



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Encouraging Test-Taking Prepares Students for Their Future

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Samford encourages students to take a standardized test, regardless of whether they submit it for admission, because it is believed the experience of taking the test will **serve students well in the future if/when they apply to graduate school and/or enter certain careers.**
- ✓ Students who apply without test scores receive a regular cadence of reminders until they submit scores. They are also encouraged to sit for an exam even after they have been admitted if they have yet to take one. As a result, **90% of students have a score on file at the point of enrollment.**
- ✓ Admissions advisors and the Academic Success Center staff use test scores as one way to **monitor students' academic progress in their first and second years.** Students can also use scores to test out of certain classes.

Institutional Profile

Overview	Admissions	Enrollment & Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religiously affiliated private university • Located in Birmingham, Ala. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate enrollment: 5,700 • 25% in-state • 74% out-of-state • 1% international 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of applicants: 4,337 • % admitted: 83% • % admitted who enrolled: 27%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Fall 2022

Policy and Practice: Admission

Samford adopted a test-optional policy during the pandemic when access to testing was limited. While Samford enrollment leaders believe that going test optional has grown and diversified their applicant pool, they strongly encourage students to submit test scores for general admission and require them for programs such as nursing. As a result, Samford has approximately 25% of students applying without test scores, and only 10% of students have no score on file at the point of enrollment.

Samford does not believe that removing test requirements is necessary to create access. Even so, their overarching philosophy is that test scores should “do no harm.” The admission committee evaluates each applicant in a holistic manner. The first and greatest priority is to take the information provided (including test scores) and make decisions that put students in the best position to be successful. If a student submits a test-optional application the test score is not considered in their review. Instead, they train admissions readers to put more emphasis on other parts of the application, like the strength of their curriculum and their high school grades.

Samford encourages students to take the SAT or ACT, even if they later decide not to provide scores for admission because they believe the act of taking the assessment will prepare students for their future. Many graduate programs and careers require students to take and pass standardized exams; taking an exam now gives them the opportunity to practice test taking under lower-stakes conditions. Samford has heard from parents that their younger children are now planning to take the SAT or ACT because they've watched their older siblings, many of whom have never taken a standardized entrance exam, struggle with their applications to graduate programs.

Samford's messaging around their test-optional policy has morphed since its inception. Initially they began with messaging designed to deter students from withholding test scores, especially in areas where they knew students had access to the test. More recently, their messaging encourages students to test and submit their scores. Within the school counselor community Samford is equally clear about their stance on testing: **It's a disservice to the student if they're told not to test. The score, or just the experience of taking the test can have a meaningful impact on their lives.**

Policy and Practice: Post-Admission

Long before applying to Samford, students are told that they will be required to submit a score before enrollment, even if they are admitted without test scores. Follow-up with test-optional admits is persistent, yet polite, with students receiving biweekly reminders via email and reassuring calls that submitting scores after admission will not result in one's decision being rescinded. In cases where students are genuinely unable to test prior to applying, they are informed about upcoming test dates if they have not yet taken an exam.

The emphasis on score submission is tied to positive outcomes for the student, such as being able to place out of certain classes and, in some cases, have their scores considered for some graduate programs.

Once a student enrolls, admission advisors and the Academic Success Center can review test scores, knowing which students applied with and without scores so they can keep up with first-year students and monitor student progress. These efforts have now been extended into the second year, as Samford has seen that support throughout a student's second year is just as critical. In addition to academic metrics, Samford is also monitoring student engagement on campus, as they have noticed a correlation between testing and campus engagement.