Date: January 5, 2021

To: Richard C. Benson, President
    The University of Texas at Dallas

From: Inga H. Musselman, Provost

Copy: George Fair, Co-Chair of the Living Our Values Task Force
      Rafael Martín, Co-Chair of the Living Our Values Task Force

Re: Implementation Timeline for LOV Task Force Recommendations Related to Undergraduate Recruitment

This memo provides an update on responses to recommendations endorsed by the Living Our Values (LOV) Task Force pertaining to the recruitment of undergraduate students at UT Dallas.

Recommendations, detailed on pages 4-6 of the attached memo (Attachment 1), “UG Recruitment – Implementation Memo - 20200915,” and also reproduced below, were made by a Recruitment, Admission, and Scholarships for Black Students Discussion Group in response to a memo on the topic of undergraduate recruiting and admissions prepared by the LOV Task Force.

Before addressing the recommendations, however, it should be made clear that any action by the university (or by any U.S. university) that differentially benefits or penalizes students on the basis of race is illegal. Indeed, many programs that seek to devise surrogates for race are under continuing legal attacks alleging that they are subterfuges for race-preferential actions. It would be wise to eliminate all mention of race in ongoing discussions and employ instead the commonly used term “underrepresented minority” or URM. Otherwise, programs created to address diversity issues as a result of our ongoing deliberations might be in legal jeopardy a priori.

The recommendations address two issues: (1) recruitment and admission standards; and (2) scholarships. The response to each recommendation is accompanied by a timeline for gathering information to inform a university response.
**Issue:** Recruitment and admission standards

“Expand recruitment at college fairs and campus visits to include lower-income communities and communities outside of Dallas.”

*Comment: Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson will provide a written overview of the activities of the Office of Enrollment Management covering, among other aspects, the location and time assignments of undergraduate recruiters.*

*Timeline: February 15*

“Review and amend admission standards to be more intentional in recruiting Black students.”

*Comment: Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson will explain how admission decisions are made, and will emphasize that, unlike UT Austin, UT Dallas desires to enroll every single student whose successful graduation seems probable. Many factors, in addition to scores on standardized tests, go into estimating this “probability” of success.*

*Timeline: February 15*

**Recommendations:**

- Increase the funding and staffing of existing pipeline programs that support the development of cultural capital, provide access to standardized test preparation resources and mentorship, and expose students to UT Dallas in historically underserved communities.

  *Comment: UT Dallas’s current and past programs of this sort will be reviewed, including Academic Bridge, Young WISE, Jindal Young Scholars, etc.*

  *Timeline: February 15*

- Hire a dedicated recruiter for Dallas Independent School District whose scope of work includes coordinating the engagement of current students, alumni, faculty, and staff in recruitment and collaborating with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, as well as external organizations to identify funding opportunities to support pipeline programs. It is important to note that this position must be separate from the recruiter assigned to the Dallas County Promise, which could support Black, first-generation, and low-income student recruitment at Dallas College.

  *Comment: Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson will review current recruiter assignments. It should be recognized that DISD is not the only independent school system with significant numbers of URM students.*

  *Timeline: February 15*
Comment: Vice President Kyle Edgington will review current and prospective efforts for fund raising in this context.

Timeline: February 15

- Establish a group to ensure improved intentionality in the coordination of data-driven recruitment, admission, financial awarding, and placement in student support programs for all incoming students. This group could provide oversight of recruitment efforts to ensure that resources are sufficiently allocated to recruiting at Title IX, south Dallas, and rural areas with high concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and Black students.

Comment: Is such a group necessary in the context of all other recommendations? If created, to whom would this group report? Should this be an issue for the Academic Senate?

Timeline: ?

- Expand upon existing efforts to increase consideration of high school characteristics, personal essays, and socioeconomic factors to further reduce the weight assigned to standardized testing in admissions.

Comment: As before, Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson will explain that many factors are considered in making enrollment decisions, most importantly high school characteristics, curricular choices, and grades. The only students who are denied admission are those whose holistic records indicate a low probability of success in pursuing UT Dallas curricula.

Timeline: February 15

- Approach the recruitment, admission, financial support, and completion of Black students holistically. If the university is able to effectively recruit more Black students, we must be prepared to invest in support structures, such as the Diversity Scholars Program, Undergraduate Success Scholars, Cultural Scholars, and First-Generation Student Programs, to cultivate belonging and support their persistence.

