

Office of the Commission
of Higher Education
Montana University System
2500 Broadway
Helena, MT 59620-3101

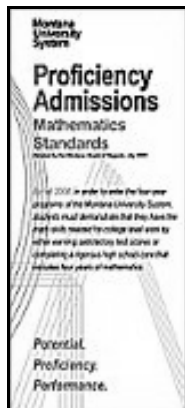
Jan Clinard, Director Academic Initiatives
Phone: 406 444 0652
FAX: 406 444 1469
Email: jclinard@ocche.montana.edu

The Montana University System Proficiency Admissions

2003 Data: Newsletter 11

Ethnicity and Gender Data — page 2
Instructional Data — page 3
College Plans — page 4
ACT and SAT News — pages 4-5

Watch for our new proficiency website.



The new Proficiency Admissions Math Standards brochure is now available. Please call 406 444 0520 to request printed copies or go to: http://www.mus.montana.edu/mus_mathstandards.pdf to download new math standards information.

Additional 2003 Test Data Reported

The third field test of the Montana University Writing Sample for Proficiency Admissions was administered to juniors and seniors in 89 high schools in March, 2003. All tests and prompts were scored using the same criteria, a holistic scoring rubric developed by ACT and modified by the project's Steering Committee to reflect the Montana K-12 Writing Standards. Each essay was scored at least twice and scores were sent to schools in May.

In addition to other data, Newsletter 10 reported gains of about 5% in student scores over three years. In 2001, the mean score for

3365 tests was 3.0. In 2002, the mean score for 3467 tests was 3.2. In 2003, the mean was 3.3 for 4,000 tests.

Information regarding other correlations is reported in this newsletter. In order to infer these findings beyond the sample, it is necessary to have a random sample. Since schools participated in this field test voluntarily, and in some schools only selected classes wrote for the test, we must be cautious about making generalizations at this time. However this sample includes about one-third of all high school juniors in Montana, representing all school sizes and demographics.

2004 Test to Set Stage for Sustainability

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and its associates hope that the fourth administration of the University System Writing Assessment will mark the beginning of a new approach to writing assessment in Montana. OCHE will contract for printing tests and reporting scores and will conduct training of trainers. Each region will send teachers to be trained as leaders for the scoring sessions at regional sites. In 2003, the model for regional training/scoring was initiated when Katie Myers of Great Falls and Beverly Ann Chin of Missoula co-trained with Jan Clinard at two of the scoring sites. Since Montana now has over 200 trained scorers, it should not be difficult to prepare 10-15 experienced scorers as trainers so that scoring can take place at regional sites, scheduled at the convenience of area schools.

By maintaining state quality control (prompts, rubric, training, data collection), and fostering district responsibility (scheduling, scoring, test collection and distribution), the 2004 Writing Assessment may serve as a model for K-16 collaboration. Districts that plan to participate in this venture are asked to complete response forms and commit to testing and scoring in 2004, 2005, and 2006 to ensure a successful launch of the Montana Writing Assessment Consortium. The advantages to such an approach are numerous. For more information and response forms, contact Jan Clinard or see the Writing Proficiency website.

