

## Shared Governance Proposal

- I. Date: Sept. 21, 2022
- II. Sponsoring Constituent: Provost Office, Enrollement Management, Student Affiars, Diversity and Community Engagement, Student Government Assocaition (SGA), Black Student Association, Black Faculty and Staff Association executive board, NAACP student chapter on campus, the Strong-Turner Alunmi Chapter and the Chancellor's Cabinet.
- III. Statement of the Issue: Admission Requirement Pilot Study  
In response to the discovery of an unintended consequence of the most recent admission standard revision, the reinstatement of a second admissions pathway is proposed as a pilot study. It was discovered that a significant number of students from the entering fall 2022 class were rejected by Arkansas State but admitted at peer and aspirational institutions. The proposed pilot study will track students admitted under this second pathway, as well as provide them with targeted academic support. It will also address an inequity in admission standard among groups of first-year students. These students will be deemed as Admitted with Pack Support, indicating they will begin their career with the appropriate additional monitoring or support to provide them with the best opportunity for success. An expedited review is requested so that this pilot study can have impact on the entering fall 2023 class recruitment.
- IV. Rational for Proposal: Modification of existing procedure
- V. Type of review: Expedited

Current circumstances as follows:

### *Current admission requirement at A-State for domestic UG Freshmen:*

In spring of 2021, after six months of work completed by New Admission Requirement Task Force formed by Academic Affairs and based on the recommendation by the A-State Shared Governance Committee, the following admission standards were approved for the fall 2022 incoming class:

- Students must have either a 3.0 GPA **or** ACT of 19/SAT of 990 **or** be in the top 20% of their high school class. If a student doesn't meet one of these requirements, they are denied admission and must appeal the decision. The appeal process requires a statement letter, 2 reference letters, a test score (ACT, SAT, ACCUPLACER) and transcripts.

These new standards were based on the following:

- Numerous research studies finding that high school GPA is a better predictor of student success than standardized test scores. The task force report found that ACT actually had a negative and significant impact on first to second year retention rates, even when controlling for a host of other variables.
- High school GPA was also found to be a better predictor of six-year graduation rate for A-State students.
- ACT requirements of 12 four-year public universities in Arkansas were being dropped, changed or suspended at the time of the report
- At A-State, ACT is a negative predictor of student success while HS GPA is positive and significant. There was not a significant difference between an ACT score of 19 compared to an ACT score of 21 when it comes to student success at A-State.

The new standard was more selective as indicated by the new admission requirement task force. In the conclusion of their report, they projected that the new standards would have reduced the previous year's cohort size by 33 students. The committee also concluded that the new standards would make A-State among the most, if not the most, selective four-year public university in Arkansas. During the same period, other universities were moving toward a holistic and/or multiple admission pathways, as shown in the table below.

## *Other universities' admission requirements for fall 2022*

	<b>Pathway 1</b>	<b>Pathway 2</b>	<b>Website</b>
<b>A-State</b>	3.0/4.0 or ACT 19 or Top 20%	No second pathway	N/A
<b>U of A</b>	3.20/4.0 without having to have a test (except for placement)	Less than a 3.2/4.0 plus test--no cut off listed	<a href="#"><u>Admission</u></a>
<b>UCA</b>	3.0/4.0 without having to have a test (except for placement)	2.5/4.0 with a test score (ACT 15)	<a href="#"><u>Admission</u></a>
<b>ATU</b>	2.0/4.0 & composite ACT 19	2.0/4.0 & composite ACT 15	<a href="#"><u>Admission</u></a>
<b>Ole Miss</b>	3.20/4.0 without a test score	2.0 & no ACT if you don't have access to take the test	<a href="#"><u>Admission</u></a>
<b>SEMO</b>	2.75/4.0 without a test score or 21 ACT	2.5/4.0 with a certain score or not required at all with a certain score	<a href="#"><u>Admission</u></a>

### *The Competitive Disadvantage:*

The peer competitor or aspirational universities in our region have multiple pathways for admission, while at A-State there is only one pathway. By having one pathway, it is tougher to get admitted to A-State compared to other universities. While it can be argued that the appeal process after rejection is another pathway, it is neither practical – a week-long process requiring a student to overcome additional paperwork hurdles – nor public – a prospective student only learn of the appeal process upon rejection. As such, when a student applied to A-State and had a GPA lower than 3.0 without the appropriate test score or rank, they would be denied admission. Meanwhile, at the University of Arkansas, and potentially at UCA, SEMO, or Ole Miss, they would be admitted under the holistic admission pathway. A-State denied admission to 305 students for the fall 2022 freshmen class.