Comment: Such investments are indeed essential. It must be understood that the more fundamental goal is not to enroll more URM students but, rather, to graduate more URM students. Currently, graduation rates for URM students are below the UT Dallas average. A review of all of our currently active programs in this domain, those listed and any others, by Dean Murphy and Vice President Fair is the first step. Their structures, activities, and records of achievements must be assessed to determine how they might become more effective.

Timeline: February 15
Discussion Summary: Before discussing the strength and weaknesses of existing recruitment efforts on garnering the interest of Black students, we shared a list of diversity-oriented recruitment practices, pipeline programs, and yield efforts. While it was not exhaustive, this exercise provided the opportunity for us to share with the student participants and discuss the distinction between recruitment and admissions related work. We have two central Texas recruiters. One is dedicated to Houston. Several group members mentioned the value of the dedicated recruiter in Houston. Specifically, how the Houston recruiter’s visibility and clear priority being the Houston area has allowed him to establish strong school relationships and engage with students much earlier in their high school careers. The group expressed interest in learning more about UT Dallas representation at lower-income schools that may possess higher concentrations of Black students and how Admissions determines what schools to visit and how frequently. This discussion highlighted that while Academic Bridge Program and Jindal Young Scholars Program representatives may be present in those schools, their work does not yield the same results as a dedicated recruiter. The group was interested in the data associated with the return on investments of recruiter time in relevant districts and if the students who enroll from our top visited high schools are representative of the DFW and State of Texas demographics overall. A significant portion of the conversation was dedicated to the value of visibility and brand association, in which the students expressed concerns about the many references to SAT scores on webpages and marketing materials because it may discourage first generation, low-income, and minority applicants. The group recognized that the term “low-income” is not synonymous with Black students, therefore, the institution needs a strategy specific to recruiting Black students that engages Black current students, alumni, faculty, and staff in the process.

Comment:
Evaluation of the relative effectiveness of dedicated recruiters and representatives of the Jindal Young Scholars Program and Academic Bridge Program is important.

The characterizations of UT Dallas on our promotional materials should reflect the realities of what prospective students will discover upon enrolling at UT Dallas, in the spirit of “truth in packaging.”

Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson, Vice President George Fair, and Dean Hasan Pirkul are asked to respond to these comments.

Timeline: February 15
**Issue: Scholarships**

"Create scholarships and/or grants specifically for non-first year African American, and Black students."

“Create scholarships for non-first year/transfer Black students that reward accomplishments outside of academics (civil and community service, leadership on campus).”

*Comment: Race-specific scholarships, like race-specific admission criteria, are illegal. Surrogate criteria, however, may not differentiate between URM students and White students. UT Dallas does not have quasi-affiliated independent foundations that are able to provide such race-specific aid. This is a handicap in enrolling and graduating URM.*

**Recommendations:**

- Reassess admission and scholarship timelines with consideration given to the timing of when students who are dependent upon waivers take the SAT or ACT.

  *Comment: Rationales and issues regarding admission and scholarship timelines are complex. This issue should be entered into the mix. Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson will consider this issue and respond.*

  *Timeline: February 15*

- Research and track schools with known issues of families from higher income districts transferring in to inflate high school class rank and GPA in lower income schools. Advocate for districts to continue efforts to prevent the practice.

  *Comment: There might be some extant research on this topic. However, given UT Dallas admission practices, the phenomenon, to the extent that it is significant, should have little, if any, impact of our student profile.*

- Establish a group to perform the following functions:

  *Comment: Is such a group necessary in the context of all other recommendations? If created, to whom would this group report? Should this be an issue for the Academic Senate?*

  *Timeline: ?*

  - Investigate and respond to concerns surrounding the racial and socioeconomic diversity of merit-based scholarship recipients presented by our students.

  *Comment: The facts about these issues will be provided by research done by the Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis staff.*

  *Timeline: March 15*
- Research how other universities of similar size, quality, and state demographics award merit and need-based scholarships. Explore non-race based scholarship alternatives that may support Black students.

