

for further information:
Bob Schaeffer (239) 395-6773
cell (239) 699-0468

Embargoed until 3:00am EDT, Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017 -- for use with annual ACT scores

**FEMALES' ACT SCORES TOP MALES' FOR FIRST TIME;
NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING ACT DECLINES AS
MANY MORE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DROP ADMISSIONS EXAMS;
980+ SCHOOLS ARE NOW TEST-OPTIONAL**

Young women in the high school class of 2017 scored higher on the ACT exam than their male counterparts for the first time. The average Composite ACT score for females, 21.1 out of 36, is slightly better than the 21.0 posted by males. According to Bob Schaeffer, Public Education Director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest), "Finally this year, ACT results are consistent with measures of real academic performance, which show that females earn higher grades than males in both high school and college when matched for identical courses."

The number of high school graduates taking the ACT in 2017 declined by 3% from the test volume for the class of 2016. That's the first year-to-year decline in a decade and a half and the biggest percentage drop since 1990-1991, a period in which the ACT overtook the SAT as the nation's most widely administered college admissions exam (http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/ACT-SAT-Annual-Test-Takers-Chart_1.pdf). A FairTest analysis reveals that average ACT scores are generally flat over the past five years. Schaeffer noted, "This shows that K-12 test-and-punish policies have not improved readiness for higher education, at least as measured by these exams."

At the same time, a rapidly growing number of colleges and universities adopted policies to waive consideration of ACT/SAT scores for all or many applicants. A new FairTest tally shows that 980 bachelor-degree granting institutions are test-optional (<http://fairtest.org/university/optional>). In the past four years, more than 100 schools eliminated or reduced their ACT and SAT exam requirements (<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/Optional-Growth-Chronology.pdf>), a pace of one every two weeks. FairTest's test-optional list now includes more than 285 colleges and universities ranked in the top tiers of their respective categories. (<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/Optional-Schools-in-U.S.News-Top-Tiers.pdf>).

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2017 COLLEGE-BOUND SENIORS AVERAGE ACT SCORES

2,030,038 test takers

	COMPOSITE SCORE	FIVE-YEAR SCORE TREND (2013 – 2017)
ALL TEST-TAKERS	21.0	- 0.1
African-American	17.1	+ 0.2
American Indian	17.5	- 0.5
Asian	24.3	+ 0.8
Hispanic/Latino	18.9	+ 0.1
White	22.4	+ 0.2
Female	21.1	+ 0.2
Male	21.0	+ 0.1

Source: ACT, *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2017* and *The Condition of College & Career Readiness 2013*