

Admission History Timeline

1862 – Morrill Act begins the establishment of land-grant colleges

The purpose of the land-grant colleges was “without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactic, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.” Under the act, each state received 30,000 acres to establish institutions of higher education.

1901 – College Entrance Examination Board is founded

In the late 1800s, a group of leading American universities were concerned about not having a universal way to determine if students were prepared for college-level course work. They formed the College Entrance Examination Board, and working together, they administered the first standardized college admissions exam in 1901. For the first time, students could take one entrance exam for several universities, instead of taking a separate exam for each university that they applied to.

1926 – SAT first administered to 8,000 students

The SAT was developed as a tool to democratize access to education for all students. When the College Entrance Examination Board introduced the first, essay-only entrance exam, schools had very different grading systems and curriculum standards. These differences were especially noticeable between public and private schools. Further, many in higher education wanted to spot students from more modest backgrounds who were “diamonds in the rough.” The multiple-choice SAT® was created to give equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, regardless of their economic status, familial background, or their specific high school curriculum.

1937 – The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) is founded

On March 23, 1937, representatives from 19 Midwestern colleges*—who called themselves College Field Workers—gathered in Oak Park (IL) with a distinct goal in mind: to provide students greater access to higher education. Crafting the Code of Ethics, which has since developed into the [Statement of Principles of Good Practice \(SPGP\)](#), this visionary group founded the organization which now represents more than 11,000 college counseling and admission professionals. In 1941, the group donned the name Association of College Admissions Counselors, officially becoming the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) in 1995.¹

1944 – Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill)

The G.I. Bill was a major milestone in revolutionizing access. Also, the Vietnam war certainly altered the balance of men and women as men looked for military deferment and also affected the ranks of faculty along the way.

1954 – Brown v Board of Education

This landmark Supreme Court decision declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students, denying black children equal educational opportunities unconstitutional.²

1959 – American College Testing Program is founded

On August 21, 1959, representatives from 16 states met in Iowa City, IA on the campus of The University of Iowa to establish The American College Testing Program. On November 7, 1959, 75,460 students in those 16 states took the first ACT test. More than 132,000 students took the ACT during that first year. Nearly 1.5 million 2009 high school graduates took the test.

1961 – President Kennedy first introduces the term “Affirmative Action” in the context of creating equal employment opportunities for all qualified persons

1964 – Civil Rights Act

This landmark piece of legislation, amongst other things, called for the desegregation of schools.

1965 – Higher Education Act of 1965

This piece of legislation – part of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society agenda – resulted in increased federal funding for financial aid at universities nationwide.

¹ <http://www.nacacnet.org/AboutNACAC/Pages/history.aspx>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_v._Board_of_Education

1969 – Equity and diversity in higher education are first discussed on a formal national level

The National Conference at Chicago's now closed Sherman House was the site of the first formal national effort to put the association behind equity and diversity efforts. A list of 10 demands, most focused on increasing the number of underserved students in higher education was presented, heatedly debated, and eventually adopted (it was primarily an African American initiative then) – but the text of each item could easily have been applied to other ethnicity, gender, etc.

1975 – Common Application is established with 15 members

A more detailed history is available at <https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/History.aspx>.

1978 – Bakke v University of California

This landmark Supreme Court decision barred quota systems in college admissions but affirmed the constitutionality of affirmative action programs.³

1983 – First US News and World Report college rankings

1991 – End of the Ivy League Overlap Group

Beginning in the mid-1950's, a number of prestigious private colleges and universities agreed to award institutional financial aid (aid from the school's own funds) solely on the basis of demonstrated financial need. These schools also agreed to use common principles to assess each student's financial need and to give essentially the same financial aid award to students admitted to more than one member of the group. Among the schools engaging in this practice were the Ivy Overlap Group (Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, Penn, Yale, and MIT) and the Pentagonal/Sisters Overlap Group (Amherst, Williams, Wesleyan, Bowdoin, Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar, Wellesley, Colby, Middlebury, Trinity, and Tufts). From the 1950's through the late 1980's, this practice continued undisturbed. In 1989, the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice brought suit against the nine members of the Ivy Overlap Group to enjoin this practice. In 1991, the eight Ivy League schools (i.e., all of the Ivy Overlap Group except for MIT) entered into a consent decree that for all practical purposes ended the practices of the Overlap Group.

1992 – FAFSA created to improve distribution of student Federal funds for higher education

1995 – The Board of Regents of the University of California adopts two resolutions prohibiting the use of sex, color, ethnicity, and national origin in the admission process.

1996 – Hopwood v Texas

The first successful legal challenge to a university's affirmative action policy since Bakke v University of California.⁴

2003 – Gratz v Bollinger and Grutter v Bollinger (University of Michigan)

In Gratz v Bollinger, the Supreme Court rules that the university of Michigan's admission policy of awarding points to underrepresented ethnic groups is too formulaic and, hence, unconstitutional. In Grutter v Bollinger, the Supreme Court upholds the use of affirmative action in admissions (but not the points system) at the University of Michigan's Law School.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regents_of_the_University_of_California_v._Bakke

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hopwood_v._Texas