  *Comment: There are not many degrees of freedom in awarding financial aid. Race-specific scholarships, like race-specific admission criteria, are illegal. Surrogate criteria may not differentiate between URM students and White students. UT Dallas does not have quasi-affiliated independent foundations that are able to provide such race-specific aid. This is a handicap in enrolling and graduating URM.*

- Examine the feasibility and possible impact of diverting a portion of merit-based scholarship funding to establish a need-based scholarship for incoming freshmen and transfer students. This should include exploring what additional investments would be necessary to make funding and staffing in specified programs more proportional and better situated to close equity gaps.

  *Comment: Such investigations should be undertaken. Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson and Senior Director of Financial Aid Beth Tolan will provide guidance.*

  It must be understood that need-based student financial aid is mandated and controlled by state and federal law and that all non-need-based aid is awarded not to benefit the recipients but because of the university’s self-interested agenda of enrolling students who otherwise would not have enrolled at UT Dallas. The large rate of UT Dallas enrollment increases over the past 20 years have been correlated with the merit scholarship program.

  *All university operations, starting with faculty and staff salaries are funded primarily from student tuition and fee revenue. In the ideal world, we could enroll all of the students we desire simply because of our reputation, without offering anything other than need-based financial aid, and use the resulting tuition and fee income to improve and enhance the ratios of faculty and support staff to the numbers of students. We do not seem to have reached that status.*

  *Timeline: March 15*

- Create strategies that leverage existing programs to coordinate recruitment, admissions, scholarship allocation, and placement in support programs with intentionality – specifically, in a manner that focuses on our most vulnerable and mobile students. Pilot this work beginning as early as Academic Year 2022.

  *Comment: Senior Director of Enrollment Operations Michael Seeligson and Dean Jessica Murphy will provide a review of the existing programs.*

  *Timeline: March 15*
**Discussion Summary:** To begin the conversation, the group reviewed a list of the University’s primary scholarship programs, which included a reference to endowed scholarships and those within the schools. The faculty and staff participants then proceeded to acknowledge the following known issues and limitations: existing legal limitations that prevent scholarships from being designated for Black students, lack of institutionally funded need-based scholarships comparable to the institutionally funded merit-based scholarships, limited scholarships for incoming transfer students, inability to automatically consider continuing student attributes outside of academic performance, and limited scholarships for continuing students that considers financial need, UT Dallas academic performance, and community engagement. Our student leaders articulated their concerns, which are best represented in their own words, in the correspondence and formal report included here as an addendum.

Thank you in advance for communicating these recommendations and the context of their development with the Living Our Values Task Force and senior leadership. The main consensus of this group was that to truly live the value of diversity we must invest in it.

Attachments:
UG Recruitment – Implementation Memo - 20200915
September 15, 2020

Provost Inga Musselman
The University of Texas at Dallas

Dear Inga,

Thank you for your work in collaboration with the Living Our Values Task Force. I have reviewed the attached recommendations related to recruitment, admission, and scholarships for Black students. With this memo, I ask that you continue work on their implementation and take the following actions:

- No later than six weeks from the date of this memo, please provide me with an implementation timeline with appropriate milestones for this work so that we can track and report on our progress in addressing these issues. I ask that you copy the co-chairs of the LOV Task Force, George Fair and Rafael Martín, on this implementation plan.

- If for any reason you find that implementation of any of these recommendations is not feasible or not advisable, please provide me with an explanation of why this is the case and any actions you believe should be considered as an alternative.

Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about this request. Thank you for your work to support our efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion at UT Dallas.

Sincerely,

Richard C. Benson
President
Eugene McDermott Distinguished University Chair of Leadership

c. George Fair and Rafael Martín, Co-Chairs of the Living Our Values Task Force
Date: September 9, 2020

To: Dr. Richard C. Benson, President

From: George Fair, Co-chair, Living Our Values Task Force
       Rafael Martín, Co-chair, Living Our Values Task Force

Re: LOV Task Force Recommendations Related to Undergraduate Recruitment

Dr. Benson:

Attached please find recommendations endorsed by the Living Our Values (LOV) Task Force relating to the recruitment and retention of underrepresented undergraduate students at UT Dallas. The assignment memo issued by the LOV Task Force on this issue is also attached for your reference. Please let us know if you have any questions related to these recommendations. We look forward to your response.

