



University of California Student Association
1107 9th St, Suite 711
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916-442-8280 | www.ucsa.org

July 13, 2026

Chair Maria Anguiano
UC Board of Regents
1111 Franklin St, 12th floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: UCSA Letter of Concern on Reinstatement of SAT/ACT Standardized Testing for UC Admission

Dear Chair Anguiano and Members of the UC Board of Regents,

On behalf of the University of California Student Association (UCSA), I write to express **deep concern** with recent pressure from UC math faculty urging the Academic Senate and the Board of Regents to immediately consider reinstating standardized testing (SAT/ACT)¹ for certain undergraduate majors in the 2027-28 admissions cycle. As the official voice representing over 237,000 undergraduates, UCSA has spent over 50 years advocating for the affordability, accessibility, and quality of higher education for current and future generations of UC students across the state, centering equity by uplifting our most vulnerable communities.

Immediately after the vote to remove the SAT/ACT as an admissions requirement in May of 2020², the UC saw a 19% increase in freshman applications within a single year. The fact that the UC had been seeing an average of 5% in annual growth of applications for about 20 years, then two years of declining application rates from 2018-2020, and then a 19% jump from 2020 to 2021 suggests that **the elimination of standardized testing for UC admission presented a significant access point for thousands of California students** and their families. Moreover, along with the increased diversity that resulted from UC's test-free policy, **there was no decline in student persistence or graduation rates**.³

Standardized admission tests serve as strong indicators of students' backgrounds and access to resources, rather than effective measures of college readiness, leading to significant equity gaps among disadvantaged groups. If higher test scores are viewed more favorably, this would inevitably result in a disparity in admissions between lower-income and marginalized communities, who may have less access to educational enhancement resources. Disparities in SAT/ACT scores among disadvantaged student groups are inherently a result of certain school districts' limited access to resources compared to others, not our students' inherent capabilities. This is more apparent when considering there are economic gaps: wealthier families can easily afford better testing prep, according to a national review compiled by the Harvard Gazette⁴. **Therefore, required test scores in the admissions process tilts the scale and likelihood of admission towards more advantaged applicants.**

¹ <https://dailybruin.com/2026/05/27/hundreds-of-uc-faculty-call-to-reinstate-sat-act-requirements-for-stem-applicants>

² [h the Brookings Institution t, which
tps://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/university-california-board-regents-unanimously-approved-changes-standardiz
ed-testing](https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/press-room/university-california-board-regents-unanimously-approved-changes-standardized-testing)

³ <https://www.ucop.edu/institutional-research-academic-planning/files/admissions-outcomes-and-performance.pdf>

⁴ <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/11/new-study-finds-wide-gap-in-sat-act-test-scores-between-wealthy-lower-income-kids/>



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As reported by the Brookings Institution, using the SAT as a tool for standardized testing admissions requirements “*mirror and maintain*” inequality⁵. Equity gaps caused by education access policy **deepen existing socioeconomic barriers** that have widened amid many other barriers to a college degree, including affordability and retention. Requiring STEM applicants to include their SAT scores, as suggested in the UC math faculty letter, while appealing in order to thoroughly evaluate students applying to more competitive degree programs, may unfairly bias the admissions process towards specific demographics. A supplemental UC social sciences faculty letter⁶ argues that SAT scores shall be used to assist students who may be underrepresented, but given that UC admissions are all race-blind, reinstating standardized testing will disadvantage certain students from underrepresented backgrounds before they even apply or can be considered for admission, as seen in the rise in UC applications once testing requirements were banned. **UCSA does not believe SAT/ACT will result in better prepared students**, and furthermore **seeks clarity on whether the SAT/ACT may even limit the very access to a UC education** we prioritize in our advocacy by closing the doors of opportunity for disadvantaged students.

Over the past seven years, admissions to the UC have been a prominent focus among our campus, system, and state leaders, but UCSA believes that **we must not discount the incredibly historic events and unprecedented challenges** that have erupted over this same time period. From navigating a global pandemic in 2020, combatting enrollment declines across higher education due to COVID and the perception of the value of a college degree, reeling from a rocky rollout of Better FAFSA in 2023, and weighing concerns on math standards under Area C of comprehensive A-G admissions requirements in 2024, the consideration of next steps over this discussion on standardized testing cannot happen in a silo and must acknowledge the timeline of events we find ourselves in. Furthermore, the eruption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the lack of an adequate measure of the impact AI is having on shaping K-12 education and our students’ academic preparation is also an ongoing concern that requires attention in widespread education policy matters. Additionally, the **lack of clarity and transparency** surrounding the math workgroup established by the UC Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools (BOARS) **was cause for alarm in the college access consultation process**. Increased **communication and feedback** from our K-12 educators and counselors, school district and state leaders, as well as students and families from low-income, urban and rural school districts, **is critical amid the ever-shifting goalposts** being moved for admission to the premiere public research university in the nation.

