

ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF  
WHITMAN COLLEGE  
STUDENT SENATE  
SESSION 2014 FALL TERM

IN THE SENATE  
RESOLUTION SRF14.1

WRITTEN BY: Arthur Shemitz, '17  
SPONSORED BY: Sayda Morales '15, Tim Reed '15

*A Resolution Urging the Adoption of a Policy Making Standardized Testing an Optional Component of the Admissions Process*

WHEREAS, Whitman College emphasizes the importance of diversity, stating that “[a] Whitman education involves deep and lasting learning in an academic community comprised of people with varied experiences and global perspectives”;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS *The New York Times* recently ranked Whitman as the least economically diverse among top-tier colleges and universities;<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS the Associated Students of Whitman College (ASWC) is committed to ensuring equal educational access to people of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds; and

WHEREAS standardized testing serves to perpetuate racial and socioeconomic privilege through unequal access to supplemental materials and tutoring, with average scores for white students exceeding those of black students by almost 300 points and average scores for students with high family incomes exceeding those of students with low family incomes by almost 400 points;<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS Whitman College currently requires applicants to submit standardized test scores as part of the admissions process; and

WHEREAS a 2014 study published in *Research in Higher Education* found that competitive colleges’ use of standardized testing in the admissions process has created “de facto institutional preferences for men”;<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup> “Differences that enrich personal growth.” Whitman College. Web. 19 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.whitman.edu/about-whitman/diversity>>

<sup>2</sup> Leonhardt, David. “The Most Economically Diverse Top Colleges.” *The New York Times*, 8 Sep 2014. Web. 15 Oct 2014. <<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/09/09/upshot/09up-college-access-index.html>>

<sup>3</sup> Buchmann, Claudia, Dennis Condron, and Vincent Roscigno. “Shadow Education, American Style: Test Preparation, the SAT and College Enrollment.” *Social Forces* 89(2) (2010): 435-61. *Oxford Journals*. Web. 14 Oct 2014. <<http://sf.oxfordjournals.org/content/89/2/435.full.pdf.html>>; Goldfarb, Zachary. “These four charts show how the SAT favors rich, educated families.” *Washington Post*, 5 Mar 2014. Web. 14 Oct 2014. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/03/05/these-four-charts-show-how-the-sat-favors-the-rich-educated-families/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Bielby, Rob, et al. “Why are Women Underrepresented in Elite Colleges and Universities? A Non-Linear Decomposition Analysis.” *Research in Higher Education*, 10 April 2014. Web. 3 Oct 2014. <<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bastedo/papers/BielbyPosseltJaquetteBastedo.pdf>>.

WHEREAS a 2002 report from the Whitman College Office of Institutional Research acknowledged that there were “small, but significant correlations between SAT score, race, and gender” and that reliance on standardized testing “undermines a college’s ability to judge students on achievements as opposed to general aptitude” thereby privileging specific racial and gender categories;<sup>5</sup> and

WHEREAS despite continued confirmation of the Office of Institutional Research’s 2002 findings, a steady expansion of top colleges that de-emphasise standardized testing in the admissions process, and student support at the 2014 ASWC Forum on Economic Diversity and College Accessibility, the college has not formally re-evaluated the role of standardized testing in the admissions process; and

WHEREAS in 2014 the Whitman Leadership Program, a committee of staff tasked with making recommendations to increase student diversity, recommended to the President’s Council that the college make standardized testing optional in the admissions process; and

WHEREAS three of Whitman’s comparison colleges, Dickinson College, Franklin and Marshall College, and Union College, have made the submission of standardized test scores an optional part of the admissions process;<sup>4</sup> and

WHEREAS more than 850 schools currently de-emphasise standardized testing in the admissions process,<sup>6</sup> including a third of US News and World Report’s top 100 liberal arts schools;<sup>7</sup> and

WHEREAS in May 2014 Wesleyan University made standardized testing optional in the admissions process, with President Michael S. Roth stating, “Scores don’t necessarily add much to student applications; what’s more, we believe they can skew the advantage toward students from privileged backgrounds, or those who can afford test prep”;<sup>8</sup> and

WHEREAS many schools which de-emphasise standardized testing in the admissions process have developed alternative means of evaluation for non-submitting students, such as Franklin & Marshall College, which requires two graded writing assignments rather than test scores;<sup>9</sup> and

WHEREAS Franklin & Marshall College adopted a test-optional policy in 1991 and found that, in addition to the policy providing a greater and more diverse pool of applicants, non-submitting students were “outperforming the norm of the class” according to Admissions Director Peter Van Buskirk, with higher

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<sup>5</sup> Christopherson, Neal. "SAT: Pros and Cons." Whitman College Office of Institutional Research, Aug 2002. Web. 18 Mar 2014. <[http://www.whitman.edu/Documents/Offices/Institutional Research/SAT\\_Proc\\_and\\_Cons.pdf](http://www.whitman.edu/Documents/Offices/Institutional%20Research/SAT_Proc_and_Cons.pdf)>.

