

# NACAC Recommendations on Ensuring Integrity in College Admission Testing

Dear Colleague,

The NACAC Board of Directors today accepted recommendations on integrity in standardized testing proposed by our International Initiatives Advisory Committee. In light of the recent spate of testing scandals, we felt it imperative to outline challenges faced by students, families, and institutions domestically and internationally as they enter the upcoming testing season. The committee has developed a set of recommendations that we approve and wish to share with the testing organizations.

We encourage increased transparency and future collaboration among NACAC, the testing organizations, and other interested parties to ensure we can all better fulfill our roles of assisting students in the transition from high school to college.

We thank the members of the International Initiatives Advisory Committee for their many hours of dedicated work on this complex issue.

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## **NACAC Recommendations on Ensuring Integrity in College Admission Testing**

Standardized testing has been a valuable tool in undergraduate college admission in the United States for more than 90 years. The tests, as well as practices related to administration and interpretation, have evolved over time. They have adapted to changes in the US higher education landscape, including the massive growth and diversification of postsecondary participation by American students and the increasing enrollment of international students at US colleges and universities.

The testing agencies have introduced content, formatting, and scoring changes to improve test validity and usefulness and to correct for biases at key junctures throughout the tests' lifespan. In the past decade, the unprecedented rate of technological change in society - especially in regard to

information-sharing technologies -- is presenting a unique challenge to the effectiveness and integrity of these evaluative tools. Additionally, globalization is reconfiguring the world in such a way that what happens beyond US borders impacts the environment within them (and vice-versa) more immediately and unavoidably than ever before. America and "the rest of the world" are not silos.

Recent alarming reports, combined with the cumulative experience of practitioners in the field, have highlighted a growing, significant, and immediate challenge: how to curb cheating on exams in the US and abroad when the technological means to cheat have never been more available. Students seamlessly, and often times innocently, share test content within minutes of finishing their exams. Organized cheating rings use social and mobile tools to share that same content in real time. Standardized testing organizations monitor popular websites and attempt to ensure that what is illicitly shared is quickly removed. The effectiveness of these efforts is further undermined by the proliferation of private messaging channels, whether SnapChat, WeChat, or platforms yet to come. As an organization that is sympathetic to this problem, NACAC appreciates that this is an overwhelming task.

The US higher education community relies on the integrity of academic credentials, including standardized test results, to effectively administer the admission process. The exams provide a way for some institutions to compare student achievement across different educational systems in the US and other countries. Based on the cumulative experience of NACAC's college admission counseling professionals--an association committed to postsecondary access and success--we offer the following urgent recommendations to the testing agencies as means for ensuring the integrity of standardized test results domestically and internationally:

- Recognize that while the re-use of entire standardized test forms or test questions is a long-standing practice, the proliferation of modern communications technology today has rendered it vulnerable to easy exploitation.
- Provide abundant, immediate, and proactive communication with students and families, secondary school counselors and the higher education community when problems arise.
- Significantly update and enhance education and training about test administration and security for all personnel, including college counselors and test supervisors, at all testing sites, domestically and internationally.

- Collaborate with secondary and postsecondary education stakeholders to promote better understanding of the role of culture in determining what constitutes cheating, the individual and social consequences of cheating, and the pedagogical reasons why cheating is deemed unacceptable in the United States.
- Recognize that situations that arise outside of the United States have direct implications domestically, and act accordingly.
- Regularly evaluate testing practices to ensure alignment within an educational and technological landscape that is both fast-changing and global.

In an effort to ensure integrity in the admission process for all students, families, and member institutions, NACAC will continue to advocate for measures that recognize changing pedagogical, cultural, security, and technological dynamics in college admission, both domestically and internationally.

With our best regards,

Phil Trout, President

Nancy Beane, President-elect

Jeff Fuller, Immediate Past President

Joyce Smith, CEO