

Beyond the SAT: Rethinking Admissions

Researchers, Admissions Practitioners to Present New Findings at Wake Forest Conference

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (March 30, 2009) - Wake Forest University, the first top-30 national university to make the SAT optional for applicants, is bringing together admissions officers and leading researchers from Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton, Texas, Virginia, Yale and other universities for a candid discussion of college admissions practices and the role that standardized testing plays in the process. The conference, *Rethinking Admissions*, will be held on the Wake Forest campus on April 15 and 16, 2009, and is open to the public. For more information, visit www.wfu.edu/rethinkingadmissions.

Foremost experts in the fields of sociology, economics and psychology will present new findings at the conference, including research on the SAT's ability to predict which students will do well in college and the role that class rankings, grades and advanced placement exams play in identifying top-performing students. The director of data research for *U.S. News & World Report* and the developer of *Forbes* magazine's new college-rating system also will be on hand to describe the tools they use to rank universities. Admissions officers from Duke, Harvard, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Virginia, Wake Forest, Yale and others will discuss how the admission process works at their schools and how they craft a class to meet academic and social goals.

Author Daniel Golden, who won the Pulitzer Prize for a series of articles he wrote on inequities in college admissions, will deliver the keynote address on April 15. His presentation titled *Slumdog Ivy Leaguer*, will draw parallels between the obstacles faced by low-income students trying to get into Ivy League schools and the homeless hero in the Academy Award-winning movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

"At Wake Forest, we take admissions very seriously so we have invited representatives from some of the country's finest universities to continue the conversation about the best admissions practices to build a campus of diverse thinkers, scholars and leaders," said Wake Forest Provost Jill Tiefenthaler. "Another thing that makes this conference unique is that it brings together scholars with admissions practitioners to integrate the latest research with best practices."

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On the conference's first day, new research will be unveiled about the merits of the SAT and the nuts and bolts of crafting a class at universities that have made standardized tests optional. The second day's sessions will focus on other tools universities are using to assess the high school record and predict which students will succeed. The conference will conclude with a debate over the media's college rankings. Here are some other highlights:

Evaluating Standardized Testing

- A Wake Forest economist will present new findings on the predictive power of the SAT by family income, gender and race. In a separate session, a Princeton University professor will unveil new research on outcomes at other universities that have decided to make the SAT optional.
- Research also will be presented on the University of California's experience with dropping the SAT requirement for admissions and then reinstating the use of the new SAT on a limited basis in conjunction with the top-nine-percent rule.
- The new SAT will be the topic of a second session, including groundbreaking new research on the role it plays in predicting first-year college grades for different racial groups and genders.

The Admissions Process Revealed

- Admissions officers from Harvard, Duke and Wake Forest will join with their counterpart from Spelman College, one of the nation's oldest African American universities, to reveal how they make decisions about who gets accepted and how they identify creative leaders and problem-solvers.
- Admissions directors from two of the nation's leading public universities – University of Texas at Austin and University of Virginia – will discuss how they attract high-achieving, low-income students and how these students perform once they enroll.

The Media and College Rankings

- The dean of admissions at Yale University, an outspoken critic of commercial magazine college rankings, will exchange views with U.S. News & World Report's director of data research, and the economics professor who developed Forbes new college ratings system.

For complete event information, including a conference schedule and biographical information on the participants, visit www.wfu.edu/rethinkingadmissions. The conference is sponsored by the Provost's Office.

About Wake Forest University

Founded in 1834, Wake Forest University is a private, collegiate university dedicated to serving humanity through the pursuit of knowledge. Consistently ranked among the nation's top universities, Wake Forest offers students the personalized attention of a small liberal arts college with the resources, technology and co-curricular opportunities of a large university. With strong undergraduate and graduate programs and leading professional schools, Wake Forest maintains the highest academic and scholarly standards and strives to instill in all its students a desire to lead examined and purposeful lives.

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