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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
Faculty Representative to the Regents
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February 3, 2020

CHAIRS OF SENATE DIVISIONS AND COMMITTEES:

Re: Systemwide Review of BOARS Recommendation to Eliminate the ACT/SAT Essay Requirement

Dear Colleagues,

I am forwarding for systemwide Academic Senate review the attached proposal from the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) to eliminate the SAT Essay/ACT Writing Test requirement for undergraduate admission.

Please note that the BOARS recommendation is distinct from the Standardized Testing Task Force (STTF) recommendations, but we are conducting a systemwide Senate review of both sets of recommendations simultaneously, to enable a more comprehensive conversation about the use of standardized testing at UC.

Please submit comments to the Academic Senate office at SenateReview@ucop.edu by March 23, 2020 to allow us to compile and summarize comments for the Academic Council's April 1 meeting. As always, any committee that considers these matters outside its jurisdiction or charge may decline to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kum-Kum Bhavnani".

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

Encl.

cc: Academic Council
Senate Directors



BOARD OF ADMISSIONS AND RELATIONS WITH SCHOOLS (BOARS)

Eddie Comeaux, Chair

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Assembly of the Academic Senate

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June 19, 2019

**ROBERT MAY, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

RE: BOARS Recommendation to Eliminate the ACT/SAT Essay Requirement

Dear Robert,

While the UC has appointed a Task Force to examine the utility of standardized testing this year, the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) has engaged in a more narrow review of the requirement for all applicants to the UC system to submit scores from the SAT Essay or ACT Writing Test. We recommend that the UC eliminate this requirement as soon as is feasible. Three key considerations led to this recommendation.

1. Nationally, the ACT/SAT essay exams have been virtually eliminated from the college admissions outside the UC. The UC campuses represent 9 of the 12 remaining institutions that still require the ACT Writing Test or SAT Essay. The need to sit for this exam adds time and cost-related burdens on California's students, and, and such, adds to other access barriers for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
2. ACT/SAT essay exams, at present, do not adhere to [BOARS' general principles](#) for use of admissions tests by UC. We received uniform feedback from Admissions Directors across all nine campuses that scores from the ACT Writing Test and SAT Essay are not, and have not, been used for admissions decisions. Although the College Board has produced data showing that SAT essay scores may be associated with academic performance indicators, a case has not been made that there is incremental utility of the essay over and above other data available in the application.¹ Moreover, there remain concerns about scoring criteria and validity of the tests (described below) that have dissuaded UC admissions officials from giving any weight to these scores. Ultimately, the essay examination requirement is serving no purpose in helping campuses make decisions about which students are best prepared to excel in the UC system.
3. The UC strongly values the ability of students to write well. Well-developed skills in written expression serve as a foundation for achievement in all areas of study, and the evaluation of writing competence should remain a priority in UC admissions. However, samples of writing produced within a time-limited, single sitting examination may not

¹ BOARS requested data and analyses on SAT essay exams to determine incremental validity.

reflect critical writing skills involving composition, reflection, and revision. BOARS recommends that the admissions review process attend to applicants' demonstrated strengths in written expression within other aspects of the application, such as performance in writing intensive courses.

In summary, the elimination of the SAT Essay/ACT Writing Test requirement will reduce burden on California students, mitigate concerns related to access among low-resourced applicants, and better align application requirements with actual admissions practice across the UC system. We note that applicants may still choose to take the SAT essay or ACT writing as these test scores may be used to satisfy UC's Entry-Level Writing Requirement (ELWR). We encourage all campus admissions committees to reflect upon and articulate how they evaluate applicant's writing ability in comprehensive review and to clearly convey this to applicants.²

Sincerely,

Eddie Comeaux
BOARS Chair

cc: Members of the Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS)
Executive Director Baxter

² With the elimination of the SAT essay/ACT writing test requirement, BOARS would be required to reconstruct the Statewide Eligibility Index (similar to the 2013-14 BOARS adjusted Statewide Index). Note that the SAT Essay is not used in the Statewide Eligibility Index. The ACT English Arts (ELA) score (a composite of the English and Writing scores) is used in the Index.

<http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/california-residents/admissions-index/instructions.html>