SAT SCORE: COLLEGIATE SUCCESS ::

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(A) Shoe size: High IQ

(B) Balance: Painless bicycle riding

Unlike those on the scored test, the answer to this analogy promises to remain forever disputable.

For the sake of argument, let’s say that for three hours it was possible to group every College-bound high school senior on the East Coast together into one large and extremely crowded convention hall. Representing states from Florida to Maine, and cities from New York to Washington DC, these students would be surrounded by strangers of different backgrounds, races, religions and locations and forced (on threat of death) to make idle conversation with one another. What could they talk about (with such subjects as college choice, hometown, friends and family being out the question)? The answer, of course: the SAT.

Last year 44 percent of high school graduates, or more than 2 million students, took the SAT. And earlier this month Richard Atkinson, President of the University of California, said that he would like to see that number change. In a speech to his fellow college presidents Atkinson observed that SAT preparation, a near obsession for most college bound students, often comes at the expense of more relevant academic study. He proposed that UC ditch the SAT and create a subject based test of its own.

The S.A.T., or Scholastic Aptitude Test (although today makers of the test deny that the exam measures intelligence and avoid calling the test by anything other than its acronym) was developed in 1926 as a way of measuring innate academic ability. In the early twentieth century, with the academic world decentralized and plagued by largely unchecked school systems, the SAT was seen as a way to report on a student’s capabilities while factoring out secondary education. With the help of the SAT, colleges hoped to make their student bodies more national and academic. Today the SAT is used with several of the same goals in mind. While college admissions reviewers admit that test scores are influenced by High School education, many still rely on the test as a noteworthy universal standard. The reasoning being that while every high school has slightly different procedures for grading and varying degrees of classroom quality, questions and