Out of the 305 students, only 26% (81 students) went through the comparatively rigorous appeal process and 94% of those who appealed (76 students) were admitted. The A-State admission appeal committee is made up of 1 faculty member from each college. Of 224 freshmen who were denied admission to A-State and didn't appeal the decision for fall 2022, approximately 215 would have been admitted to the University of Arkansas based on their holistic admission process. Additionally, 97 students would have been admitted to UCA on their non test optional pathway, and 91 would have been admitted to the University of Mississippi. While we know how many would have been admitted to other universities but not A-State, what we don't know is how many didn't even apply because they perceived they would be denied admission to A-State. Many could look at the standards of University of Arkansas, or University of Mississippi and feel assured of admission.. Thus beyond the 224 referenced above, we additionally don't know how many more students didn't even bother to apply with the current standards, but we have to assume there are many who chose to apply to other places where admission was more likely.

The range of GPA and ACT scores for students who were admitted through the appeal process varied greatly. Students with GPA as low as 2.0 and ACT of 17 and 2.16 with ACT of 19 were admitted or 2.16 and 2.68 with ACCUPLACER scores that placed students in remedial English and math. In addition, we had students who had been able to raise their GPA above the 3.0 requirement by the time they appealed, and they were admitted. The appeal committee used a holistic approach to evaluate if a student would be successful rather than focusing on just GPA or ACT.

*Some admission policies are a barrier to minority and low-income students:*

The most recent study of this issue (April 2021) in *American Educational Research Journal*, found that test-optional admissions increased only slightly (1%) the share of Black, Latino and Native American students and low-income students in universities that adopted the policy between 2005-06 and 2015-16, compared to similar schools that continued to require SAT and ACT scores. (See <https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-test-optional-policies-didnt-do-much-to-diversify-college-student-populations/>)

Therefore, in addition to standardized test-optional admission standards, a more holistic approach is needed, especially with minority and low-income students, consisting of a focus on areas such as the recruitment pipeline, removing difficulties in the application process, and providing more assistance with identifying financial aid and scholarships. A successful strategy is also one that recognizes students' potential success for college beyond standardized tests such as high school grades, work experience and valuing any challenges they have overcome (See <https://www.gmu.edu/news/2021-10/increase-diversity-colleges-should-decrease-focus-standardized-tests-mason-expert-says>).

With the first increase in admission standards in 2013, African American first-year enrollment declined 13 percent (261 in 2012 down to 226) and fell 31% in 2014 (261 to 180). The decline continued thru 2017 to 131 (49.8% from 261 in 2012). The average ACT in Arkansas is 19 and for African Americans it is 16.2 which is lower than the admission point for A-State. The admission standards have had devastating effect on the African American first-year students' admissions which has an effect on the overall enrollment for years to come.

### *Impact on retention:*

Whenever changes to admission standards are made, there are always concerns about retention rates. The table below lists retention rates since 2013 (increased in academic standards) and includes the 2021 first test optional year.

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>First Fall</b>	<b>Spring 1</b>	<b>Fall 2</b>	<b>Spring 2</b>	<b>Fall 3</b>	<b>Spring 3</b>	<b>Fall 4</b>	<b>Spring 4</b>
201360	1,575	89.14%	74.54%	70.60%	63.68%	61.33%	57.59%	53.21%
201460	1,681	90.84%	75.97%	71.39%	65.20%	62.22%	57.23%	51.22%
201560	1,542	91.63%	74.90%	69.33%	63.04%	61.35%	56.55%	48.05%
201660	1,609	86.89%	72.84%	68.12%	62.90%	60.29%	54.51%	46.12%
201760	1,405	91.46%	76.44%	70.75%	63.99%	61.57%	55.59%	47.19%
201860	1,525	88.98%	74.95%	68.85%	64.00%	60.59%	55.15%	47.93%
201960	1,352	91.27%	78.85%	70.86%	65.16%	54.22%	54.2%	
202060	1,236	87.06%	74.19%	63.19%	63.2%			
202160	1,225	90.69%	77.31%					

The retention rate for first-time students has fluctuated since 2013, while sophomore to junior year has stayed consistent (65%) and junior year to senior year also has been consistent (55%). While six-year graduation rate since we changed admissions standards in 2013 have remained around 50%.

