

Meeting Date	December 3, 2024
Action Title	Test Optional Update
Action Type	Information Item

Summary

This is a special meeting of the Academic, Student Affairs, Research and Economic Development Committee. The committee will receive updates from MU, UMKC, S&T, and UMSL enrollment managers regarding the status of test optional admissions at their institutions, followed by an opportunity to ask questions. This is an informational item.

Table of Contents

- 1. Executive Summary [OPEN – ASARED – INFO – 1-1]**
 - *Provides background information regarding test optional admissions at University of Missouri System institutions.*

- 2. MU Test Optional Update – PowerPoint [OPEN – ASARED – INFO – 1-2-11]**
 - *Provides updates regarding MU’s test optional pilot. Dr. Rhonda Gibler, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Interim Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, will present this information to the committee and will be available for questions.*

- 3. Missouri S&T Test Optional Update – PowerPoint [OPEN – ASARED – INFO – 1-12-18]**
 - *Provides updates regarding Missouri S&T’s test optional pilot. David Spivey, Vice Provost of Enrollment Management, will present this information to the committee and will be available for questions.*

- 4. UMSL Test Optional Update – PowerPoint [OPEN – ASARED – INFO – 1-19-29]**
 - *Provides updates regarding UMSL’s test optional pilot. Dr. Reggie Hill, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Enrollment, will present this information to the committee and will be available for questions.*

- 5. UMKC Test Optional Update – PowerPoint [OPEN – ASARED – INFO – 1-30-38]**
 - *Provides updates regarding UMKC’s test optional policy. Doug Swink, Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, will present this information to the committee and will be available for questions.*

Executive Summary

Test Optional Updates

The purpose of this special meeting of the Academic, Student Affairs, Research and Economic Development Committee is to provide an update to the Board on the status of test optional admissions across the four UM System universities. This is an informational item.

Three universities – MU, S&T, and UMSL – are currently operating under test optional admissions pilot programs launched during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Board approved one-year extensions of the three pilot programs in May 2022, April 2023, and February 2024. The latest extension of the pilots encompasses the Fall 2025 admissions cycle. The Board granted UMKC an open-ended approval for its test optional admissions policy in April 2020.

At the December 3rd meeting, the enrollment manager from each institution will provide a test optional update and be available to answer questions. MU, S&T, and UMSL's presentations will provide an assessment of the ongoing pilot programs, while UMKC's presentation will highlight its current test optional admissions policy. Dr. John Middleton, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, will moderate.

Mizzou - Test Optional Update

Rhonda Gibler

Interim Vice Provost Enrollment Management

Vice Chancellor - Finance & Business Services



Test Optional - a Tool in the toolbox

- Holistic Review includes:
- Core HS GPA
- Essays are read by independent readers
- Extra curricular involvement
- Rigor of HS performance
 - AP and dual credit courses taken
 - Courses taken as electives



The Competitive Landscape

- We are entering a period where the number of high school graduates will decline each year for the next decade. This is true in MO as well as the Midwest overall
- Lower proportions of HS graduates are choosing college
- Students who choose to attend college are applying to more Colleges and Universities than they historically have.
- Students are making deposits with multiple institutions and waiting longer than historical trends to decide where they will attend.
- The demographics of those graduating from HS are skewing more significantly to households of lesser means.



Test Optional and our Competition

- All Missouri public four-year institutions are allowing test optional application
- Test optional remains common among AAU, Big10, Big12 and SEC
- MU's top out-of-state competitor institutions that allow test optional application:
 - University of Illinois
 - Indiana University
 - University of Iowa
 - Iowa State University
 - University of Kansas
 - University of Arkansas



Test Optional impact on applications

- Significant growth in applications from test optional students
- Out of state students are a greater share of the test optional application growth
- Missouri residents who may be intimidated are more willing to initially apply test optional



Admissions Trends (ALL UNDERGRADS)

	FS21	FS22	FS23	FS24
	All	All	All	All
Applicants – Test Optional	6,142	6,749	7,373	9,651
Applicants – Total	19,966	20,303	21,669	24,490
Applicants – % Test Optional	31%	33%	34%	39%
Admits – Test Optional	4,124	4,491	4,937	6,901
Admits – Total	15,283	16,065	16,690	19,218
Admits – % Test Optional	27%	28%	30%	36%
Acceptances – Test Optional	1,066	1,146	1,263	1,864
Acceptances – Total	5,147	5,274	5,431	6,256
Acceptances – % Test Optional	21%	22%	23%	30%
Enrollment – Test Optional	990	1,077	1,181	1,760
Enrollment – Total	4,843	4,983	5,139	5,953
Enrollment – % Test Optional	20%	22%	23%	30%



Predictors of Student Success

- There is a strong correlation between high school core GPA and first year MU GPA.
- Data shows that both high school core GPA and ACT score have a positive correlation with MU first year GPA
- High School core GPA is the stronger indicator for our population, accounting for 31.7% of the variance in first year GPA.
- The combination of GPA and ACT is a slightly better predictor of success, when considered together they accounted for 33.5% of variance in first year GPA.



