

SAT, ACT waived for high school top 10 percent

By Jamie Kmiec
The Baylor Lariat

By a new law, high school students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their class will no longer have to take the SAT or ACT and will automatically be admitted into Texas's public colleges and universities. The law goes into effect in fall 1998.

Although the new law applies to

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public colleges and universities such as Texas A&M and the University of Texas, the law does not apply to a private university like Baylor.

Both the SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test) and the ACT (American College Test) are designed to provide college admissions officers with an academic comparison of student

applicants.

According to Ray Grasshoff of the Texas Higher Education Board's Information Office, the legislature passed the law in response to the Hopwood v. Texas case decision.

Mike Carr, a reporter for the University of Texas campus paper, wrote in an April article for The Daily Texan that "the Hopwood case caught national attention in March when the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans ruled that universities within its jurisdiction, including the University (of Texas), could no longer use race as a basis for admissions."

In July, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal, so the decision stood.

University of Texas students' opinions of the ruling were split. On one hand, qualified majority students will not be rejected so that unqualified minority students can fill a racial quota. According to Carr, it is also "a setback in the struggle for minority rights."

Dropping SAT and ACT test scores from admissions criteria may boost minority enrollment to all public colleges and universities and it might help lessen the negative effects the Hopwood case will have on minorities.

"I think it's wonderful," Maria G. Miller, a counselor at University High School, said. "I'm happy about it, and I'm sure the students will be very happy to hear about it, too."

According to the College Board, "minority students comprised 32 percent of (high school) graduates who took the SAT." Other studies by the College Board have shown minorities, including women, score lower on the standardized tests because of economic and cultural disparities.

"Diversity at any university, especially at Baylor, is extremely important," Gabe Gerber, a Moss Beach, Calif., junior, said.

Removing scores from public college admissions would also lessen the disparity between the preparation materials available to families of different incomes. Special courses, study guides and computer aides, while affordable to high-income families, may not be as easy to come by for low-income families.

Stacy Boultinghouse, a Mathis junior, was offered free SAT and ACT study material by her high school, but she also studied for the tests with a computer program that her parents bought for her.

"We had little practice tests during our study break," Boultinghouse

said, "But I mostly used a computer program to study at home."

In addition to bridging economic unfairness, schools which abide by this new law may also see an increase in applications. Less pressure to submit high test scores on a college application may encourage minority students, as well as the majority, to apply for college.

While some students feel there is too much pressure placed on them to make a good score on one or two tests, others feel less pressure because they are aware that other factors like after school involvement, special awards and achievements and community involvement are also considered by admissions officers.

According to Miller, students at University High School are encouraged to get involved in athletics and volunteer programs so that they will have a better chance of college acceptance.

Although removing the standardized tests from admissions requirements could benefit some high school graduates, some Baylor students see that the advantages are outweighed by the disadvantages.

"I think that they should have to take the SAT just to see how they measure up to other students," Josh Gatell, a San Antonio junior, said.

A problem with dropping SAT and ACT scores could be that a top 10 percent class ranking is becoming easier to achieve in some high schools than others. According to Kyoko Altman, a CNN correspondent, some high school students are reporting that it is not hard to make A's anymore.

"The average SAT score of A students fell 14 points, leading some to worry that good grades are easy to come by," Kyoko said in an August report.

If grades are getting easier to come by, then a high class ranking could mean nothing when an admissions officer tries to gage a student's academic capabilities.

"In some of these schools you can get away with murder," Boultinghouse said. "Being in the top 10 percent was easy. We had good grades, but we wended our way out of a lot of other tests."

"I don't see why you would do away with them," Gerber said. "We've put so much validity into them for so many years. The tests are still a very important way to gauge a student."

Baylor admissions officials at press time were unavailable for comment on this new law.

School celebrates 25 years of coed classes

HANOVER, N.H. -- Professor Karen Turner remembers being pelted with rotten eggs as she walked across Dartmouth College campus 25 years ago as a freshman.

The last of the Ivy League schools to admit women, Turner and other survivors of that first class return to Dartmouth this weekend to celebrate a quarter of a century of co-education with films, concerts, and art exhibits.

In the fall of 1972, 177 women entered as freshmen and 74 other women transferred in. A year later, 37 women became the first to graduate with a coeducational class. More than half of them did so with honors.

But Dartmouth was unprepared for coeds at the time. There were few women's restrooms and a college infirmary that had never seen a female student.

The women faced abusive raids by drunken male classmates, hostile graffiti and a taunting song about "co-hogs" who were spoiling all the fun. But most men made them feel welcome, according to one former student, now a museum deputy director in New York.