Data from 2003 Montana/ACT Writing Sample

2003 Additional Data Reported

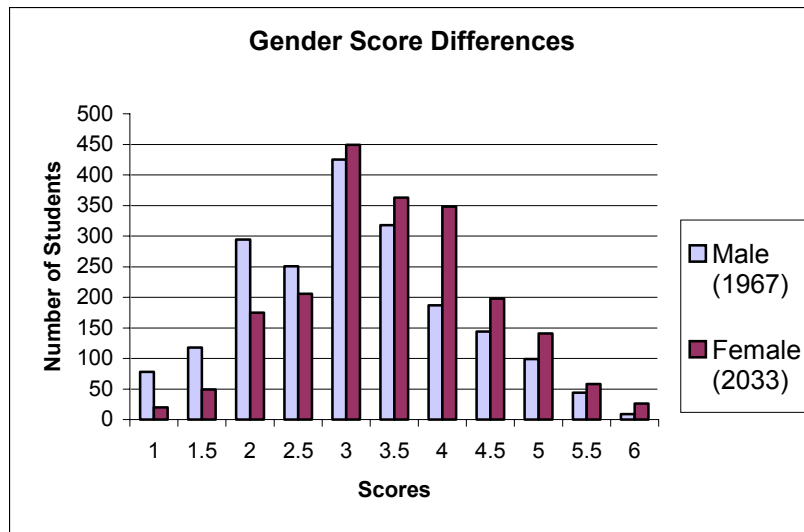
Ethnicity

Of the students who identified themselves as American Indian in 2001, 78% scored at 2.5 or below; in 2002, that percentage was 52%; in 2003, 56%. Of those Indian students, 47 wrote for 30 minutes and averaged 2.38 and 224 wrote for 40 minutes, with an average score of 2.59. The 135 boys had a mean score of 2.35 and the 136 girls averaged 2.75.

American Indian scores: 2003	
Total	271
Average Score	2.55
Score of 2.5 or Below	152
Percent 2.5 or below	56

However, 321 students did not or preferred not to respond to the racial/ethnic group question. Their mean score was 3.12. In addition, there were 187 students who classified themselves as *multiracial* or *other*, with a mean score of 2.9.

SAT also reports a large number of public school students who do not respond to the ethnicity question. On the SAT Verbal 35 American Indian students averaged 485, but 542 “no response students” averaged a 546 verbal score. On the English portion of the ACT, American Indian students achieved an average score of 18.2, compared to 20.7 for the total group. ACT did not report non-responders.



Gender

Girls continue to outperform boys.

In 2002, the mean score for girls was 3.34 and for boys, 2.99. In 2003, mean scores for girls was 3.46 and for boys, 3.07. Of the 35 papers scored as “6,” 9 were written by boys and 26 by girls.

Score	Male	Female
1	78	20
1.5	118	49
2	294	175
2.5	251	206
3	425	449
3.5	318	363
4	187	348
4.5	144	198
5	99	141
5.5	44	58
6	9	26

Gender Data for Montana ACT and SAT Show Mixed Results

The 2002-2003 SAT Montana Score Report shows the average verbal score for males at 541 and for female, 536. Nationally, males scored 512 and females 503. The gender gap in SAT scores in favor of males, which was shrinking slowly, actually increased this year for verbal scores. Female’s verbal SAT scores were 5 points below male’s last year and trail by 9 points this year. The 34-point gap on the totalSAT in favor of males was unchanged from last year.

ACT, on the other hand, reported that the 2003 graduating class’s English scores from males was 20.2 and for females, 21.2.

NAEP, for which students produce two samples of writing (from narrative, informative, and persuasive prompts) shows that in writing grades 4, 8 and 12, females scored higher than males across all racial and ethnic groups in 1998.

Questions

Many writing assessments report a gender gap between girls and boys. On the other hand, boys outperform girls on the verbal section of the SAT. Will that gap be closed when the SAT introduces a writing sample to their exam? How might Montana schools improve the writing performance of our male students?

To address these questions, send your answers to jlclinar@oche.montana.edu.

Writing Process

Students were asked, “How often do you write more than one draft of a paper before it is graded by a teacher?” In 2002, mean scores ranged from 2.72 for students who marked “never,” to 3.36 for students who marked “always

In 2003, average scores are also better for students who usually and always write more than one draft. More interesting, of the students who scored 5.5 or above, only 2% never write more than one draft, 34% sometimes do, 39% usually do, and 22% always write more than one draft. None of those students who scored 6 “never” draft and 24 of the 35 6’s usually or always write drafts.

Computer Usage

Students who write most of their assignments using the computer, from first draft through final copy, tend to earn higher scores on this test.

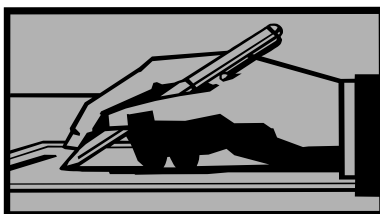
Computer Usage	Count	Average Score
Never	433	2.90
Sometimes	1503	3.16
Usually	1307	3.40
Always	742	3.49
No Response	14	3.54

How often students write drafts	Count	Average Score
Never	292	2.9
Sometimes	1588	3.2
Usually	1403	3.4
Always	699	3.4
No Response	18	2.8

District Writing Assessment

With each passing year, the use of a district writing assessment makes less difference to these test scores. Still, students from districts with writing assessments continue to score higher than their peers in other schools.