## **Proposed pilot program for Admission with Pack Support**

### *Admission standards:*

A-State proposes to pilot test a second admission pathway that is more closely aligned with how the A-State admission committee evaluated potential students' college readiness and how the University of Arkansas evaluates their potential students. Both A-State admission appeal committee and University of Arkansas use a holistic approach when it comes to determining if a student should be admitted to the university or not.

After a review of the University of Arkansas, UCA and the University of Mississippi for the pilot test, A-State's admission standards will be:

**Regular Admission:** Students who have a GPA of 3.0 or ACT of 19 or Top 20%. This retains the current standard.

**Admission with Pack Support:** If students don't meet one of the 3 criteria mentioned above for automatic admission, a student will have to have a minimum GPA of 2.3 (currently our international admission requirements), a test score (no minimum) and submit a list of high school activities or community service that indicate leadership or extracurricular participation.

This would align international and domestic admission standards. While they will be coded in Banner as restricted admit for tracking purposes, the student, and the family, will know they are admitted and pre-assigned appropriate support mechanisms from the Pack Support team.

### *Specific Pack Support provided for pilot study students:*

To make sure that students deemed as "Admitted with Pack Support" are retained and successfully graduate, the following support mechanisms will be put in place:

- Enrollment Management and Global Outreach will hire, a full-time student coordinator to oversee the pilot study as well as the student support assistants. Each With Pack Support admit student will be assigned a student support assistant that they must check in with (text, phone, in person) every week during the fall and spring semester of their first year. During their sophomore and junior year, they must check in once a month. This process mirrors the proven model of support structure in place for students in the Arkansas Online Services degree programs.
  - a. The student support assistant's job responsibilities are the following:
    - i. To check in on how students are doing during that week or month. These can be done in the office or in an informal gathering place on campus.
    - ii. In coordination with Pack Support, assist the student with finding resources on campus to help with their academics, financial or student life (mental health problems, housing, etc.) when necessary
    - iii. Escalate concerns or issues of students to the appropriate departments/unit heads on campus. Work with advisors from the college, designee from financial aid, treasurer's office, housing, and student life to help students resolve their issues. Also help connect students with Pack Support and other services on campus.
    - iv. Remind students of upcoming deadlines or events.
    - v. The student support assistants will work under Enrollment Management and Global Outreach. Depending on the number of students enrolled (approximately 350) under this criteria, we will hire 1-2 student support assistants.
    - vi. Notes of student assistants and student interaction will be documented in SLATE.

- vii. Have a strong communication plan on what to email students at all times (such as registration dates, note about visiting them to get hold removed, common first year resources, etc.)
- A Living-Learning Community will be created for these students in the residence halls for students who are in a major that does not offer an LLC. This would create a sense of community and support system for the students.
  - a. This LLC support will be available in Kays Hall, North Park Quads and University Hall.
  - b. Tutoring will be offered in Kays Hall during designated hours each week.
  - c. Students may utilize the on-campus resource or online resources provided to assist with student success.
- Study hall will be setup in Kays Hall for students to attend each evening after classes.
  - a. Objective based study hall approach will be used for students admitted with Pack Support. Each student is required to complete their task sheet each week or they must continue coming back to study hall each day until it's signed off and checked by a student academic coach. In addition, we will use a platform called Teamworks, a calendar and communication tool.
- Peer mentors (junior or seniors) will be assigned during to the first-year students. Mentors assist both in class and between classes:
  - a. Responsibility:
    - i. Campus life
    - ii. Academics
    - iii. Social skills building
    - iv. Health and wellness
  - b. Requirements
    - i. 1-3 hours per week
    - ii. Semester commitment
    - iii. Hours are set to fit your schedule
  - c. Will report to the Student Coordinator(s) from each college.

Also, students in the pathway program will be in their respective major's FYE classes.

### *Assessment of pilot study:*

If the retention rate of each of the three cohorts (fall 2023 cohort, fall 2024 cohort, and fall 2025 cohort) is equal to or higher than the five-year first-time student retention rate (first-time students who enrolled as sophomore the following year, 76.2%), then these new admission standards will become permanent.

### *Funding:*

Funding for the student support assistants and student academic coaches during the pilot study will come from Enrollment Management and Global Outreach and reallocation of current resources.

### *Implementation:*

Upon approval, the pilot study will be implemented immediately so as to impact fall 2023 enrollment.