

1. **Mark your confusion.**
2. **Show evidence of a close reading.**
3. **Write a 1+ page reflection.**

## **New Harvard report proposes major changes to college admissions**

Source: Scott Stump, Today.com, January 20, 2016

Should taking the SAT to get into college be optional?

A new report released Wednesday and endorsed by more than 80 colleges and universities nationwide is recommending some stunning changes in the application process, including possibly making standardized testing optional or lessening its importance.

"I do believe that most students stress out over their SAT scores much more than they need to," Stu Schmill, the dean of admissions at MIT, told Matt Lauer on TODAY.

The hope is to level the field in admissions to provide more opportunities to a broader group of students and make it less about grades, test scores and a laundry list of extracurriculars.

"I think our students are just doing too much," said Schmill, who has endorsed the report. "They feel like they have to do too much, and they really don't. We want to send this message that they can pull back on that a little bit."

The report, sponsored by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, aims to reform the admissions process to dial down the pressure on high school students. Any changes that could take effect may not be in place for two to three years.

The report suggests the following changes:

- De-emphasize standard testing, which could include making the SAT and ACT optional.
- Quality over quantity with extracurricular activities and advanced placement classes, with students showing sustained commitment to a community service rather than just listing a bunch of things they have done.
- Factor in family and community responsibilities to level the playing field in admissions by capturing the contributions of low-income and working-class students.
- Include an essay question on college applications for students to write about their contributions to their families and others.
- Broaden criteria to include public service that consistently contributes to the common good as part of the admissions process instead of just "brag sheets" listing two-week community service projects.

- Widen the net by emphasizing a good fit for each student rather than the notion that there are only a few elite colleges that matter.

Despite colleges' efforts to have diverse student bodies, students from poor families are still rare on the campuses of elite colleges in America, as Inside Higher Ed has reported.

Admissions departments' focus on test scores, AP/IB classes, and superficial extracurriculars doesn't help underprivileged students, according to the Harvard report released on Wednesday. Rather, community involvement — whether that be a service project or caring for your family — should be emphasized in the application process.

Giving students clear opportunities to report their contributions to their families on their college applications — whether that involves working outside the house, watching over younger siblings, or taking on major household chores — can help underprivileged students, who may not be able to participate in the expensive sports or international trips that often determine elite-college admissions.

**Possible response questions:**

- Do you agree or disagree with Harvard's proposed changes to the college admission process? Explain.
- Comment on any of the specific recommendations.