

Contact: Rachel Boon

BOARD OF REGENTS ADMISSIONS POLICY CHANGES

Action Requested: Authorize the Executive Director to do the following:

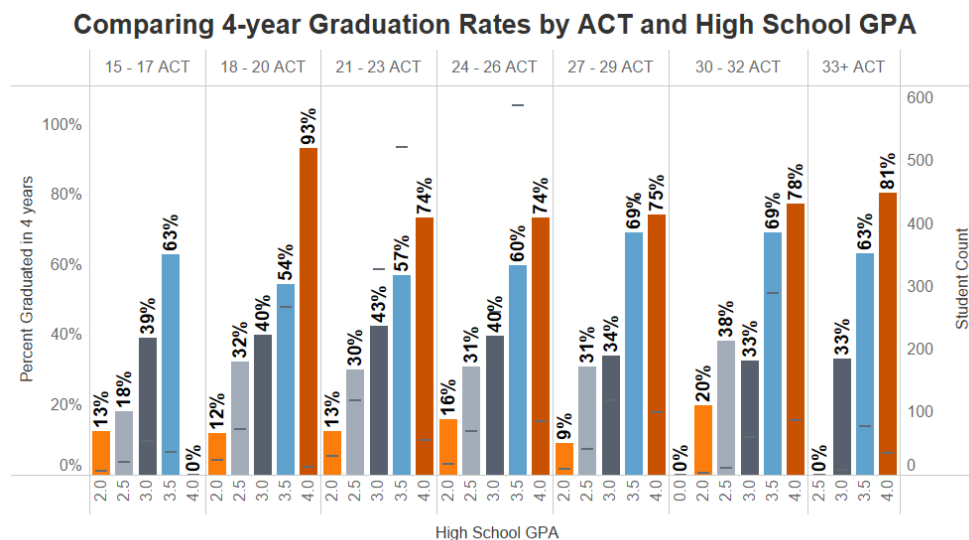
1. File a notice of intended action with the Iowa Administrative Rules Review Committee to amend Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 681-1, Admission Rules Common to the Three State Universities, as more fully detailed in this memorandum.
2. Accept additional amendments to Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 681-1 prior to filing a notice of intended action provided any additional amendment is not materially inconsistent with those contained in this memorandum.

Background: Since the inception of the Regent Admission Index (RAI) in 2009, the Admissions Study Team conducts biennial reviews of the RAI’s effectiveness. In response to a growing “test-optional” movement among colleges and universities nationally, the committee reviewed the Board’s temporary test-optional policy and began to assess how the admissions process might work in a permanent test-optional environment. About one-third of the Fall 2021 class was unable to generate an RAI score due to missing ACT scores and were admitted through individual review.

Starting in March 2021, a sub-group of the Admissions Study Team met to compile and analyze data, conduct interviews with high school principals and counselors, and review the national landscape. This group emphasized tenets of access, student success, access and transparency throughout their work.

Analysis showed that while standardized tests do provide some additional information on student preparation, they are not strong predictors of student success outside of first year college grades. Figure 1 below shows four-year graduation rates by high school GPA and various ACT score ranges. The likelihood of graduating in four years was fairly consistent based on GPA, irrespective of the ACT score level.

Figure 1



Source: Iowa Board of Regents, 2016 entry cohort

Data also indicate uneven access to testing and test preparation programs can impact students from low-income and rural backgrounds, and result in differential access to the universities. Finally, the wide adoption of test-optional policies among colleges and universities nationally risks creating a competitive disadvantage to Iowa's public universities should they continue to require a standardized test score for admission. Currently, of UNI's 10 peer institutions, six have permanently gone test optional, three are still in a pilot of the policy and just one continues to require ACT or SAT. Many Big 10 and Big 12 institutions also have pilot test optional policies, but three in the Big 10 and at least three in the Big 12 have made a permanent change to test optional admissions while the rest are continuing a pilot of the policy for additional years while they assess.

The Admissions Study Team reviewed this information as well as additional statistical analysis and provided their recommendation for policy changes pertaining to the RAI. The recommendation includes three elements:

1. End the standardized test requirement for university admission of first-time undergraduate students.
2. Retain the automatic admission pathway using the 3-factor RAI at the 245 threshold for Iowa resident applicants to all universities. *
3. Each university will use individual review for admission of all other first-time undergraduate students. **

* Standardized tests are required to receive automatic admission through the RAI

** This would apply to a student not reporting one or more of the three RAI factors, and therefore unable to generate an RAI score, or an Iowa resident student who did not meet the 245 RAI threshold for automatic admission.