District Writing Assessment	Count	Average Score
Yes	1530	3.4
No	1595	3.2
No Response	875	3.2



Title II Improving Teacher Quality Requests for Proposals are now available from the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education. One funding priority is “to provide teachers with specific instructional strategies that enable students to gain the proficiencies needed to achieve admissions standards for the Montana University System or the college of their choice.”

Projects will be funded in the \$30,000-\$90,000 range. Please see the OCHE website for more details. A post-secondary institution must be the primary applicant.

Instructional Practices

Teachers reading the drafts their students write does not appear to be correlated with their students’ writing scores. This question read “How often do you read at least one draft of a student’s paper before it is graded?”

Teacher Reads Drafts	Count	Average Score
Never	137	4.03
Sometimes	1504	3.38
Usually	762	3.13
Always	742	3.16
No Response	855	3.18

Type of Writing Assigned

As in 2002, the scores of students whose teachers assign analytic writing outperform other groups of students. However, in 2002, only 274 students’ teachers did not answer this question, in 2003, 928 did not answer. Fewer students now are most often assigned narratives (316 in 2002; 199 in 2003) and more students are most often assigned persuasion (324 in 2002; 474 in 2003).

Assigned Writing	Student Count	Average Score
Narrative	199	2.95
Description	265	3.02
Analytic	1268	3.51
Expository	866	3.16
Persuasive	474	3.38
No Response	928	3.14

Teachers find it difficult to categorize “most” of their assignments into these types.

First-year College Plans in Montana

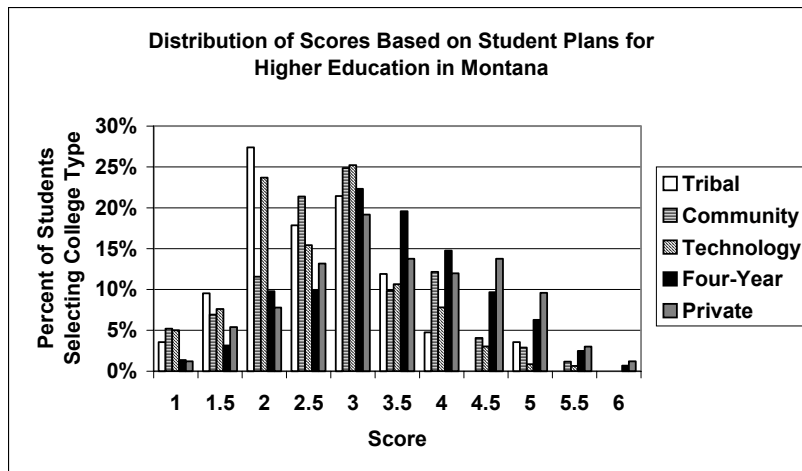
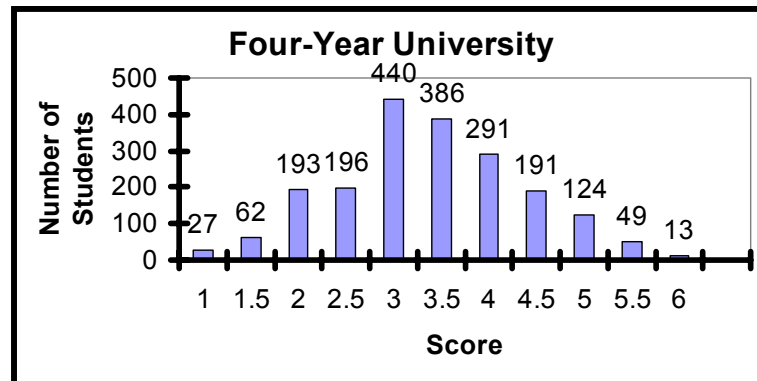
This question explores the scores of students who plan to attend college in Montana. The question reads: “If you plan to attend college in Montana, where would you go as a first-year student?”

