

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 952

(Senator Muse)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Appropriations

Task Force on the Use of College Entrance Examinations for Admission to Public
Institutions of Higher Education

This bill establishes a Task Force on the Use of College Entrance Examinations for Admission to Public Institutions of Higher Education to evaluate whether college entrance exams add value beyond other measures of student achievement and to assess the effects of using the exams on different populations of college applicants. The Maryland State Department of Education and Maryland Higher Education Commission must provide staff support for the task force, and a report is due by December 31, 2008.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2008 and terminates June 30, 2009.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Travel expense reimbursements for task force members could be supported with existing budgeted resources. MSDE and MHEC could provide staff support for the task force with existing personnel.

Local Effect: Local officials appointed to the task force could serve without affecting local budgets.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In general, each public institution of higher education sets its student admissions standards with guidance from the institution's governing board. Policies for University System of Maryland institutions, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's

College of Maryland require applicants for admission to submit scores on the SAT or ACT, which are both nationally accepted college entrance exams.

Community colleges have open enrollment, so tests are not specifically required for general admission to the colleges. However, college entrance exams may be used to determine whether a student may be exempted from developmental courses, can receive credit towards a degree, or is eligible to apply for a certain program of study.

Background: There are two nationally accepted college entrance exams, the SAT and ACT. Although the policies for Maryland's public institutions of higher education note that scores on either test are used for admissions, Maryland high school students more commonly take the SAT. The College Board, which developed the SAT, reports that nearly 1.5 million students from the class of 2007 took the SAT. ACT reports that 2.1 million ACT tests were taken in the 2005-2006 school year.

The USM Board of Regents recently approved a proposal from Salisbury University to make submission of SAT or ACT scores optional for students with high school grade point averages of at least 3.5. The five-year pilot began with fall 2007 applicants, and Salisbury expects the initiative to attract a more diverse pool of highly motivated students with distinct talents in academics, the arts, and leadership. A preliminary assessment of the new admissions policy suggests that 20% of the incoming fall 2007 freshmen used the new policy to gain admission to Salisbury and that the initiative increased access for economically disadvantaged students.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Independent College and University Association, Morgan State University, University System of Maryland, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Baltimore City Community College, Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510

