



Associated Students of
Western Washington University
Viking Union 504 – MS 9106
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
360-650-4648
as.wwu.edu/gov/board

July 28, 2020

Dear President Randhawa,

We are writing to you in collaboration with the Washington Student Association to express concern with Western's use of SAT and ACT scores in the undergraduate admissions process. Research shows that the SAT and ACT have clear racial biases, are a financial barrier for low-income students, and do not predict student success in higher education.

In 2003, [Roy Freedle](#) published an article in the Harvard Educational Review titled, "The Case of Freedle, the SAT, and the Standardization Approach to Differential Item Functioning," and argued that the SAT has a clear racial bias against African American students. Average [SAT](#) and [ACT](#) test scores from 2019 and 2018 show significant racial disparities, with white students, on average, outperforming every racial group with the exception of "asian" students.

The cost of standardized testing may be a barrier for low-income students. Furthermore, students with financial means are able to hire SAT/ACT tutors and take the exam multiple times. The admissions office website states that they will superscore the SAT; however, this may raise the average SAT scores for Western and disadvantaged students that are unable to take the exam multiple times.

Since the test requirement has been waived for 2021, this is an opportune time to remove the requirement for future terms as well. The Office of Admissions website states:

"Western is test optional for 2021, meaning we will not require test scores for students applying for winter, spring, or fall 2021 terms, but will consider them within our holistic review process if submitted." ([First-Year and Running Start](#))

Furthermore, the Office of Admissions does not always require test scores as a part of the undergraduate application. Thus, the use of the SAT/ACT as a measure of student success in the holistic review process is arbitrary:

"Students who have completed fewer than 45 transferable quarter (30 semester) credits are also required to submit an official high school transcript and SAT or ACT test scores. (Exception: if you are 21 or older you will be exempt from the test score requirement and need only submit an official high school transcript.)" ([Transfer Admissions](#))

The University of Washington recently removed the SAT/ACT requirement because "[research showed that standardized testing did not add meaningfully to the prediction of student success that our holistic admission process already provides](#)," UW President Ana Mari Cauce said in a statement. Furthermore, Whitman College in Walla Walla, since removing the requirement, has "[seen a small but steady increase in its enrollment of students of color](#)," said Adam Miller, Director of Admissions for the college. It is clear that the standardized testing requirement that we use in our admissions process perpetuates structures of white supremacy within our institution.



Associated Students of
Western Washington University
Viking Union 504 – MS 9106
516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
360-650-4648
as.wwu.edu/gov/board

Moving forward, we want Western to be a leader in restructuring the college application process. We ask that you also evaluate the use of GPA as a determining factor in admission. We challenge you to think outside of the current structures and find more holistic ways the institution can better look at a student's experience. [Everyone's K-12 education experience is different based on the identities that they hold](#). Therefore, since marginalized students face additional barriers compared to their white counterparts, GPA should not be used; it assumes equal access to resources and quality of education.

We also want to take this opportunity to elevate the demands of Black students on campus. In the Black@WWU, Pt. 2 Statement, Black students demanded the re-evaluation of each major application campus-wide. The lack of acknowledgement of the systemic barriers BIPOC students face should also be considered at the university admissions level:

*"Re-evaluate each major application campus-wide, as many of them are built upon a white supremacist view of "merit" and its connection to GPA that **never acknowledges the mental, and emotional systemic barriers that Black students face while stepping on this campus and its impact on grades.**" ([Black@WWU, Pt. 2](#))*

We fully support the efforts to move away from the use of SAT and ACT scores throughout this year and we urge you to take action immediately. With Western's continuous commitment to "advancing inclusive success", we strongly believe that removing these requirements will make Western more accessible, for all students.

The Washington Student Association prepared a policy brief regarding the issue. This can be found [here](#).

Thank you for your time. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

Best,

Nicole Ballard | She/Her/Hers
Vice President for Governmental Affairs | AS
Executive Board
Western Washington University
516 High Street, Bellingham WA 98225
ASVP.Gov@wwu.edu

Jude Ahmed | She/Her/Hers
AS Director of Legislative Affairs | AS
Office of Civic Engagement
Western Washington University
516 High Street, Bellingham WA 98225
aslegislativeliasion@wwu.edu