. While the Californian plan can be seen as a substitute for race-based and SAT-based admissions policies, different ethnic groups appear to be impacted differently. The percentages of African Americans and Hispanics graduating within the top 12.5% of their class are 2.8% and 3.8%, respectively. This is noticeably lower than the percentages of whites (12.7%) and Asian Americans (30.0%) meeting this standard. Success for the California policy will rest on the extent it fosters improving the quality of the high school curriculum for all students.
Forces of Change

As foreseen by President Richard Atkinson, college admission practices are likely to acquire a more holistic approach when assessing a college applicant’s potential for success in college. Instead of stressing students’ characteristics as ethnicity and admission test scores, attention will be placed on those factors that actually predicate successful engagement in college. True, the popularity of reports from *Money Magazine, US News and World Report, Barron’s Profiles of American Colleges*, and *Peterson’s/AGB Survey of Strategic Indicators* reinforces the misguided belief that institutional reputation based on average admission test scores captures the effectiveness of the institution. However, it is also true that public policy and accreditation practices are abandoning admission test scores as a proxy of institutional quality. Ewell (1998) estimates two-thirds of the states have developed assessment mandates compelling institutions of higher education to establish mechanisms for assessing and reporting student collegiate performance. Similarly, Burke and Serban (1998) found fewer than 15% of the eleven states they surveyed used resource or reputation indexes. Instead, most of the states surveyed had introduced indicators gauging impacts or results, particularly in the area of student development and gains in professional competencies. These outcomes-based indicators are meant to guide public policy (see Figure 3).

Emphasis on demonstrable changes in student outcomes is beginning to influence state-funding practices as well. Some state initiatives, like Maryland’s 1998 Higher Education Reorganization Act, seek institutional change by making public funding contingent upon demonstrated ability to foster student learning and to retain students. The 1998 New York Plan calls for the allocation of state funding ranging from 3% to 5% on the basis of four major groups of performance indicators: “student achievement,” “faculty achievement,” “academic robustness,” and “quality of campus services.” Though few states have adopted performance
funding, Burke and Serban (1998), estimate slightly more than fifty percent of the states will
soon adopt funding schemes in which portions of state allocations to higher education
institutions would be linked to demonstrated performance\(^4\).

Interest in student development is also heightened by calls from industrial leaders for
college graduates who can work in teams and solve real-world problems (Augustine, 1996;
Black, 1994; Bucciarelli, 1988). In 1992, the National Educational Goals Panel declared student
developmental outcomes such as critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication,
and responsible citizenship essential when judging the effectiveness of its institutional affiliates.

Accrediting agencies have contributed to the trend of shifting focus from resource
measures and admission tests to indicators of teaching effectiveness. In 1996, for example, the
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools Agency placed teaching and learning as the
centerpiece of institutional self-assessment. Similarly, other regional accreditation agencies are
adopting policies encouraging institutional evaluators to focus their attention to students’ gains in
group interaction and problem solving skills (McMurtrie, 2000). Regional accreditation efforts
are being matched by professional accrediting organizations. The Accreditation Board for
Engineering and Technology (ABET), the sole agency responsible for accrediting engineering
degrees in the US, recently enacted criteria requiring colleges of engineering to demonstrate their
graduates have developed eleven competencies, including the abilities “to design systems or
components, or process to meet desired needs,” “to function on multi-disciplinary teams,” and
“to communicate effectively” (ABET, 1998).

A major push towards the abandonment of standardized tests as measures of institutional
quality was prompted by a 1999 Pew grant of $3.3 million awarded to Indiana University to

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\(^4\) This estimate is based on a 1997 telephone survey of all state higher education finance officers in the fifty states, Puerto Rico
and the District of Columbia.
implement the National Survey of Student Engagement (Kuh, 2000). Already endorsed by more than 700 postsecondary institutions, the survey seeks to assess the extent to which undergraduate students are engaged in educational practices known to produce educational gains. This survey was regarded by Russell Edgerton, director of the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning, and Lee Shulman, president for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, as a more valid indicator of quality than admissions tests (Kuh, 2000).

Developers and administrators of the SAT remain doubtful of valid alternatives to standardized testing (Selingo, 2001). The number of technical reports produced by The College Board attest to their faith in admission testing (e.g. Bridgeman et al, 2000; Burton & Ramist, 2001; Camara & Echternacht, 2000). However, mounting research is supportive of bringing a more comprehensive perspective on what makes it possible for a high school graduate to succeed in college. This emerging research clearly shows that factors such as quality of educational experiences in the K-12 sector, having clear educational expectations, and supportive school and family environments are better pre-college predictors of degree completion than is a single score on a four-hour standardized test taken one Saturday morning (Adelman, 1999a, 1999b; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Cabrera, La Nasa, & Burkum, 2001; Horn, Kojaku, & Carroll, 2001).

Unless we develop measures of quality where colleges can provide evidence of their contribution to students, then this whole system [of ranking colleges] turns on resources and reputation, and reinforces the elitism of higher education.

