



News Release

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Test-Optional Alternatives Open to Students Applying to Public Universities

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota’s six public universities are emphasizing test-optional academic pathways for prospective students as they apply in the current admissions cycle.

Current South Dakota Board of Regents’ policies allow students admission based on various academic criteria, including:

- High school grade point average (GPA), or
- High school class rank, or
- ACT or SAT test scores, or
- Smarter Balanced test scores completed in the junior year of high school.

“The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted test taking and created unique challenges for prospective students and families as they plan for college,” said Brian L. Maher, the regents’ executive director and CEO. Maher said current admissions’ standards at the six public universities make submitting an ACT or SAT score optional for students in the upcoming year.

“It’s important our prospective students and their families recognize they have multiple pathways to achieve a higher education,” Maher said. “At a time when students have encountered test cancellations and other barriers, we stand ready to work with them to achieve their goals.”

University admissions’ staff do recommend prospective students submit test scores if they have them, as those scores may be used for accurate course placement. In some cases, test scores could also improve a student’s opportunity to gain admission into certain programs and maximize scholarship opportunities. Students do not need to wait to apply until after testing, however, nor do they have to test if they choose not to in order to gain admission.

Students and their families should contact university admission offices to learn more about test-optional practices at each institution. The South Dakota Board of Regents is the constitutional governing body for Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, South Dakota State University, and the University of South Dakota.