Attachment
Date: August 8, 2020

To: Dr. Inga Musselman, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

From: Dr. Courtney Brechee, Dr. Rashaunda Henderson, Heather Dragoo, Ayomide Irabor-Musa, Tonya Carroll, Soliana Ghirmai, Tamara Havis, Shanon Patrick, Michael Seeligson, Axum Taylor, Beth Tolan, Arthur Gregg

Re: Recommendations related to recruitment, admission, and scholarships for Black students

Attachments provided by UT Dallas student Ayomide Irabor-Musa: 1. McDermott SAT Requirement Report 2. McDermott Demographic Comparisons

The following has been prepared in response to your request for recommendations related to Black student recruitment, admission, and scholarship awarding. We met last Friday, August 8, 2020, to discuss these issues. We have organized our summary by categorizing the issues and providing an overview of our discussion and recommendations for each. Please note that based on the initial memo to you from Mr. Martín and Dr. Fair that requested “recommendations on how our institution can and should address these issues in the longer term and what structures we should put in place (e.g. policies, plans, committees, working groups, metrics, etc.) to ensure progress is made” many of our recommendations include requests to investigate some issues further to ensure that decisions on what actions to take are, at minimum, data-informed.

Before addressing each issue narrowly, we would like to share four central themes that emerged in conversation we believe are critical to ensuring success and progress in these areas.

- The words and actions that follow the Living Our Values Task Force work must provide clear priorities to drive recruitment, admissions, and scholarship awarding, which in turn, dictate our student success and fundraising strategies. The priorities should include a list of programs, policies, and processes identified as critical to re-defining UT Dallas’ values to include roles in contributing to social mobility and anti-racism. Our group asks for next steps to have accountability metrics with deadlines, so that progress can be clearly monitored.

- While the university can convene meetings to talk about these issues, we will not influence systemic racism, biases, and structures until our financial investments and staffing allocations are representative of our verbal commitments and value statements.

- Drawing upon the experience of our students, academic literature, and institutional data, we recognize that our institution’s past and current valuation of standardized testing has hindered our ability to recruit, admit, and financially support a significant percentage of prospective Black students. We make this point not to suggest that UT Dallas deviate from
valuing standardized testing, which is beneficial for rankings, or its commitment to attracting the best and brightest, but rather, this is a critical moment for the institution to rethink how it defines “merit.” In addition, as described by our students, this is a “moment” to challenge and change how we internally define “need” and “quality” and how we demonstrate who we consider the best and brightest to our external stakeholders.

- Several of our recommendations include that specific topics and strategic opportunities for significant change be further examined, seen through to implementation, and provided reoccurring oversight. Therefore, to ensure that efforts are institutionalized, we propose that an expanded version of this group be charged with some of these tasks to prevent inaction and track progress. The charge of the group supporting these efforts should be different than that of other related committees, such as the Committee on Student Scholarships and the Committee for the Support of Diversity and Equity.

**Issues: Recruitment and admission standards**

“Expand recruitment at college fairs and campus visits to include lower-income communities and communities outside of Dallas.”

“Review and amend admission standards to be more intentional in recruiting Black students.”

**Recommendations:**

- Increase the funding and staffing of existing pipeline programs that support the development of cultural capital, provide access to standardized test preparation resources and mentorship, and expose students to UT Dallas in historically underserved communities.

- Hire a dedicated recruiter for Dallas Independent School District whose scope of work includes coordinating the engagement of current students, alumni, faculty, and staff in recruitment and collaborating with the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, as well as external organizations to identify funding opportunities to support pipeline programs. It is important to note that this position must be separate from the recruiter assigned to the Dallas County Promise, which could support Black, first-generation, and low income student recruitment at Dallas College.

- Establish a group to ensure improved intentionality in the coordination of data-driven recruitment, admission, financial awarding, and placement in student support programs for all incoming students. This group could provide oversight of recruitment efforts to ensure that resources are sufficiently allocated to recruiting at Title IX, south Dallas, and rural areas with high concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and Black students.

- Expand upon existing efforts to increase consideration of high school characteristics, personal essays, and socioeconomic factors to further reduce the weight assigned to standardized testing in admissions.

- Approach the recruitment, admission, financial support, and completion of Black students holistically. If the university is able to effectively recruitment more Black students, we must be prepared to invest in support structures, such as the Diversity Scholars Program,
Undergraduate Success Scholars, Cultural Scholars, and First-Generation Student Programs, to cultivate belonging and support their persistence.

