

Grad test scores fall

(CPS)--Students hoping to become college teachers are scoring lower on their grad school entrance exams than other students, a new study shows.

"The doctoral degree programs are not attracting the best and the brightest anymore," concludes Clifford Adelman, who wrote the report on the test scores for the National Institute of Education.

His study found grad school entrance exam scores have declined nationwide since 1982, particularly among liberal arts students likely to become teachers.

Adelman believes the decline indicates undergraduates in disciplines such as history and

political science are more likely to skip graduate school and go directly into the job market or professional programs such as law.

"Students perceive that academic life is not as attractive as other lives," he says.

Although Graduate Record Examination (GRE) test scores have declined as a whole since 1962, the decline varies widely among disciplines, Adelman says.

Political science majors' scores have dropped sharply, while those of mathematics, economics, chemistry and engineering majors have held steady or risen slightly.

Most grad schools use the GRE as an admissions test. The

exam focuses on certain thought patterns--such as deductive reasoning and the use of symbolic systems--that are more common in some disciplines than others.

But Adelman believes another factor is that the brightest political science majors are not even taking the GRE test because they're not going on to grad school.

If true, the quality of teaching in many academic disciplines is in jeopardy, Adelman says.

"If we're not putting the quality students into the pipeline of academia now, we're going to face a dismal situation in the 1990's," he predicts.

Adelman's report shows test scores declined precipitously from 1962 to 1970, only to resume falling at a more moderate clip around 1976.

Changes in test questions and scoring methods may help explain the declines, Adelman says.

But changes in demographic variables such as age, race or gender--which are cited frequently to explain the decline of test scores in high school students--don't influence GRE test scores, Adelman says.

"Only in combination with undergraduate majors do these variables begin to offer plausible hypotheses of influence on test score trends," he says.

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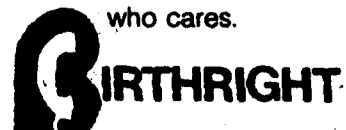
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