The Council of Provosts reviewed, discussed and unanimously approved this recommendation on November 3, 2021. The Council of Provosts noted the importance not only of the findings of the analysis, but also the landscape of peer institutions with which the Regent universities compete for enrollment.

Admissions rules for the universities are found in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 681-1. The following proposed changes would align the administrative rules with the recommendations of the Admissions Study Team and the Council of Provosts.

Proposed Administrative Rules changes:

CHAPTER 1
ADMISSION RULES COMMON TO THE THREE STATE UNIVERSITIES
PREAMBLE

The state board of regents has adopted the following requirements governing admission of students to the three state universities.

Each university is expected to describe in its catalog the requirements and other information necessary to make the admission process operate within the framework of these requirements.

~~Amendments and changes in these requirements normally are proposed by the universities to the regent committee on educational relations, which examines the proposals and makes specific recommendations through the council of provosts to the state board of regents, which is empowered by law to establish the admission requirements.~~

The regent universities recognize that the traditional measures of academic performance do not adequately describe some students' potential for success. Therefore, the regent universities strongly encourage all interested students to apply for admission. Applicants who feel their academic record is not an accurate reflection of their potential for success are encouraged to provide supplemental information explaining their circumstances, in

addition to the application, academic transcripts, and test scores.

681—1.1(262) Admission of undergraduate students directly from high school. Students desiring admission to the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, or the University of Northern Iowa must meet the requirements in this rule and also any special requirements for the curriculum, school, or college of their choice.

1.1(1) Application. Applicants must submit a formal application for admission, together with the appropriate application fee as approved by the state board of regents pursuant to Iowa Code subsection 262.9(3) and detailed in rule 681—1.7(262), and have their secondary school provide a transcript of their academic record, including credits and grades, rank in class (when available), and certification of graduation. Applicants ~~must~~ **may** also submit SAT Reasoning Test or ACT scores. Applicants whose primary language is not English must also meet the English language proficiency requirement specified by each university. Applicants may be required to submit additional information or data to support their applications.

1.1(2) Admission criteria.

a. A regent admission index (RAI) will be calculated for ~~each~~ freshman applicants **who submit all components used in** using the equation below. For purposes of calculating the RAI, the ACT composite score has a top value of 36 (SAT scores will be converted to ACT composite equivalents), high school GPA is expressed on a four-point scale, and number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas is expressed in terms of years or fractions of years of study.

$$\text{RAI} = \frac{(3 \times \text{ACT composite score})}{4} + \frac{(30 \times \text{high school grade point average})}{4} + \frac{(5 \times \text{number of high school courses completed in the core subject areas})}{4}$$

b. Freshman applicants from Iowa high schools who have an RAI of at least 245 and who meet the minimum requirements of the regent universities will qualify for automatic admission to any of the three regent universities. Freshman applicants who have an RAI below 245 **or who do not have all components used in the RAI** may also be admitted to a specific regent university; however, each regent university will review these applications on an individual basis, and admission decisions will be specific to each institution.

1.1(3) Graduates of approved high schools in other states may be held to higher academic standards, but must meet at least the same requirements as graduates of Iowa high schools. The options for conditional admission or summer tryout enrollment may not necessarily be offered to these students.

1.1(4) Applicants who are graduates of nonapproved high schools will be considered for admission in a manner similar to applicants from approved high schools, but additional emphasis will be given to scores obtained on standardized examinations.

1.1(5) Applicants who are not high school graduates, but whose classes have graduated, may be considered for admission. These applicants will be required to submit all academic data to the extent that it exists and achieve scores on standardized examinations which will demonstrate that they are adequately prepared for academic study.

1.1(6) Early admission.

a. Students with superior academic records may be admitted, on an individual basis, for part-time university study while enrolled in high school or during the summers prior to high school graduation.

b. In rare situations, exceptional students may be admitted as full-time students to a regent university before completing high school. Early admission to a regent university is provided to serve persons whose academic achievement and personal and intellectual maturity clearly suggest readiness for collegiate level study. Each university will specify requirements and conditions for early admission.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 262.9(3).

1.2(2) Admission of students with fewer than 24 semester hours of college credit will be based on high school academic ~~and standardized test~~ records in addition to review of the college record.