**Discussion Summary:** Before discussing the strength and weaknesses of existing recruitment efforts on garnering the interest of Black students, we shared a list of diversity-oriented recruitment practices, pipeline programs, and yield efforts. While it was not exhaustive, this exercise provided the opportunity for us to share with the student participants and discuss the distinction between recruitment and admissions related work. We have two central Texas recruiters. One is dedicated to Houston. Several group members mentioned the value of the dedicated recruiter in Houston. Specifically, how the Houston recruiter’s visibility and clear priority being the Houston area has allowed him to establish strong school relationships and engage with students much earlier in their high school careers. The group expressed interest in learning more about UT Dallas representation at lower-income schools that may possess higher concentrations of Black students and how Admissions determines what schools to visit and how frequently. This discussion highlighted that while Academic Bridge Program and Jindal Young Scholars Program representatives may be present in those schools, their work does not yield the same results as a dedicated recruiter. The group was interested in the data associated with the return on investments of recruiter time in relevant districts and if the students who enroll from our top visited high schools are representative of the DFW and State of Texas demographics overall. A significant portion of the conversation was dedicated to the value of visibility and brand association, in which the students expressed concerns about the many references to SAT scores on webpages and marketing materials because it may discourage first-generation, low-income, and minority applicants. The group recognized that the term “low-income” is not synonymous with Black students, therefore, the institution needs a strategy specific to recruiting Black students that engages Black current students, alumni, faculty, and staff in the process.

**Issue:** Scholarships

“Create scholarships and/or grants specifically for non-first year African American, and Black students.”

“Create scholarships for non-first year/transfer Black students that reward accomplishments outside of academics (civil and community service, leadership on campus).”

**Recommendations:**

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- Research and track schools with known issues of families from higher income districts transferring in to inflate high school class rank and GPA in lower income schools. Advocate for districts to continue efforts to prevent the practice.
- Establish a group to perform the following functions:
• Investigate and respond to concerns surrounding the racial and socioeconomic diversity of merit-based scholarship recipients presented by our students.
• Research how other universities of similar size, quality, and state demographics award merit and need-based scholarships. Explore non-race based scholarship alternatives that may support Black students.
• Examine the feasibility and possible impact of diverting a portion of merit-based scholarship funding to establish a need-based scholarship for incoming freshmen and transfer students. This should include exploring what additional investments would be necessary to make funding and staffing in specified programs more proportional and better situated to close equity gaps.
• Create strategies that leverage existing programs to coordinate recruitment, admissions, scholarship allocation, and placement in support programs with intentionality – specifically, in a manner that focuses on our most vulnerable and mobile students. Pilot this work beginning as early as Academic Year 2022.

Discussion Summary: To begin the conversation, the group reviewed a list of the University’s primary scholarship programs, which included a reference to endowed scholarships and those within the schools. The faculty and staff participants then proceeded to acknowledge the following known issues and limitations: existing legal limitations that prevent scholarships from being designated for Black students, lack of institutionally funded need-based scholarships comparable to the institutionally funded merit-based scholarships, limited scholarships for incoming transfer students, inability to automatically consider continuing student attributes outside of academic performance, and limited scholarships for continuing students that considers financial need, UT Dallas academic performance, and community engagement. Our student leaders articulated their concerns, which are best represented in their own words, in the correspondence and formal report included here as an addendum.

Thank you in advance for communicating these recommendations and the context of their development with the Living Our Values Task Force and senior leadership. The main consensus of this group was that to truly live the value of diversity we must invest in it.
Overview

Historical Background

Current Biases

College Board Intentions

Argument Supporting SAT: Removing the SAT would leave a void we cannot fill.

Argument Supporting SAT: The SAT is accurate for what it predicts.

Argument Supporting SAT: The SAT is not flawed, but rather mirrors larger societal problems.

Bibliography

Overview

A diverse and inclusive Eugene McDermott Scholars Program is not possible with an application that includes an SAT score requirement.

In this report, we want to convey the following:

1) The SAT was developed as a eugenicist tool to prove the intellectual superiority of Nordic white people. It was introduced into the University of Texas System as a strategy to prevent integration after Brown vs Board of Education.

2) We have constructed a projected eligible applicant pool using 2019 SAT score data. White and Asian students compose over 90% of the students who meet our 1490 cutoff, despite being 58% of students who took the SAT.