The table to the right shows numbers of students who selected various types of colleges at each score point.

The graph labeled “Four-Year University” shows the distribution of scores for students who plan to attend a four-year university in Montana. Were students required to score “3” or better, 478 students would be considered under-prepared, needing to retake the test or make another choice as freshmen. If 2.5 were the cut score, 282 students would not qualify.

The final graph shows distribution of scores, in percentages, based on which type of unit in Montana students plan to attend as freshmen. It is important to note that most respondents were juniors, whose plans about college may change during their senior year.

SCORE	Tribal	Community	Technology	Four-Year	Private	NA
1	3	9	23	27	2	32
1.5	8	12	35	62	9	41
2	23	20	109	193	13	106
2.5	15	37	71	196	22	116
3	18	43	116	440	32	209
3.5	10	17	49	386	23	196
4	4	21	36	291	20	144
4.5	0	7	14	191	23	107
5	3	5	4	124	16	75
5.5	0	2	3	49	5	43
6	0	0	0	13	2	17
Total Number of Respondents	84	173	460	1972	167	1086



Example: 27% of the students who selected *tribal college* scored **2**. Only 10% of the students who elected *4-yr university* scored **2**.

ACT Introduces a National Assessment in Writing

ACT will add a 30-minute Writing Test as an optional component to the ACT Assessment beginning in the 2004–05 academic year.

The ACT Writing Test will complement the English Test. The combined information from both tests is designed to tell postsecondary institutions about students' understanding of the conventions of standard written English and their ability to produce a direct sample of writing.

Because postsecondary institutions have varying needs, ACT will offer the Writing Test as an option.

For colleges and universities, the ACT Writing Test will:

(continued)

- collect a writing sample under standardized testing conditions
- score the writing sample with a high degree of technical accuracy and reliability
- integrate the Writing Test information with the ACT English Test to form a new combined score that is reported on the student score report
- provide online access to student writing samples for faculty and staff at the colleges to which students have sent their ACT scores.

SAT introduces New Exam

SAT has announced that a writing sample will be added to the SAT I in 2005. The new SAT will build on the foundation of the SAT II Writing Test. At this juncture the new SAT writing section will include multiple-choice questions and a written essay.

Along with the multiple-choice questions that test students' ability to identify sentence errors, improve sentences and paragraphs, the essay section will assess student ability to write on demand. SAT recognizes that an essay written in a short amount of time will not be polished, but represents the initial phase of the writing process: the first draft.

Though research will determine the exact kind of writing assessment to include in the test, SAT suspects the assignment will be persuasive in nature and will ask the student to take a position on an issue and support it with reasons and evidence from his or her reading, experience and observation.

The SAT essay will be scored by readers using a holistic rubric, or scoring guide. The awarded score will take into account such aspects of writing as the development of ideas, supporting examples, organization and the overall quality of the essay. Each essay will be scored independently by two readers on a scale of one to six, with the com-

New SAT continued.

bined score for both readers being two to twelve. If the readers' scores differ by two points, the essay will be read by a third reader.

Unlike the current SAT II, which calls for readers to assemble in one place to conduct scoring, essays for the new SAT I writing section will be scanned and distributed to readers via the internet.

What happened to Montana's Partnership with ACT?

ACT Played Important Role in 2001 and 2002

In 2000, the committee and ACT envisioned a 2004 test designed in Montana and administered by ACT, with students paying directly for the test and ACT reporting scores. After three years of training, Montana teachers and professors could conceivably score tests from their home or school computers.

In 2001, 75 schools volunteered to test students. In 2002, there were 71 schools and in 2003, 89 schools. These large numbers necessitated regional scoring for over 100 teachers per year. ACT charged approximately \$10,000 each year to print tests, train scorers, and report school data. OCHE organized all logistics and meetings, handled mailings, provided professional development, and published newsletters.

The field test provided the opportunity to experiment and fine-tune this testing instrument. During the first year, both 40-minute and 90-minute samples were field-tested, with no significant difference in scores. In 2002, 40-minute and 70-minute samples were field-tested, again with no significant difference. In 2002, a significant difference was found between the scores of students who wrote for 30 minutes (2.9) and those who wrote for 40 minutes (3.4).

