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# Delivering Opportunities

## Executive Summary

David Coleman  
CEO, College Board

Cynthia B. Schmeiser  
Senior Advisor to the CEO, College Board

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In 2014, the College Board decided to rethink the SAT®. For far too long, SAT results revealed that most students were not prepared for college-level work or workforce training programs, causing us to reconsider how assessment could propel students into the opportunities they have earned.

The College Board redesigned the SAT to focus on what is being taught in classrooms that is essential for college and career readiness. The SAT was transformed from a one-time event to the 11th- and 12th-grade assessment in the carefully sequenced SAT Suite of Assessments, which measures college readiness from 8th through 12th grades. We then turned our attention to how the SAT Suite of Assessments could go beyond delivering test scores to delivering opportunities designed to help students clear a path to college.

At every step, we solicited feedback from policymakers and our K–12 and higher education partners to help us design and deliver opportunities to students and their parents. This report details the efforts and findings from our first full year of the delivery of the Suite, 2016-17.

### Major Findings

Among the detailed research findings compiled for this report, some key lessons stand out:

- **Early exposure to college readiness assessments appears to improve student achievement.**  
The complete SAT Suite of Assessments is new, so findings about student progress are preliminary. But initial results are promising, suggesting that performance increases as students progress through high school and take sequential assessments. There is notable progress between 8th and 9th grades, and again between 11th and 12th grades. The relative slow-down between 9th and 10th grades, particularly in math, deserves further study.
- **Free, personalized SAT practice promotes more equitable outcomes.**  
Since the College Board began promoting access to free, high-quality, personalized SAT practice through Khan Academy®, students from every part of the socioeconomic spectrum have used the practice resources and devoted time to practice at nearly equal rates. Not surprisingly, more practice is associated with greater score gains, a finding that holds true for students across race, ethnicity, and parental education levels. Another encouraging sign: The lowest-scoring students show the greatest improvement following SAT practice.
- **Roadmap to Careers shows promise, but further research is needed.**  
Launched in partnership with Roadtrip Nation, Roadmap to Careers is an online tool that offers guidance on career options and college choices that match career aspirations.

More than 375,000 students used the tool in its first year 2017—about 20% of SAT takers—but it's too early to gauge the impact on college enrollment and outcomes.

- **Offering the SAT during the school day can improve college access.**

SAT School Day participation has grown from just over 20,000 students in 2011 to more than 810,000 students in 2016-17. Offering a college entrance assessment as part of the regular school calendar equalizes access to the assessment and the opportunities it delivers to all students, and a growing body of research suggests that universal SAT adoption is a cost-effective strategy for encouraging more students to enroll in college.

- **Connecting students to scholarships through the SAT Suite of Assessments.**

The College Board is expanding the number of scholarship providers who use the SAT Suite of Assessments to identify and reach out to potential scholarship candidates. In 2016-17, a combined total of \$205M in annual awards was available through our scholarship partners, with 89% of their scholarship applicants identified through PSAT-related assessments. There remains significant work to be done in better communicating these opportunities to students and school officials and encouraging students to follow up and apply.

- **SAT fee waivers and free score reports improve college access for low-income students.**

Increasing the number of free SAT score reports for low-income students led students to broaden their college search and improve their odds of enrolling at a well-matched institution. Unfortunately, the gap between the population of fee waiver-eligible students and those who actually use fee waivers represents a missed opportunity. The next challenge is to increase the number of fee waiver-eligible students who take full advantage of the fee waiver opportunities available to them, including taking additional assessments, sending scores to more colleges, applying to more colleges, and applying for financial aid.

- **Retaking the SAT increases college access, especially for low-income students.**

Recent research indicates that retaking the SAT can lead to an increase in SAT scores for admission, and that there are substantial gains in college enrollment associated with retaking the test, especially among low-income students.

- **Identifying students with AP potential can increase AP enrollment and expand access to college credit.**

As a result of focused efforts to identify students with AP® potential through the full array of College Board assessments, there was an increase in students enrolling in AP coursework and attempting at least one AP Exam between 2012 and 2017. We are continuing to work with educators to improve the AP Potential™ tool so more students who show potential can take advantage of this opportunity they have earned.

## **Implications for Research and Practice**

Our efforts to deliver more opportunities show promise in this first year. Some results surprised us, others disappointed us, and others deserve deeper research. But what we found has important

implications for the work we continue to do to help prepare all students for college and workforce training programs.

- College readiness can be impacted. We know that student readiness increases as a result of instruction, and it also can be positively impacted by time spent practicing both in and out of the classroom.
- Access to school-day testing can expand access to college for all students.
- Offering additional free SAT score reports is associated with increases in college applications and enrollment.
- Encouraging students to retake the SAT, especially low-income students, can increase college access.
- Increasing access and increasing scholarships can help remove financial barriers to college for more students.
- Further research is needed to understand the relative lack of progress in college readiness—especially in math—between 9th and 10th grades. We hope to gain a better understanding of the math courses students are taking and the kind of practice needed to impact readiness in these grades.
- The College Board must thoroughly examine each step on the college readiness pathway for low-income and lower-performing students, taking care to disentangle results for each group. Too many low-income students don't take advantage of fee waivers available to them, which calls for improved communication and delivery strategies. And college access rates increase for low-income students when they take the SAT on a school day, offering another avenue for increasing low-income enrollment.

We already see an impressive number of students who have taken PSAT-related assessments receiving scholarships and we hope to see more as the pool of scholarships increases by over 37% in the next two years. We see the greatest impact of practice on students who score the lowest on the test, and we see a substantial impact on college enrollment rates of lower-scoring students retaking the SAT. We need to understand how certain steps students take—testing behaviors, quality and frequency of practice, career planning, use of fee waivers, and applying for scholarships—affect performance and readiness so more of these students can clear their path to college.