



## Georgia's Missing Opportunity

Expand access to higher education through universal SAT/ACT testing

Georgia from its business climate to its people is a state filled with opportunity. But where our high school students are concerned, we could be missing an opportunity for more students to go to college and lead prosperous and fulfilling lives.

GeorgiaCAN has worked diligently in engaging students, families and policy makers in Atlanta and the state's rural communities and found that people are passionate about getting a college degree. While numerous prospective first-generation college students have plenty of drive and hunger for knowledge and success, what they don't have is experience navigating the process of registering for and taking the SAT or ACT. This alone is a significant barrier to engaging fully in the college process for students in urban and rural communities.

When these students miss out so do their families (Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce found Bachelor's degree holders earn 84 percent more than those with just a high school diploma over their lifetimes) and so does the state of Georgia in terms of future taxpayers and engaged citizens. While we support career and trade pathways for students who choose those routes, **GeorgiaCAN also supports state policy that would make the SAT/ACT available to all students.**

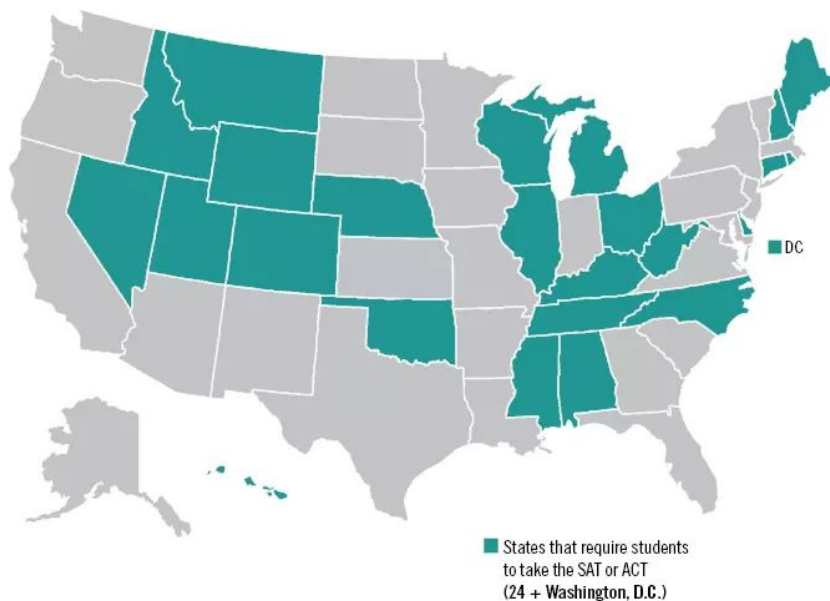
In [\*Missed Exams and Lost Opportunities\*](#) researchers at the University of Virginia, looking at the graduating class of 2014, predicted **24% of students who did not take the SAT would have posted a score at or above 1000, with a significant number of them likely to score high enough for consideration at the state's flagship university.** They concluded that administering the test to all students "could increase the number of high school graduates in the state with test scores competitive for in-state admission by as much as 40% overall and 20% at the most selective universities ...with larger increases for low income students."

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Two key reasons for students not taking the entrance test are simple: money and paperwork. In [\*College Choices: The Economics of Where to Go, When to Go, and How to Pay for It\*](#), researchers in Boston discovered that completing the SAT and an application essay are sufficiently costly that they would deter students from engaging in the process at all, and that many students primed for four-year college admission simply fail to complete this stage of the process and thus don't go.



The work of Joshua Hyman at the University of Connecticut West Hartford supports these findings as well. In his report “[ACT for All: The Effect of Mandatory College Entrance Exams on Postsecondary Attainment and Choice](#)” published in 2017, he noted that prior to the institution of universal college admissions exam policies “for every ten poor students who score college-ready on the ACT or SAT, there are an additional five poor students who would score college-ready but who take neither exam.” Hyman also found that this policy’s effects are especially pronounced for low-income students noting that “this policy is in fact effective at reducing inequality, with effects on college enrollment concentrated among economically disadvantaged students and poor schools.”



At GeorgiaCAN we believe in self determination but, in this case, we also believe nudges work and that tweaks such as administering the exam during a dedicated school day, and ensuring all children take the exam at no charge to them, will be a boon for all Georgians. Currently [24 states and the District of Columbia](#) require the SAT or ACT for all students. These states include Georgia’s neighbors **Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina**. Think tanks such as the highly respected [Brookings Institute](#) and the market focused [Manhattan Institute](#) also support the proposal. Universal administration of the SAT/ACT could increase the state’s pipeline of college-ready students by 25% annually. That’s smart for business. It’s smart for families. It’s smart for taxpayers. And it’s smart for Georgia.

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