Russell Edgerton  
Director, Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning
### Tabla 1. Caminos para obtener el grado de licenciatura en los EEUU por tipo de institución

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institución</th>
<th>Descripción</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universidades (2,151)</td>
<td>(“4-year”) • Ofrecen carreras de licenciatura, maestría y doctorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tecnológicos (1,276)</td>
<td>“Community colleges” (“2-year”) • Máximo grado conferido es licenciado asociado el cual es equivalente a dos años de carrera universitaria. • Egresados con el título de licenciado asociado pueden ser trasladados a la universidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otros (669)</td>
<td>“Proprietary schools” • Máximo grado conferido es técnico. • Egresados pueden ser trasladados a la universidad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tabla 2. Uso de Criterios de Admisión por Tipo de Institución

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterio de Admisión</th>
<th>Universidad Pública</th>
<th>Tecnológico Público</th>
<th>Universidad Privada</th>
<th>Tecnológico Privado</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pruebas de admisión</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking en el bachillerato (High school rank)</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admisión libre</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: Chronicle of Education (2001)
Tabla 3. Criterios de admisión considerados como de suma importancia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterios de admisión</th>
<th>De Suma Importancia (porcentajes)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promedio académico en cursos preparatorios</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruebas de acceso</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promedio académico en general</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking en el bachillerato</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muestras de escritura</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recomendación del consejero académico</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartas de recomendación del maestro</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servicio a la comunidad</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participación en actividades extra-curriculares</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participación en programas de excelencia</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condición financiera</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figura 1. Criterios de Admisión Considerados Como de Suma Importancia: (1990-2000)

### Tabla 4. Criterios de Admisión y su Contexto

**Breve Historia**

- **1636. Creación de Harvard**
- **1600-1700s. Los presidentes de las universidades examinaban el conocimiento de los candidatos**
- **1893. El Comité de las 10 Universidades. Establecimiento de currícula y estándares nacionales en la educación primaria y secundaria**
- **1899. Creación de la primera agencia de Acreditación (North Central Accreditation). La universidad adquirió influencia definitiva en la educación secundaria.**
- **1900. Creación del College Entrance Examination Board. Constituido por 14 universidades privadas para formular criterios de admisión. Uso de ensayos como criterio fundamental.**
- **1910’s Uso extensivo de pruebas estandarizadas por parte del ejército (Army Alpha y Army Beta).**
- **1926. Primera aplicación de la prueba de admisión SAT. Busca medir habilidades inatas.**
- **1959. Creación del American College Testing Program el cual desarrolló el ACT test.**
- **2001. El presidente la Universidad de California propone el abandono del SAT.**

### Tabla 5. Average freshman SAT scores in 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Selective colleges</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denison U.</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania State U.</td>
<td>1,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami U. (Ohio)</td>
<td>1,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulane U.</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highly selective colleges</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryan Mawr College</td>
<td>1,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale U.</td>
<td>1,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swathmore College</td>
<td>1,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia U.</td>
<td>1,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice U.</td>
<td>1,316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chronicle of Higher Education (January 24, 2000)
### Tabla 6. Impacto desproporcionado en las Minorías

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origen</th>
<th>SAT Verbal</th>
<th>SAT Math</th>
<th>SAT Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asiático</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeo</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indígena</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino-Americano</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africano</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: Chronicle of Higher Education (September, 17, 1999)

### Tabla 7. Impacto desproporciando en estudiantes de bajos recursos económicos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingreso Anual</th>
<th>SAT Verbal</th>
<th>SAT Math</th>
<th>SAT Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 o más</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>1,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000-$99,999</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000-79,999</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>1,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-69,999</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>1,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-59,999</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>1,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-49,999</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>1,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-39,999</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-29,999</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-19,999</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$9,999 o menos</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>871</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: Chronicle of Higher Education (September, 17, 1999)
### Tabla 8. Correlaciones entre Criterios de Admisión y Promedio Escolar Universitario en el Primer Año (GPA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterio de admisión</th>
<th>UVSC* GPA</th>
<th>UH* GPA</th>
<th>College Board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>% de varianza explicada</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desempeño en bachillerato (promedio o ranking)</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>.366</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT + Desempeño en bachillerato</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nota Explicativa: UVSC=Utah Valley State College UH=University of Houston

### Tabla 9. Correlación entre Criterios de Admisión y Obtención del Título Universitario

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterio de admisión</th>
<th>Utah Valley State College</th>
<th>College Board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>% de Varianza Explicada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desempeño en bachillerato (promedio académico)</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>.302</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT + Desempeño en bachillerato</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabla 10. Evolución de los Nuevos Ingresantes a la Educación Superior por Universidad y Raza (1997 to 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Berkeley</th>
<th>Santa Barbara</th>
<th>Riverside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>1,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino American</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>952</td>
<td>982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: Dr. Dennis J. Galligani. Associate Vice President, Student Academic Services. SHEEO. May 12, 2000

Figura 2. Proporción de Egresados del Bachillerato en el año 1996 que Cumplen el Criterio de 12.5% Rank por Raza (Estado de California)

Fuente: Dr. Dennis J. Galligani. Associate Vice President, Student Academic Services. SHEEO. May 12, 2000
Figura 3. Tipo de indicadores empleados por 11 estados de los EEUU en “performance funding” (en %)

Basado en Burke & Serban (1998). Performance funding for public higher education: Fad or trend?
References


