

Executive Committee Meeting
June 10, 2020

REVISE THE POLICY REQUIRING STANDARDIZED TESTS FOR BEGINNING
FRESHMEN APPLICANTS TO UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS PURSUANT TO
A ONE-TIME PROCESS FOR FALL 2021

Action: Revise the Policy Requiring Standardized Tests for Beginning Freshmen Applicants to Undergraduate Programs Pursuant to a One-Time Process for Fall 2021

Funding: No New Funding Required

From time to time the Board of Trustees (Board) has adopted policies recommended by one or more of the universities concerning various requirements for “beginning freshmen” who are applying for admission to an undergraduate program at the University of Illinois. One of these requirements is having undergone an admission test, commonly referred to as a standardized test, such as the ACT or SAT, before applying.

On April 15, 1970, for example, the Board approved changes to the policy on “requirements for admission of beginning freshmen” that included the following provision:

Selection of beginning freshmen for admission to the regular programs at the Chicago Circle and Urbana-Champaign campuses shall be based on a combination of high school percentile rank and admission test score. [Minutes, Board of Trustees, April 15, 1970, p. 897, Regular Agenda Item #32] [emphasis added].

This provision was reaffirmed by the Board in 1983:

Admission of beginning freshman applicants will be based on the completion of specified high school subjects and on a combination of high school percentile rank and admission test score. [Minutes, Board of Trustees, September 15, 1983, pp. 349-50, Regular Agenda Item #20] [emphasis added].

In both instances, as well as similar actions in previous years, the policy provisions were the result of modifications to existing undergraduate policies specifically recommended by one or more of the universities and endorsed by the appropriate Senate that then were advanced to the Board for formal action.

The current nationwide COVID-19 pandemic has prevented large numbers of high school students from taking standardized tests due to various restrictions imposed by states that not only have closed high schools but also, among other things, have prohibited gatherings of a certain size. Although there has been consideration of providing “in-home” exams this summer, those plans are currently on hold, in part because many students do not have the necessary computer technology or reliable internet connection to take advantage of this option. Several private universities, including Harvard, Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, have adjusted their application requirements to make standardized testing optional for students applying, looking to enroll in Fall 2021, all citing the coronavirus outbreak. Dozens of other schools, including the University of California, the University of Oregon and the University of Washington, temporarily have changed their policies on standardized

testing. Many other universities have decided to no longer require standardized tests at all and into the future (e.g., Indiana University, University of Chicago).

For these reasons, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and the University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS) have requested that they be allowed to implement a one-time process in which they would allow high school students to apply for admission to undergraduate programs in Fall 2021 without requiring such students to have taken a standardized test. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), meanwhile, is in the process of consulting with its Senate about this issue.

Therefore, in conjunction with the Chancellors at UIC and UIS, who have consulted with their respective university Senates, the President of the University recommends that the Board impose a one-year moratorium on its policy of requiring standardized tests for beginning freshmen applicants to undergraduate programs at UIC and UIS, and to permit UIC and UIS to implement a one-time process pursuant to which they will consider applicants for undergraduate admission who have not completed such tests. Consistent with this action, UIC and UIS will make this change clear in their application materials. Moreover, the President recommends that, in light of the possibility that UIUC ultimately may decide to take the same approach and to avoid the need for additional Board action, the Board delegates to President Killeen, in consultation with Chancellor Jones, the authority to approve UIUC's implementation of a one-time process pursuant to which they will consider applicants for undergraduate admission who have not completed such tests.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.