"Dartmouth undeservedly still has a bad reputation," said senior Candace Crawford. "A lot of people are still thinking it is like the 1980s."

During the 80s, Dartmouth was known more for racist and sexist attacks by the right-wing Dartmouth Review student newspaper than for intellectual achievement.

The class of 1999 is the first in which women comprised half of the undergraduates, Dartmouth officials said, adding that among the tenured faculty, 27 percent are women, the highest percentage in the Ivy League, although they still lag in salaries.

Boalt's only black 1st year student finds support as he adjusts to law school

By Tracy L. Brown
The Dallas Morning News
Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Services

BERKELEY, Calif.-- A couple of months into classes at the renowned Boalt Hall Law School, Eric Brooks is like any other first-year student. His life is consumed with lectures, law briefs and long hours at the library.

But one thing makes the soft-spoken Brooks unlike any of the 267 other freshmen at the University of California-Berkeley law school: He's African-American. Not since the 1960s has Boalt Hall had only one black student in a class.

Brooks, 27, said it's a circumstance that almost made him change his mind.

"I wasn't sure that was the kind of environment I wanted to be in," he said. "But Dean Herma Kay assured me I was very welcome, and that they would do all they could to ... help me put my focus on school."

When Brooks decided to pursue a career in environmental law because of his interest in dump sites and toxic waste plants in black and Latino neighborhoods, he had no idea he would land in the middle of a new racial debate.

"People keep telling me that this is historic," Brooks said. "I guess it is historic in that we're starting this new age of post-affirmative action. But I don't think it's nearly as much an act compared to the people before me who broke the color barriers the first time."

Several decades after implementing policies to increase minority enrollment in state colleges and universities, California voters in November approved Proposition 209. It prohibits considering race or gender in state hiring, contracting and college admissions.

Although the measure is still being challenged in court, its impact already is evident: Last year's freshmen at Boalt Hall included 30 Latinos and 20 African Americans. This year, there are 14 Hispanics and Brooks.

At least one other school is facing a similar situation. As the result of a lawsuit, the University of Texas Law School was ordered last year to abandon race as a consideration in its admissions policy. Four black students and 26 Hispanics are enrolled as freshmen, down from 31 black students and 42 Hispanics last year. And the challenges across the nation continue. On Oct. 14, the Center for Individual Rights, which played a role in the University of Texas lawsuit, sued the prestigious University of Michigan Law School, alleging that the school's affirmative action policies discriminated against qualified whites in favor of minorities.

Brooks, who grew up in a middle-class family in Bloomington, Ind., decided he wanted to be a lawyer while earning a bachelor's degree in telecommunications at Indiana University. He chose Boalt Hall because of its academic reputation and because he and his wife wanted to be closer to family in the San Francisco area.

Although his first weeks of school

have been filled with cameras and requests for interviews, Brooks said, he has not felt intimidated by the attention. With the support of his wife, family and other students, the experience has been manageable, he said.

"My dad has been very supportive. When he went to prep school in New Hampshire, he was the only African-American there," Brooks said. "He says, 'Well, I did it and you can do it, too.' And I told him, 'Well, you didn't have journalists following you everywhere.'"

Anticipation of that kind of attention was one reason that law student Malcolm Laverne elected not to attend University of Texas this fall.

In Hopwood vs. Texas, a federal appeals court banned the use of race as a factor in University of Texas recruitment, admissions and financial aid decisions.

When early numbers for this year's freshman law class were released, Laverne, 24, of Houston, realized that, at that point, no other blacks had committed to attend the school. He decided to attend Cornell University instead.

"I didn't want to go to school where cameras were popping on me, so the decision got a little easier," Laverne told The Houston Chronicle. He declined to comment for this report.

At Boalt Hall, members of Law Students of African Descent have tried to help Brooks adjust. A second-year student acts a mentor, and members who already have taken some of Brooks' classes share notes and tips on what to expect from

professors and exams. But group members say Proposition 209 has taken a toll.

"LSAD is having a very hard time this year," said co-chair Hashona Braun, 25. "Because we have only one new student, morale is very low. Normally, we all rally around the first-year students to help introduce them to law school; it's a source of inspiration for the rest of the group. We don't have that this year."

On Oct. 13, simmering frustrations erupted. More than 50 protesters who occupied the Boalt Hall registrar's office were charged with trespass. And in two law classes, white students willingly gave up their seats to minority students from other schools to protest the lack of minority enrollment.