In 2001, 3 ACT prompts were used. In 2002, ACT trained a group of Montana teachers to develop prompts, resulting in 16 prompts that passed a Montana Bias Review Committee for field-testing. In 2003, four of these prompts were used. ACT may use some of these prompts, particularly for COMPASS E-Write.

Beginning in 2002, schools were given the option of allowing students to word process their essays.

New Announcements from SAT and ACT Change Focus

In the summer of 2002, both SAT and ACT announced that they would be adding writing samples to their national tests. Both are now scheduled for release in 2005. The SAT writing sample will be 25 minutes in length and the ACT sample will be 30 minutes. The options now available for a Montana Writing Proficiency Test include:

1. Discontinue the MUS Field Test. Use ACT, SAT, or AP scores for college admissions after 2005.
2. For 2004, continue the MUS Field Test as in 2001-2003; then switch to ACT, SAT, or AP for college admissions and discontinue Montana test.
3. Form a voluntary Assessment Consortium to sustain a Montana Writing Assessment as an alternative to ACT, SAT, or AP scores.
4. An option not yet considered, such as requiring students to take the Compass e-Write in ACT testing centers.

The ACT Writing Sample approved by the Board of Regents for a three-year field test is no longer available from ACT.



Webwrite! Webscore! Webcoach!

Webwriters will continue next year with the expectation that students can begin submitting practice essays as early as October. During the 2002-2003 school year a total of 199 essays were submitted.

The *Student Assistance Foundation of Montana* will again sponsor Webwriters for the 2003-2004 school year. For 2003-2004:

1. Participating high schools are asked to include a link to Webwriters on their school websites;
2. Students from any school participating in the Montana/ACT Writing Field Test may submit essays;
3. Students from any school with a contracted Webscorer may submit essays; and
4. Students may use the website at the beginning of the school year.

Webscorers can earn \$5 each for the first five essays scored and \$3 each thereafter. See the Writing Proficiency Website for a contract.



Although 2002-2003 added writing coaches, no students sent writings to Webwriters for feedback and re-write and to develop an online "relationship" with the coach. Please encourage Web coaches, especially at low-scoring schools and those schools with American Indian students. Coaches will be paid \$10 per hour, or a minimum of \$5 for each writing sample to which they respond.

Interested coaches should contact Jan Clinard, 444-0652.



Writing Proficiency Steering Committee

Betsy Bach 243-4251
Assistant Provost, Academic Affairs
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula MT 59801
BachBW@mso.umt.edu

Beverly Ann Chin 243-2463
Department of English
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
bchin@selway.umt.edu

Frank Matule 243-2362
Director of Admissions
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula MT 59812
fmatule@mso.umt.edu

Jocelyn Siler 243-4204
Department of English
The University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula MT 59812-1013
jfsiler@ism.net

Kathy Holt 657-Kathy Holt
657-2337
College of Education CAFÉ Office
Montana State University – Billings
Billings MT 59101-0252
kholt@msubillings.edu

Marsha Davis 447-8344
Superintendent of Schools
Lewis and Clark County
316 North Park
Helena, MT 59601
msdavis@state.mt.us

Bruce Messinger 447-8510
Superintendent
Helena Public Schools
55 South Rodney
Helena MT 59601
bmessinger@helena.k12.mt.us

Phil Gaines 994-5194
English Department
Montana State University
PO Box 172440
Bozeman MT 59717-2300
gaines@english.montana.edu

Steve Tull 822-4737
Superior K-12 Schools
PO Box 400
Superior MT 59872
stull@bigsky.net

Greg Hirst 653-1200
Wolf Point High School
211 Dawson
Wolf Point MT 59201
gregh@wolfpoint.k12.mt.us

Katie Myers 268-6009
GFPS PO Box 2429
Great Falls MT 59403
Katie_myers@gfps.k12.mt.us

Mary Moe 771-4310
Dean
MSU GF College of Technology
PO Box 6010
Great Falls MT 59406-6010
mmoe@msugf.edu

Judy Snow 444-3656
Office of Public Instruction
1300 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, MT 59620
jsnow@state.mt.us