3) The College Board itself advocates that SAT scores should “never be a veto on a student’s life.”

4) Universities who use test optional policies have higher enrollment of underrepresented minorities.

5) Black students score worse than white students even when income, family education, and all other factors are considered due to racial bias in question development.

6) SAT scores do not predict college grades accurately for women and students of color, and GPA is a better predictor of college grades than SAT score.

Historical Background

The SAT test was founded by Carl Brigham, an influential eugenicist and professor at Princeton. Brigham believed that standardized tests could prove the intellectual superiority of white (specifically, Nordic) Americans. In his seminal work A Study of American Intelligence, Brigham argued that his tests proved “the marked intellectual inferiority of the negro.” He
mobilized the score results as a warning: the “tests had proven beyond any scientific doubt that, like the American Negroes, the Italians and the Jews were genetically ineducable. It would be a waste of good money even to attempt to give these born morons and imbeciles a good Anglo-Saxon education.” This context is important to consider while considering the legitimacy of the SAT.

The SAT rose to prominence and legitimacy after being adopted by Harvard University in 1934. Carl Brigham’s ideas had caught the attention of Henry Chauncey and Wilbur Bender, an assistant to the President and later Dean of Admissions that “concentrated on improving Harvard’s techniques for evaluating ‘intangibles’ and, in particular, its ‘ability to detect homosexual tendencies and serious psychiatric problems.” They pitched the test to then Harvard president James Conant. He agreed to use it to determine recipients of scholarships.

Despite its use in the 1930s, the SAT did not make its way into the UT System until 1955, after the Supreme Court decided Brown vs Board of Education. In September 2019, documents surfaced revealing that the University of Texas Admissions Board intentionally used standardized testing cutoffs to prevent integration without violating the terms of Brown. With no choice but to integrate, the 1955 admissions board predicted that 300 of 2,700 admitted students in the next class would be Black. They speculated, however, that introducing a standardized test cutoff “would eliminate about 10% of UT freshman and about 74% of Negroes… this cutting point would tend to result in a maximum of 70 Negroes in a class of 2,700.” Then UT president Logan Wilson announced the policy to a group of influential alumni, assuring them that it would “avoid appearing to discriminate… with a selective admissions policy for all students without reference to racial origin.”

The introduction of standardized test scores into the University of Texas system was designed to exclude Black students. While that may no longer be the intention, the legacy of the SAT test remains the same. The test disadvantages students who are Black and Latinx, first generation, and low-income.
Current Biases

It is well known that racial score gaps exist on the SAT. In 2019, Black students scored on average 181 points less than white students and 290 points less than Asian students. Hispanic students scored 136 points less than white students and 245 points less than Asian students. Native students scored 202 points less than white students and 311 points less than Asian students. While these score gaps are alarming, they do not entirely apply to our admissions standards. Since we have a minimum requirement, we should examine the data for students that meet that minimum.

Below is a score distribution for the 2019 SAT. While they do not include analysis for our specific cutoff (1490), we can see how many people of each racial demographic score above a 1400. 25% of Asian students and 8% of white students meet this cutoff, whereas only 2% of Hispanic and Native Hawaiian students and 1% of African American and “American Indian” students score a 1400 or above.

A score of 1400 is in the 97th percentile of the 2019 SAT, and a score of 1490 is in the 99th percentile, so only roughly a third of the individuals in the 1400-1600 category would be expected to meet a 1490 cutoff. If we apply the percentages to the total numbers in each category, and multiply this number by a third, we can get a general idea of the eligible applicant pool.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race (as labeled by SAT)</th>
<th>Number of students who took the 2019 SAT</th>
<th>Percent of Students who scored 1400-1600</th>
<th>Number of Students who scored 1400-1600</th>
<th>% of those students (projected for 1490) Total: 48,998</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>947,842</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>75,827</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these calculations are not exact, they do reveal alarming patterns. White and Asian students compose over 90% of students who meet our score cutoff. While more African American students took the SAT than Asian students, there are twenty-one times more Asian students in our eligible applicant pool than African American students. There are less than a hundred total eligible students nationwide from Indigenous groups.

