

# Class rank predicts student success

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I read with interest the editorial on proposed changes to the SAT college-admissions exam, in which USA TODAY advocates establishing "a broader link between doing well in high school and getting into college" ("Path to college shifts as SAT changes form," Our View, Getting into college debate, March 28).

That is exactly what Texas House Bill 588, better known as the "Top 10 Percent Law," has made possible in our state since its implementation in 1998. The law guarantees that Texas high school graduates who rank in the top 10% of their senior class will be admitted to any state institution of higher education.

At the University of Texas at Austin, we view the SAT as one tool among many in predicting academic success. In our experience, top 10% students earn grade-point averages that exceed those of non-top 10% students who possess SAT scores that are 200 to 300 points higher. In other words, strong academic performance in high school is a demonstrably better predictor of success in college than high standardized-test scores. This should be no surprise, considering class rank is a measure not of a few hours of testing, but of performance over a four-year period.

The top 10% law has enabled the University of Texas at Austin to assemble a freshman class of talented students who succeed. They come from everywhere in Texas and from all of our populations. The law helps us do what a great public university is supposed to do. Texas is a large state where public schools are primarily supported by local property taxes. Poor school districts, often with large minority populations, cannot match the resources of wealthy districts. Yet, the top students at poor schools possess organizational skills, determination and ambition, just as their counterparts in affluent districts do. These attributes, important ingredients for success in any endeavor, are not measured by the SAT.

Here at the University of Texas at Austin we will continue to use a broad range of criteria, including the SAT, to build a highly qualified student body that reflects the populations we serve.

Larry R. Faulkner  
President  
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