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Stagnant 2013 SAT[®] Results are Call to Action for the College Board

Expanding Access to Rigorous Course Work in K–12 Is Critical to Delivering Opportunities to More Students

NEW YORK — With our country struggling to compete in a global marketplace and millions of skilled jobs left unfilled here at home, it is essential to ensure that our students are prepared for college and careers. However, data released today by the College Board reveals that only 43 percent of SAT[®] takers in the class of 2013 graduated from high school academically prepared for the rigors of college-level course work. This number has remained virtually unchanged during the last five years.

“While some might see stagnant scores as no news, we at the College Board consider it a call to action,” said College Board President David Coleman. “We must dramatically increase the number of students in K–12 who are prepared for college and careers. Only by transforming the daily work that students do can we achieve excellence and equity. The College Board will do everything it can to make sure students have access to opportunity, including rigorous course work.”

The SAT Benchmark and College Readiness

The College Board developed the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark to help secondary school administrators, educators, and policymakers evaluate the effectiveness of academic programs in order to better prepare students for college. The SAT Benchmark score of 1550 is associated with a 65 percent probability of obtaining a first-year GPA (FYGPA) of B- or higher, which in turn is associated with a high likelihood of college success.

Studies show that students who meet the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark are:

- **More likely to enroll in a four-year college.** 78 percent enrolled in a four-year college or university, compared to only 46 percent of those who did not meet the benchmark.
- **More likely to complete their degree.** 54 percent earned a bachelor’s degree within four years, compared to only 27 percent of those who did not meet the benchmark.

The students who met the benchmark in 2013 shared a number of other critically important academic characteristics that must be expanded to all students if our nation is to make meaningful gains in educational attainment.

Students who met the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark were:

- **More likely to have completed a core curriculum.** 84 percent completed a core curriculum (defined as four or more years of English and three or more years each of mathematics, natural science, and social science or history), compared to 69 percent of those who did not achieve the SAT Benchmark.
- **More likely to have taken honors or AP[®] courses.** 63 percent took an honors/AP English course; 59 percent took an honors/AP math course; 56 percent took an honors/AP natural science course; and 61 percent took an honors/AP social science/history course, compared to 29 percent, 21 percent, 20 percent, and 25 percent, respectively, of those who did not achieve the SAT Benchmark.
- **More likely to be ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class by GPA.** 55 percent reported being in the top tenth of their class, compared to only 17 percent of those who did not achieve the SAT Benchmark.

SAT Participation Among Underrepresented Students

In 2013, there were gains in SAT participation by underrepresented minority students. Among SAT takers in the class of 2013, 46 percent (762,511) were minority students — the largest percentage ever and up from 40 percent (635,730) in the class of 2009.

- African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students comprised 30 percent of all SAT takers in the class of 2013, up from 27 percent five years ago.

There was also an increase in the percentage of African American and Hispanic SAT takers who met or exceeded the benchmark in 2013.

- In 2012, 14.8 percent of African American SAT takers met or exceed the benchmark. That rose to 15.6 percent in 2013.
- In 2012, 22.8 percent of Hispanic SAT takers met or exceeded the benchmark. That rose to 23.5 percent in 2013.

However, despite these significant gains, the need to expand access to rigorous course work among underrepresented minority students is critical. College Board data shows that underrepresented minority and low-income students are less likely to complete a core curriculum, less likely to pursue more advanced honors or AP course work, and less likely to report a GPA equivalent to an A.

Expanding Access to Opportunity to More Students

The College Board, in collaboration with its members in the K–12 and higher education communities, is working to break down the barriers that prevent students from realizing opportunities. The College Board is currently using evidence-based practices to drive measurable outcomes for students in the following areas:

Access to rigorous course work: With the knowledge that students who meet the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark are also more likely to have taken honors or AP courses, the College Board is working with its partners to expand access to AP for students across the country. Last year alone, more than 300,000 students in the graduating class of 2012 who had been identified as having the potential to succeed in an AP course did not take one. The College Board is also working to find ways to expand access to the PSAT/NMSQT[®], currently one of the strongest predictors of AP success. This will help to identify even more students with the potential to succeed in an AP course.

Giving low-income students a fair shot at college: The College Board wants to ensure that students who have succeeded in high school recognize their potential for college. More than 50 percent of high-achieving low-income students attend less selective schools where they are less likely to graduate and earn a degree. To date, the College Board has produced and sent nearly 7,000 packets of customized college information to high-achieving low-income students in the class of 2014. The goal of this work is to ensure that these students have the necessary information to help them more effectively find the colleges that best fit their academic performance. Over 20,000 additional students are set to receive packets in early October.

Expanding access through fee waivers and SAT School Day: Taking a college entrance exam is a critical step on the road to higher education. That is why the College Board has remained committed to making its key programs affordable. Since 1970, the College Board has provided SAT fee waivers to low-income students for whom exam fees would present an undue burden in the college-going process. More students than ever are using SAT fee waivers. Among the class of 2013, 23 percent of SAT takers (387,748 students) used fee waivers, up from 17 percent five years ago. Among public school SAT takers, 28 percent (365,463) used fee waivers.

First offered in the spring of 2010, SAT School Day helps states and districts foster a college-going culture and increases access to college. Enabling students to take the SAT for free during the school day ensures that promising students who might otherwise face barriers to standard Saturday testing — such as part-time jobs or family responsibilities — do not miss out on a chance at the college-going process. This year, the SAT will be administered during the school day to all public school juniors and/or seniors in Delaware, Idaho, and the District of Columbia, and to students in more than 60 districts in 12 additional states.

Additional Information

For more information about the College Board's work, please visit www.collegeboard.org/SATPress

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The SAT

The SAT is a college entrance exam used in the admission process at nearly all four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The content on the SAT reflects how well students can apply the reading, mathematics and writing skills and knowledge they have learned in high school that are important for success in college. Validity research shows that the SAT is a fair predictor of college success (defined in terms of grade point average, persistence, and degree completion) for students of all backgrounds and its effectiveness is intensified when used in conjunction with high school

grades. SAT performance data illustrate that students who take rigorous courses in high school and do well in those courses are likely to perform well on the SAT. The SAT is administered nearly three million times a year at test centers in more than 170 countries. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org/SATPress.

The College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT[®] and the Advanced Placement Program[®]. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org

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