

## **College Application Process Shifts as Top Universities Reinstate Standardized Testing Requirements**

The annual college application process is infamous for its stressors. This year, it's the class of 2029's turn, and many top universities are changing policies. After four test-optional application cycles, several schools now require students to submit their SAT and ACT scores.

When the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted regular testing schedules in 2020, SAT and ACT testing centers closed. In response, universities shifted to a new 'test optional' policy in their admissions process. This change caused several schools to see an overall growth in their applicant pools and increased enrollment for minority communities.

However, as the number of COVID-19 cases dwindled and the world got back on its feet, many top universities, such as Harvard, Brown, Yale, Dartmouth and MIT, made plans to reinstate their mandatory test policies. In such competitive and reputable schools, there are several reasons for the policy revival: test scores help admissions officers discern potential candidates from thousands of high-performing applicants and assess how well the applicant will perform in the college's curriculum.

Critics of the test reinstatement argue the SAT/ACT set another barrier for underprivileged students since many families cannot afford the extra resources to prepare for and take the tests. Meanwhile, supporters of the test reinstatement contend that SAT/ACT scores offer an opportunity for students who may lack extensive extracurricular activities to strengthen their applications

It's uncertain whether all universities will fully return to standardized testing. Students and advisors should carefully review each school's testing expectations for this application cycle.