<sup>6</sup> "Colleges and Universities That Do Not Use SAT/ACT Scores for Admitting Substantial Numbers of Students Into Bachelor Degree Programs." The National Center for Fair and Open Testing. Web. 18 Mar 2014. <<http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional>>.

<sup>7</sup> "FairTest Press Release on Many Test-Optional Schools Earning High U.S. News Rankings." The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 13 Sept 2011. Web. 18 Mar 2014. <<http://fairtest.org/many-testoptional-schools-earn-high-us-news-rankin>>.

<sup>8</sup> Carlisle, Kate. "Wesleyan Makes Tests Optional in Admissions." Wesleyan University. 7 May 2014. Web. Oct 3 2014. <<http://newsletter.blogs.wesleyan.edu/2014/05/07/admissionstests/>>

<sup>9</sup> "Standardized Test Option." Application Process — Franklin & Marshall. Franklin and Marshall College. Web. 18 Mar 2014. <<http://www.fandm.edu/apply/application-process>>

rates of both acceptance and enrollment<sup>10</sup>; and

WHEREAS Providence College adopted a test-optional policy in 2007 and enjoyed a 12% increase in applications and a 19% increase in enrolled students of color and first-generation students, as well as finding that student quality in terms of GPA and class ranking remained constant and that non-submitting students enrolled at 50% higher rates than submitting students;<sup>11</sup> and

WHEREAS Bates College, which has been standardized test-optional since 1984, has found only a 0.05 GPA difference and a 0.1% difference in graduation rates between submitting students and non-submitting students;<sup>12</sup> and

WHEREAS a 2014 study of 123,000 students at 33 widely differing institutions conducted by two former Deans of Admission at Bates College found that GPA was a far more accurate predictor of academic success than standardized test scores, that non-submitting students are 10% more likely to apply Early Decision, and that non-submitting students are more likely to be women, first-generation, and/or racial minorities;<sup>13</sup>

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Associated Students of Whitman College urges the Whitman College Office of Admissions, the Whitman College Board of Trustees, and the Whitman College Faculty<sup>14</sup> to make the submission of standardized test scores an optional part of the admissions process, thereby demonstrating the College's dedication to ensuring equal access to students of all backgrounds.

Distributed to:

George Bridges, President  
Tony Cabasco, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Adam Miller, Director of Admissions  
Marilyn Ponti, Director of Financial Aid Services  
Neal Christopherson, Director of Institutional Research  
David F. Schmitz, Chair of the Faculty  
Whitman College Faculty  
Whitman College Board of Trustees

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<sup>10</sup> "Test Scores Do Not Equal Merit: Enhancing Equity & Excellence in College Admissions by Deemphasizing SAT and ACT Results." The National Center for Fair and Open Testing, n.d. Web. 26 Mar 2014. <<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/optrept.pdf>>.

<sup>11</sup> Epstein, Jonathan. "Behind the SAT-Optional Movement." *Journal of College Admission*. (2009): n. page. Print. <[http://www.maguireassoc.com/resource/documents/SAT\\_optional\\_article-NACAC\\_Journal\\_College\\_Admission\\_J.Epstein\\_7-09.pdf](http://www.maguireassoc.com/resource/documents/SAT_optional_article-NACAC_Journal_College_Admission_J.Epstein_7-09.pdf)>.

<sup>12</sup> Hiss, William, and Prem Neupane. "20 Years of Optional SATs." 60th Annual Meeting of the National Association for College Admissions Counseling. National Association for College Admissions Counseling. Wisconsin, Milwaukee. 1 Oct 2004. Lecture.

<sup>13</sup> Hiss, William, and Valerie Franks. "Defining Promise: Optional Standardized Testing Policies in American College and University Admissions." . National Association for College Admissions Counseling, 5 Feb 2014. Web. 18 Mar 2014. <<http://www.nacacnet.org/research/research-data/nacac-research/Documents/DefiningPromise.pdf>>.

<sup>14</sup> The current Faculty Code requires that students submit a "record of scores made on either the Scholastic Aptitude Test...the American College Test...or the Washington Pre-College Test." Whitman College Faculty Code, Chapter IV, Section 3, Point 2. 19 Oct 2014. <[http://www.whitman.edu/Documents/Offices/Provost/FacultyCode\\_May31\\_2014.pdf](http://www.whitman.edu/Documents/Offices/Provost/FacultyCode_May31_2014.pdf)>

Whitman College Enrollment Committee  
Whitman College Board of Overseers  
Whitman College *Pioneer*