Brooks said he has been torn about his role in the diversity debate. "Part of me wanted to stay private, and part of me wanted people to know what's going on at the school and encourage minorities to keep the pressure on for change," he said. "I was given the impression from the media that people wanted to know if I was for or against affirmative action."

So when the Rev. Jesse Jackson invited him on stage during an affirmative action rally at Berkeley in August, Brooks made his position known.

"I realized I couldn't keep quiet," Brooks said. "I thought it would be a good idea to tell people where I stood, that I am for affirmative action. I didn't want people to think I was a little Ward Connerly."

Connerly, a black Sacramento

businessman and University of California regent, sponsored and aggressively pushed the affirmative action ban in graduate admissions.

Connerly said that giving students preference because of their race is wrong.

"In the past, we've been using historically underrepresented groups to justify preferential treatment, and that's wrong," Connerly said.

Yale confident about winning dorm lawsuit

NEW HAVEN, Conn. -- Four Orthodox Jews who refuse to live in coed dormitories at Yale have sued the university, charging a violation of religious freedom, but the school was confident Friday it would win the suit.

"Based on our initial review of

"Yale remains confident that the suit will be successful."

-Tom Conroy
Yale Spokesman

It also charges that sexual activity involving an unmarried male or female is common in Yale's residential college dormitories.

The plaintiffs -- two men and two women -- claim they are likely to witness, or have first-hand evidence of, sexual activity if they live in the dorms.

Yale requires all freshmen and sophomores to live in the residence halls, except for those who are married or over 21.

The students are represented by Nathan Lewin, a Washington, D.C., lawyer who has long fought religious freedom battles in the United States Supreme Court.

Lewin was not immediately available for comment.

Conroy said the four students are still enrolled at Yale, and that the university is not considering expelling them.

On the contrary, he said the school hoped it could reach a solution with the students, with or without the lawsuit.

"All along, we've been open to finding some solution -- other than having the students live off-campus," he said.

One idea was to put the students in suites with private bathrooms, but this was rejected, he said.

Conroy said the residency requirement was crucial to the "Yale experience," because it allowed students to "see the world through each others' eyes," and taught respect for other values and cultures.

the suit, Yale remains confident that the suit will be unsuccessful," Yale spokesman Tom Conroy told Reuters.

"The university's policy is not in violation of any law or other legal precedent," Conroy said.

The two freshmen and two sophomores filed their suit Wednesday, charging the housing policy "violates the students' religious convictions" and denies them "free exercise of their religion."

They claim that the dormitory lifestyle goes against their faith's tenets of chastity and modesty.

The civil suit claims the four have been "discriminatorily denied permission granted to other freshmen and sophomores to live off campus."

SAE kicked off of campus for 2 years

By Mat Herron
Kentucky Kernel

Standing inside 345 Aylesford Place, marketing sophomore Brian Roby stood, straight-faced, microphone attached. "Everybody's got a home at SAE."

But for Roby and the other members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon social fraternity, the last two months have left members wondering whether their house will stay in order.

Until yesterday. After finishing its internal investigation of hazing charges against SAE, national officers suspended the chapter's charter until August 1999.

SAE Executive Director Richard Lies listed the self-imposed penalties in his letter sent yesterday to Dean of Students David Stockham.

"The University has conceded that we're innocent of (hazing) charges," said chapter president Peter Nesmith, at an informal news conference at the house last night.

"It's been very difficult," said Nesmith, a political science senior. "Our hopes are to return in two years as strong as we were when we were taken away."

Other penalties handed down are as follows:

* Effective immediately, all active members at the May 15 party are suspended until they graduate.

* The pledge period for SAE has

been shortened to seven days.

* The new chapter house will operate substance-free with an on-site University adviser.

* Remaining chapter members cannot wear SAE badges or letters and cannot form any group to subvert the process.

UK has not made an official ruling. Stockham said the matter has been tabled until next week.

"We have to see how (the suspension) impacts the disciplinary process," he said. "We are obligated to see that process through to a conclusion. Certainly there's some groundbreaking action that the fraternity has taken."

Nationals suspended the chapter's charter because it held an unauthorized party, violated SAE's risk management policy by having a keg; had alcohol when minors were present; and asked loaded questions that led pledges to believe they might be expelled if they didn't answer correctly, said Pete Stephenson, director of communications for SAE national headquarters in Evanston, Ill.

But according to Lies' letter, SAE officers found that "no physical hazing, and no compelled drinking" had occurred, citing "inconsistencies" and "procedural shortfalls" in the police report. Nesmith would not elaborate on what those inconsistencies were.