SAT Reform — Background Guide

CollegeBoard, the organization that owns and administers the SAT, recently revamped the college entrance examination in an effort to more accurately reflect the standard curriculum offered by high schools to students across the United States. The most notable changes to the exam include returning the SAT-scoring system to its earlier 1600-point scale, “making the essay portion optional, broadening the range of disciplines in the reading section, and placing emphasis on considering context of words over definition in the vocabulary section”.¹

Though CollegeBoard already announced these reforms on March 5, 2014, this committee will be a simulation of the meeting of a CollegeBoard SAT reform commission taking place on January 1, 2014. It will be up to the participants in this simulated committee to decide whether to implement reforms similar to those that were actually announced by CollegeBoard in March, or to go in an entirely different direction concerning how to modify the current structure of this ‘popular’ college entrance examination.

Committee participants, as high school students who recently took the SATs in their current unreformed state, are encouraged to share their own views of the exam during the simulation. Whatever criticisms of the SAT you have, feel free to bring them up during committee, and develop and introduce the reforms that you feel are necessary given your criticisms. Take note of the general framework for reform outlined by CollegeBoard in February 2013, which emphasizes the need to “increase the value of the SAT to students by focusing on a core set of knowledge and skills that are essential to college and career success”, to “increase the value of the SAT to higher education professionals by ensuring that the SAT meets the evolving needs of admission officers, faculty, and other administrators”, and to “increase the value of the SAT to K–12 educators, administrators and counselors by strengthening the alignment of the SAT to college and career readiness”.² Finally, consider the extent of the ‘crisis’ that
CollegeBoard currently faces: for the first time ever in 2012, the ACT overtook the SAT as the most popular college entrance examination, jeopardizing CollegeBoard’s effective dominance of the college admissions process.¹

For the purposes of the simulation, the chair of the committee will be David Coleman, the current president of CollegeBoard, while the director will be Peter Kauffman, the organization’s vice president.

Good luck, and I look forward to meeting you all!

Sincerely,

Your committee chair,

Ararat Gocmen

Bibliography