On top of the BOARS Area C math debate on data science, the UC San Diego math report cited in the May 2026 letter and its focus on students from Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF+) high schools **has extremely problematic framing**. With great respect to our globally acclaimed instructors at the UC, basing the foundation of a request to reinstate SAT/ACT almost entirely on an analysis⁷ of first-year UCSD student math preparation falling below high school level over the past five years, while citing the “*COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on education, the elimination of standardized testing, grade inflation, and the expansion of admissions from underresourced high schools*”, is deeply alarming to UCSA in our fight for equity-based solutions that disproportionately limit access the most vulnerable student group. The role of public education is to ensure all students can access their right to a robust, quality learning experience, and the UC must not limit the number of students able to enter its halls.

⁵ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/sat-math-scores-mirror-and-maintain-racial-inequity/>

⁶ <https://ucstudentsuccess.org/socscihum/>

⁷ <https://senate.ucsd.edu/media/740347/sawg-report-on-admissions-review-docs.pdf>



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UC has made strides to enroll greater numbers of diverse communities in admissions, and coupled with our campuses responding to pressure from the state to enroll more California students, and the Standardized Testing Task Force (STTF) Academic Senate report from 2020⁸ including a recommendation to increase enrollment of LCFF+ students, **reinstating SAT/ACT presents significant conflict with the priorities of state leaders and with the Academic Senate's recommendation in 2020** to "evaluate expanding the Eligibility in the Local Context (ELC) pool by admitting more than the top 9% of students in each high school, when ranked by GPA". This is why in 2020, the UC Regents decided to discontinue the requirement regarding students' submissions of standardized testing scores. The outgoing UC President Janet Napolitano "noted the association of test scores with test takers' socioeconomic and ethnic background" (Civil Rights Project)⁹. We also understand the current conversation occurring around the Smarter Balanced examination for admission requirements, and **remind the UC of the recommendation of the 2021 Regents Committee stating Smarter Balanced scores should not be used for admission**. It would likely result in similar inequities and is not designed to be used as a high-stakes admission examination.¹⁰ We stand firmly with former President Napolitano's statement; **by reinstating the SAT & ACT requirements, racial and social disparities will reappear in the college admissions process, leading to further educational inequity.**

In anticipation of deliberations on SAT/ACT in admissions moving forward, UCSA wants to ensure that faculty concerns with students' academic performance levels can be addressed through increased support provided for students, rather than shrinking the pool of qualified applicants to the UC. Students need more robust, evidence-based solutions beyond standardized testing. **UCSA formally requests the UC Board of Regents, UC Office of the President, UC Academic Senate and UC BOARS to deliver the following recommendations:**

- UCSA urges the UC Academic Senate to formally present a set of opportunities that scale education access, academic preparation, and student success that are data-driven and proven to improve student outcomes **BEYOND** standardized testing, including but not limited to Early Academic Outreach (K-6) programs, budgeting for STEM diversity enrichment and retention, co-requisite options for targeted student groups that support their enrichment in math, and more, and report these opportunities to the UC Regents as *alternatives* to reinstating SAT/ACT for UC admission.
- UCSA seeks UC Office of the President to prioritize **increased investments** into *targeted, academic preparation and college transition programs* such as summer bridge, family and community outreach, and transfer pathway guarantees in future budget matters, including but not limited to institutional matching of UC SAPEP dollars specifically to address gaps in math preparation for underrepresented student groups and/or requesting a state budget investment to scale partnerships with K-12 school. Several campuses have cut funding for SAPEP portfolio programs, and UCSA views that as antithetical to the desire for a more academically prepared student body.
- UCSA requests that **any workgroup established by UC BOARS** moving forward guarantee at least ONE (1) seat granted to an undergraduate student appointed by the UCSA President, as well as ONE (1) external third-party college access/higher education equity advocate appointed in consultation with UCSA and our partners at the Education Trust-West, the Campaign for College Opportunity, and Public Advocates, which have all been instrumental in opening the doors to a college degree for countless California students.

⁸ <https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/files/committees/sttf/sttf-report.pdf>

⁹ <https://escholarship.org/content/qt4wb5c6d3/qt4wb5c6d3.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/regmeet/nov21/b3attach2.pdf>



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- UCSA requests that the UC Board of Regents **agendize the issue of college access, UC admissions and disaggregated data on educational outcomes** among underrepresented student groups that offers comprehensive viewpoints from stakeholders including faculty, student-leaders, and both research-and community-based parties such as Institutional Planning and Research (IRAP), the State Board of Education, and higher education research partners external to UC.

Ultimately, UCSA urges you to strongly consider expanding the options that UC can take, rather than reinstating standardized testing, and prioritize consultation. It is vital to work with K-12 education leaders, state policymakers and faculty leadership at the Academic Senate level to enhance students' academic preparation for a UC education and the success of students in the state. We must allow for an effective and holistic UC education rather than one rooted in exclusion to ensure an equitable education and eliminate disparities by racial and income factors. For any questions on our concerns or to follow-up on these recommendations, please reach UCSA Policy Director Caroline Nguyen at policy@ucla.org. Thank you!

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Aditi Hariharan'.

Aditi Hariharan

President

University of California Student Association

cc: Members, UC Board of Regents
James B. Milliken, UC President
Tricia Lyall, Secretary and Chief of Staff