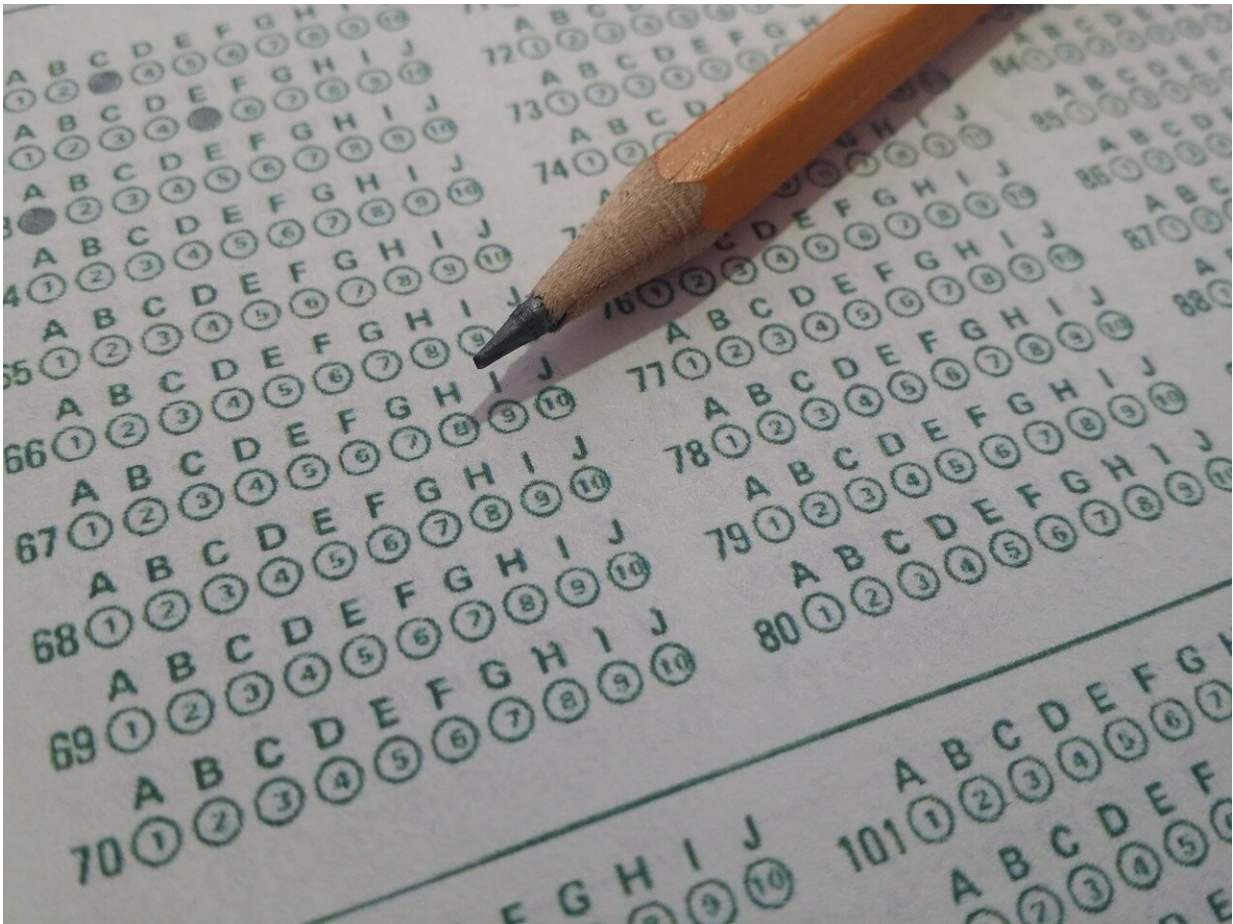


# Study shows positive impact of retaking the SAT on college enrollment outcomes

September 2 2020, by Jennifer French Giarratano

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Sitting for the SAT college admissions test a second time leads to higher

scores, a boon to high school students applying to four-year college programs according to research this year out of Georgia State University, Brandeis University and the University of Missouri.

Eliminating disparities in retake rates could close up to 10 percent of the income-based gap and up to 7 percent of the race-based gap in four-year college enrollment rates of high school graduates. Only half of SAT takers retake the exam, with the rates even lower among [low-income](#) and underrepresented [minority students](#).

For their study, Georgia State economist Jonathan Smith, with Joshua Goodman (Brandeis) and Oded Gurantz (Missouri), performed [statistical analysis](#) on College Board data representing 12 million U.S. students across the span of eight years.

"We provide the first causal evidence that retaking the SAT can substantially improve the college enrollment outcomes of students, particularly for those who are initially low-scoring or traditionally underrepresented in [higher education](#)," Smith said.

One way to mitigate retake rate disparities is to encourage or incentivize students to take the exam earlier in their high school careers.

"Our data suggest that earlier first takes are strongly associated with increased retaking rates," he said. "However, low-income students and underrepresented minority students are substantially more likely to first take the SAT in the 12th grade rather than in the 11th, so they have little opportunity to retake prior to college application deadlines."

Policy changes such as increased transparency about registration fee waivers available for low-income students, the college admission implications of having higher scores and SAT scoring in general could induce retaking and help improve the test scores for these students.

Policy changes are necessary to mitigating race-based and income-based disparities in college enrollment, the research shows.

"The impact of interventions to increase retaking rates depends heavily on the broader landscape of higher education policy," Smith said. "For example, without colleges increasing the number of available slots for enrollment, higher SAT scores for traditionally underrepresented students could just change who enrolls and not how many students enroll. And without policies to expand per-pupil funding, if [college](#) enrollment rates increase, this increase may not translate to higher rates of degree completion."

Provided by Georgia State University

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