These patterns carry for other considerations, like family income and education level. Students whose parents have graduate degrees score a whopping 268 points higher, on average, than students whose parents did not graduate high school. Students who used a fee waiver scored, on average, 89 points less than those who did not. Given that our cutoff only allows 110 missed points, these disparities are critical.
College Board Intentions

In a May 2019 op ed, College Board President David Coleman urged that we need to take a “far humbler view of the SAT.” He stated his opposition to minimum score requirements, arguing that “Low scores should never be a veto on a student’s life.” Indeed, the College Board’s own $25 million scholarship has no SAT or GPA requirement. In recent years, the College Board has taken the position that the SAT is only valuable as a component of admissions. A 2018 College Board report argued that “Standardized test scores have value when used with other indicia, but alone they aren’t a good measure of success in college or of merit for college admissions.” If we use an SAT cutoff, we are saying that SAT scores alone can determine merit. The College Board itself disagrees with this determination.

Argument Supporting SAT: Removing the SAT would leave a void we cannot fill.

Over a thousand colleges and universities utilize test-optional policies, and have found great success in doing so. Highly ranked schools such as University of Chicago, Wake Forest University, George Washington University, and others have abandoned SAT-based admissions. A 2018 study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling studied almost a million applicants to test-optional universities. They found that test-optional policies led to numerical and proportional increases of underrepresented groups in the matriculated student bodies. They also found that students who chose not to submit test scores graduated at higher rates than those who submitted scores.

Additionally, multiple studies have proved (and the College Board itself has admitted) that high school GPA is a better indicator of college GPA than standardized tests. While we are
certainly not advocating GPA cutoffs, SAT scores are not even the best indicator for what they claim to predict.

ARGUMENT SUPPORTING SAT: The SAT is accurate for what it predicts.

Proponents of the SAT have argued that it can predict college success. Indeed, studies have said that SAT scores are good indicators of first-year college grades. However, these studies are based on averages. Studies that examine predictors by gender, race, and institution find that SAT scores fail to predict college success in large numbers of cases.

In 1997, a study by Peter Sacks cast doubt on the College Board’s long-standing claim that SAT scores predict college success. He found that the trend did not hold true for women and students of color, who performed better than their scores would indicate. A more recent study in 2016 used data for more than 475,000 SAT test takers, and reached the same conclusion. SAT scores predict college success on average, the study explained. When race, gender, and individual institution are considered, however, hundreds of thousands of students either under or overestimated. Lead researcher Herman Aguinis explains that “Hundreds of thousands of students probably have been denied admission or denied scholarships just because of their ethnicity or gender when standardized tests are central in the admissions process.”
Argument Supporting SAT: The SAT is not flawed, but rather mirrors larger societal problems.

Certainly, the SAT is not the only problematic component of education and admissions. School funding, curriculum, housing and employment discrimination, and many other factors impact student success. Still, this does not excuse using the SAT as a barrier.

The SAT is, in fact, problematic on its own. While it does represent society-wide inequalities, it also perpetuates and compounds them. A 2010 Harvard Educational Review study used Differential Item Functioning to determine the correct response rates on questions for white and Black students, controlling for other factors like academic performance and income. They found that Black students score lower than white students even when these factors are considered. In language sections, “easy” questions were answered correctly more often by white students than Black students of the same academic background, in part because the language used is “reflected in the cultural expressions that are used commonly in the dominant (white) society, so white students have an edge based not on education or study skills or aptitude, but because they are most likely growing up around white people.

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New research uncovers hidden bias in college admissions tests. Indiana University Bloomington.  


https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8731/67a59796d31bf6d8ccf7fc21447f0ef06a48.pdf?_ga=2.133294606.1081673566.1575696625-339319257.1575696625
Overview

If McDermott Scholars were demographically consistent with undergraduate students nationwide, how many scholars of each identity/background would we expect in the data reported from 2009-2019?

Race/Ethnicity

Family Income

Parental Education

Gender

All Data Presented in Table Format

Overview

Education inequality is a pervasive issue not limited to merit scholarships. When viewing McDermott demographic data, it is natural to question whether apparent inequalities are representative of larger systemic inequalities rather than any factor specific to the program. When compared to national data, however, it becomes clear that the McDermott program is an anomaly even amongst an already unequal education system. Trends for wealth and parental education are almost reversed, and Black and Hispanic students remain starkly underrepresented even when compared to UTD and national undergraduate data. This report compares McDermott data to national averages and, when available, UTD data (UTD does not report family income and parental education of admitted students). In all categories, non-respondents were excluded from percent tabulations.

