



# TEST-FREE ADMISSIONS

## PERSPECTIVES FROM SELECTIVE INSTITUTIONS

By Nancy Wong

As of August 2023, 86 colleges and universities (e.g., University of California system) use “test-free admissions,” meaning that they **do not consider standardized test scores during the admissions process**. Given the desire to promote equity, more institutions may consider test-free policies. However, little is known about the implementation of test-free policies at selective institutions. To help fill this gap, we asked: **“What are the perspectives of admissions professionals on their institution’s shift to test-free admissions?”** Using data from a broader study of testing policies, we analyzed perspectives from 17 college admission professionals working at 10 selective four-year test-free institutions.

We identified three key perspectives on test-free policies at selective institutions.

★ **First, admission professionals generally viewed the shift to test-free admissions favorably. Respondents stated that advancing equity, increasing diversity, and reducing barriers to access were the most significant benefits of test-free admissions. The vast majority felt that test-free admissions made identifying talented applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds easier.**

★ **Second, respondents generally felt well-prepared to implement test-free policies. They shared that they were able to evaluate students without test scores and described various training and calibration measures used by their institutions.**

★ **Third, respondents described the benefits of becoming test-free, which included helping readers not over-rely on test scores as a shortcut when reviewing applications. Admission professionals could make decisions without pressure to admit certain applicants to maintain or increase their institution’s average SAT or ACT score. One respondent expressed that test-free policies made readers slow down when reading applications and evaluate them more carefully.**

In conclusion, **respondents generally viewed the transition to test-free policies positively due to implications for equity, and almost all felt well-prepared to review applications under new policies.** Our findings point to the feasibility of implementing test-free admissions and provide insights for institutions and policymakers considering a shift to test-free. Test-free policies may also reduce other concerns related to test-optional policies, such as confusion among students on whether they should submit scores.

Test-free policies can be a notable way for institutions to communicate their values around diversity and equity, and such policies may contribute to a more equitable evaluation of applicants. Additional research is needed to assess further the impact of test-free policies and practices, including on admissions and enrollment outcomes. **For a full version of this report, go to [www.cafcolab.org](http://www.cafcolab.org).**

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