

College Board changes policy on untimed SAT

Lauren Hodge

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ANN ARBOR, Mich. (U-WIRE) — Universities will no longer be informed of applicants who received extra time to take the Scholastic Assessment Test or the American College Test because of learning disabilities. In the past, an asterisk was placed next to the name of the student who took the SAT untimed. The College Board, which owns the SAT, will no longer flag students who take the test untimed at the start of the 2003-2004 school year.

This change occurred because of a July 15 settlement where an applicant with a disability objected to having his score singled out because he required extra time. Immediately following the settlement, ACT officials who isolated tests by marking them "special" said they would re-examine their own policies. Eleven days later, officials decided to stop flagging scores and imitated the SAT's policy of not identifying students with disabilities.

One student who requested to remain anonymous said the practice is beneficial because students will not

have to feel categorized by the asterisk, something of an "academic scarlet letter," for taking the test through nonstandard administration.

ACT spokesman Ken Gullette said, "We'd been watching the SAT situation for some time and had been evaluating our own policy. We made our decision to end the practice. We are all in the business to make the tests as fair to everybody as we can."

Many students said they are worried that admissions will now be more competitive because higher scores will be reported without knowledge of untimed test takers. Some students say it is quite simple to ask a doctor or psychiatrist to write a note on the basis of anxiety attacks or attention deficit disorder simply to get more time on the tests.

"The only difficult aspect of the tests is the issue of time. If I were allowed more time, my score would dramatically increase. What's to say that I don't deserve some extra time?" LSA sophomore Bryan Sofen said.

LSA sophomore Joanna Lee said

the new settlement is advantageous and necessary. "People shouldn't think about others' scores. I think students should focus on themselves and their own scores. If this helps to level the playing field for students with disabilities, then I think it is a good idea."

According to The National Report of 1997 College Bound Seniors, 22,441 of 1,105,403 college-bound seniors who took the SAT indicated on their application that they had a learning disability. These students' scores on both math and verbal means of the SAT were vastly lower (59-66 points) than those of students reporting no disability. The math mean scores were 448 for those reporting a disability and 514 for those without disabilities. The verbal mean scores were 450 and 509 accordingly.

Gayle Bellafiore, a researcher for the publication Teaching Exceptional Children, said SAT scores of students with learning disabilities are significantly lower because of the characteristics inherent within the disability itself.

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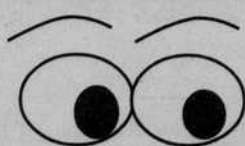
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