This report is not meant to suggest that the McDermott program should strive to meet the national undergraduate proportions as a ceiling. National averages are built from colleges and universities that exclude people because of cost. As a fully funded scholarship program, we are uniquely positioned to build a base of scholars that is far more diverse and inclusive than expensive college programs.
If McDermott Scholars were demographically consistent with undergraduate students nationwide, how many scholars of each identity/background would we expect in the data reported from 2009-2019?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity/Background</th>
<th>Expected</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Generation College Students</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars with parents that have graduate/professional degrees</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars with families that make $0-$60K</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholars with families that make $150K+</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American Scholars</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Scholars</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provided by UT Dallas student Ayomide Irabor-Musa
**Race/Ethnicity**

![Race/Ethnicity Compared to UTD and National Statistics](chart)

*UTD was the only data source that listed “International” as its own racial/ethnic group.

Source used for McDermott Scholars: Public Records Report Data  
Source used for UTD Undergraduate Students: [University Profile](https://www.utdallas.edu)  
Source used for US Undergraduates: [Association of American Colleges and Universities](https://www.aacu.org)

**Data**

The table lists the percentages of each racial and ethnic group in the undergraduate population of the McDermott Scholars Program, UT Dallas, and US universities. I could not find UTD or US data for the entire 2009-2019 range, so UTD and US data are from one year only (2017 and 2019). Obviously these numbers change gradually over time, but hopefully this snapshot will give a general sense of how McDermott compares to the UTD population and other universities.

As stated in the original report, there were not enough Black/African American and Indigenous scholars to report in the data we received so all of these students were listed as “Other”. The zeroes in these categories for McDermott do not mean that there are no scholars that are Black or Indigenous, but rather that we cannot list a value because we do not know the number.
Data Consulted
Source used for McDermott Scholars: Public Records Report Data
Source used for US Undergraduates: National Center for Education Statistics Report (Click Finances: Income, then Total Income by Dependency)

This table compares McDermott Scholars’ Family Income to US Undergraduates. I could not find any reliable data for UT Dallas students’ family income (there is some data on collegefactual.com, but it is not cited so I did not include it). The US undergraduate data is from undergraduate students in 2016, but the family income that they reported was from 2014. NCES had more categories below $60,000, and the McDermott data had another category above $150,000, but I had to collapse them so that they could be compared in the same intervals. I also excluded the $80K+ category (14 responses) from the McDermott data because they could fall in any of the highest three categories. I only included “dependent” students in the national data, because “independent” students do not report family income.
**Parental Education**

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**"Less than" in quotations because it was the language used in public records report, but incorrectly suggests that education outside of a four year college degree is lesser
Source used for McDermott Scholars: Public Records Report Data
Source used for US Undergraduates: National Center for Education Statistics (Click Parents and Family, then Parents’ Highest Education Level)

I could not find any data from UT Dallas about levels of parental education, so this chart compares McDermott Scholars to US undergraduates only. I used nationwide data for the highest level of education of a parent or guardian because that is the structure used by the McDermott data.
Gender

Gender Compared to UTD and National Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>McDermott Scholars</th>
<th>UTD Students</th>
<th>US Undergraduates (2017)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data
Source used for McDermott Scholars: Public Records Report Data
Source used for UTD Students: University Profile
Source used for US Undergraduates: US Census Bureau 2017 Report (Table 5)

Like the McDermott data, the university and national data uses a male/female binary based in biological sex. This is the data we have, but we understand that it is inaccurate and erases other gender identities. The university profile does not delineate between undergraduate and graduate students in its gender statistics, so this may not accurately represent the undergraduate population.
**All Data Presented in Table Format**
(Units are percent of total in all tables)

**Parental Educational Attainment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>McDermott Scholars</th>
<th>US Undergraduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Less than” Bachelor’s</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s/4 Year</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate/Professional</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethnicity/Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>McDermott Scholars</th>
<th>UTD Undergraduates</th>
<th>US undergraduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(not a category)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2+ Races</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(not a category)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Family Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Range</th>
<th>McDermott Scholars</th>
<th>US undergraduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0-$59,999</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60K-$79,999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80K-$99,999</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100K-$149,999</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150K+</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>McDermott Scholars</th>
<th>UTD Students</th>
<th>US Undergrads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>57</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>