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CLASSIC LEARNING TEST REVIEW

Executive Summary: During the Academic Affairs Committee meeting in September 2023, the Board office and the universities were asked to review the Classic Learning Test and report on its suitability for use in admissions decisions at Iowa's public universities. The Admissions Study Team, under the direction of the Council of Provosts, conducted a review in the fall and brought a recommendation to the Council of Provosts. This report summarizes their findings and provides a recommendation that was endorsed by the Council of Provosts at their meeting on February 29, 2024.

Background on Admissions at Iowa's Public Universities: Iowa's public universities have a long history of being accessible for Iowa residents. Admission standards are transparent and consistent. At all three Regent universities, students, families and high school counselors know the academic requirements for automatic admission well in advance of submitting their application materials. It is a unique feature among peer institutions.

There are three pathways to admission at one of Iowa's regent universities. They are:

- (1) achieving a Regent Admission Index (RAI) score of 245 or greater for automatic admission (composed of high school GPA, # of core courses and ACT/SAT score)
- (2) individual academic review for applicants who achieve less than a 245 RAI
- (3) test optional for students who choose not to submit their ACT or SAT test score (in this situation, decisions are based on high school GPA, core courses and any other academic records provided by the applicant)

The RAI combines proven factors that strongly predict success in terms of academic performance, retention to second or third year, and graduation from the universities. Given the role of the RAI in automatic admission decisions, it is carefully and regularly evaluated, resulting in periodic adjustments to ensure it continues to serve Iowans and the universities well.

Background on the Classic Learning Test: The Classic Learning Test (CLT) was developed in 2015 and has been taken by at least 25,000 students since that time. For comparison, the SAT was taken by 1.9 million students in 2023 and the ACT was taken by 1.4 million students in that same year. CLT scores are on a range from 0-120 while SAT score range is 400-1600 and ACT uses a range from 12-36.

To determine comparability of exam scores used in the college admissions process, ACT and the College Board (the organization that offers the SAT) have worked together for many years to share and analyze data to create a valid concordance table. This allows a student who takes the ACT to determine an equivalent SAT score, and vice versa. The RAI relies on the validated concordance table that converts SAT scores to their ACT equivalent for use in the automatic admission decisions. An SAT concordance produced by CLT's parent organization in early 2023 (found here: <https://www.cltexam.com/tests/research-reports/>) did not meet industry standards for the methodology used, so the resulting tables have not been widely accepted as valid. Prior studies to create CLT concordance with ACT had similar limitations in methodology and validity measures. (See <https://research.collegeboard.org/reports/sat-suite/concordance/higher-ed-brief-clt-sat> for more information.) In late 2023, ACT and the College Board held joint meetings with CLT about collaborating on a study of concordance between the three exams, but to date, none has been initiated.

Admissions Study Team Review: The Regent-wide Admissions Study Team and experts in statistics and psychometrics at Iowa State University reviewed this background and did additional research to see if other sources have produced valid studies of CLT or its concordance with the SAT or ACT. Their results emphasized the following key points:

- In examining the research on CLT, the team located no evidence to support the predictive efficacy of the CLT, particularly for students at institutions like ISU, SUI and UNI. The sample upon which the psychometric properties were derived included only high school students who were either home schooled or attended private or charter high schools, thus is not representative of the student bodies of Iowa's public universities.
- To date, the team has identified no peer-reviewed journal articles addressing the relationship to student outcomes, and the CLT technical guide does not include any study of the relationship between the CLT or its subscales and student outcomes. The relative youth of the CLT does not allow for a robust study of student learning outcomes or retention to graduation. Additionally, any studies released in the immediate future will be limited to students at private, primarily religiously affiliated institutions of higher education. Even with the recent acceptance of CLT as an admissions test at the University of New Mexico, all public institutions in Florida, and select other public institutions, any study related to student outcomes at public colleges and universities will not happen for years.
- The team identified no evidence that a criterion score from the CLT could be used for placement purposes for students in mathematics or English courses as is current practice with the SAT and ACT. The inability to use CLT for course placement is problematic.
- CLT concordance tables with SAT and ACT are not fully tested. The College Board raises legitimate concerns about the validity of CLT concordance tables related to the SAT. The absence of a representative sample of CLT scores makes direct comparisons with SAT or ACT scores, both of which have been validated and analyzed for decades, impossible.

Recommendation: The Admissions Study Team and Council of Provosts recommends that acceptance of the Classic Learning Test should be continued as part of individual academic review and the test optional pathways for admission to Iowa State University, the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa. As additional data on test takers and student outcomes becomes available both through our universities and national sources, the team should monitor and evaluate the CLT to assess its suitability for use in the RAI automatic admission pathway.