

Recognizing Talent

A Case Study on Recruiting Beyond Your Backyard with the SAT.

U.S. colleges and universities are increasingly interested in recruiting and enrolling international students. Their aim is to create campuses that represent the rich cultural and academic diversity of students from both the U.S. and around the world.

As public and private colleges and universities respond to a surge of applications from international and out-of-state students there is greater risk that high performing students from unfamiliar high schools may be overlooked. For these students, the SAT represents a global indicator of college readiness, regardless of where the student attended school.

Assessing Rigor of Unfamiliar High Schools

Assessing students' college readiness requires a thorough understanding of the academic rigor of local high schools and the environmental context within which prospective students prepare for college. Most university admission offices cannot be expected to be familiar with every high school in the nation—or the world. The best admissions officers can hope for is that a student's grades are normalized within the context of the local classroom. This works well enough when admission officers are familiar with the academic rigor of a single high school. But how can they evaluate a student's readiness for college by simply comparing grades for students from different high schools?

Leveraging Robust Data to Respond

As one of the most popular public institutions in the United States, the University of California (UC) system received over 200,000 applications in 2018. The biggest percentage growth for UC came from out-of-state and international students. As a result, UC's admissions and enrollment leaders are now evaluating transcripts from an increasing number of unfamiliar high schools.

UC's Comprehensive Review Policy focuses application readers on the educational context of students' achievements—whether they attended high school in Bakersfield or Beijing. Under this policy, students applying to UC would be assessed for admission using 14 separate admissions criteria, including traditional metrics of academic

Key Takeaways:

- Admission and enrollment leaders face the challenge of assessing the rigor of unknown high schools.
- The SAT provides a worldwide standard of achievement that bolsters confidence in the rigor of transcripts from unfamiliar schools.
- The SAT's original mission to identify talented students nationally is now extending globally to identify talented international students.

achievement, such as SAT scores and high school GPA, but also additional indicators of merit, such as the number of honors and AP courses completed, the extent to which the applicant took advantage of educational opportunities at his or her high school, and the quality of the senior year program.

For students who apply to UC from remote or unfamiliar regions, states, and countries, however, the SAT serves as an important initial indicator of student achievement, regardless of where the student attended school, providing international specialists with insight into an applicant's ability to succeed academically. Although the SAT score is not the single criterion for admission, it can indicate the presence of an applicant who might be a good fit for a college or university and signal the application reader to dig deeper into that student's academic record and other accomplishments.

This recalls the reason the SAT was first developed over 100 years ago, as a way for students throughout the US to demonstrate their readiness for college and gain the attention of admissions officers who might not otherwise appreciate their potential for success. Now the SAT can serve this purpose for students around the world.