Student Success is Comparable

	Cohort 1 FS21	Cohort 2 FS22	Cohort 3 FS23
Regular - 1st yr retention	89%	92%	93%
Test Optional - 1st yr retention	86%	90%	92%
Regular- 1st yr GPA	3.30	3.36	3.35
Test Optional - 1st yr GPA	3.10	3.10	3.15



Scholarships

- Merit scholarships are one of the key yield strategies Universities use to solidify the class size and composition that we are working toward.
- Students with a test score are eligible for the highest possible merit scholarships with the combination of their test score and HS GPA determining the award they are offered
- Test optional student are offered lower awards based on their core GPA and the holistic review of their application.
- Test optional students are made aware that if they chose to submit a test score and it would improve their scholarship, they will be offered the best scholarship for which they qualify.



Conclusion

- Test optional admission as a tool increases our applications
- Many of our competitors are using the tool in their strategies
- Test optional admits using our processes succeed at Mizzou at similar rates to regular admits
- Test optional admits do NOT reduce the seats available to students who are admitted through regular admission processes
- We are not bound to admitting more test optional students than we can manage
- Test optional creates relationship opportunities with students who may not have considered us





Missouri University of Science and Technology

Test Optional Pilot Extension Proposal

David Spivey – Vice Provost for Enrollment Management

December 2024

Competitive Landscape

Test Optional:

- ▶ Colorado School of Mines
- ▶ Illinois Institute of Technology
- ▶ New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology
- ▶ Rochester Institute of Technology
- ▶ Stevens Institute of Technology
- ▶ South Dakota School of Mines
- ▶ Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Have not Announced Decision:

- ▶ New Jersey Institute of Technology
- ▶ Michigan Institute of Technology
- ▶ University of Alabama in Huntsville

Admission to S&T

Admission by Cohort – First-Time College (FTC) US Applicants

Fall Term Cohorts	Regular Application with Test Score	Application without Test Score
2021	3660 (76%)	1176 (24%)
2022	3932 (76%)	1239 (24%)
2023	4657 (77%)	1393 (23%)
2024	4461 (78%)	1224 (22%)

Admission to S&T, Cont'd

Admission by Cohort – Core GPA FTC US Admits

Fall Term Cohorts	Regular Application with Test Score	Application without Test Score
2021	3.68	3.59
2022	3.67	3.6
2023	3.66	3.58
2024	3.62	3.59

Admission to S&T, Cont'd

AVG College GPA by Cohort – End of First Year for FTC US Admits

Fall Term Cohorts	Regular Application with Test Score	Application without Test Score
2021	3.48	3.31
2022	3.48	3.15
2023	3.48	3.26

Admission to S&T, Cont'd

Cohort Success Rate – FTC US Admits

Fall Term Cohort	1 st Year Retention		2 nd Year Retention		3 rd Year Retention	
	Regular	Test Optional	Regular	Test Optional	Regular	Test Optional
2021	87%	79%	79%	68%	76%	61%
2022	86%	85%	79%	77%	--	--
2023	88%	80%	--	--	--	--

Test Optional Takeaways

- ▶ TO Admissions Ideal: Evaluate Math and Science Core GPA, Overall Core GPA, Supplemental Essays
- ▶ Student Success Measures Improved Across TO from First Cohort
- ▶ Competitive Landscape with Peer Institutions
- ▶ Land-Grant, Access University
- ▶ Highly Selective
- ▶ Cohort Success Rates Increased Since 2021 – programming, services, admissions practices
- ▶ Highly Meritorious Scholarships Require Test Scores

UNIVERSITY OF
MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

MORE IS WHAT MOVES US

Test-optional
Admissions at UMSL



TODAY'S AGENDA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** **A Demographic Reality**
Who We Serve
- 02** **Why Test-Optional Matters**
Who We Serve
- 03** **Changing Demographics**
Opportunities for Students
- 04** **Access as a Core Value**
Our Challenge and Our Promise
- 05** **Meeting the Needs of Adult
and Transfer Students**
The Path Forward

A Demographic Reality: Who We've Historically Served

Key Points:

- UMSL has historically been recognized as a transfer-leaning institution, with more than half of our students in prior years coming from community colleges and other four-year institutions.
- Additionally, a large portion of our student body has traditionally been adult learners, many of whom returned to education after a gap.
- However, this dynamic has shifted significantly over the past three years, during which UMSL has seen steady growth in first-time-in-college (FTC) students, nearly doubling from Fall 2021 to Fall 2024.
- This transformation has coincided with our test-optional pilot, which has played a key role in attracting a broader, more regionally diverse pool of traditional college-bound students.

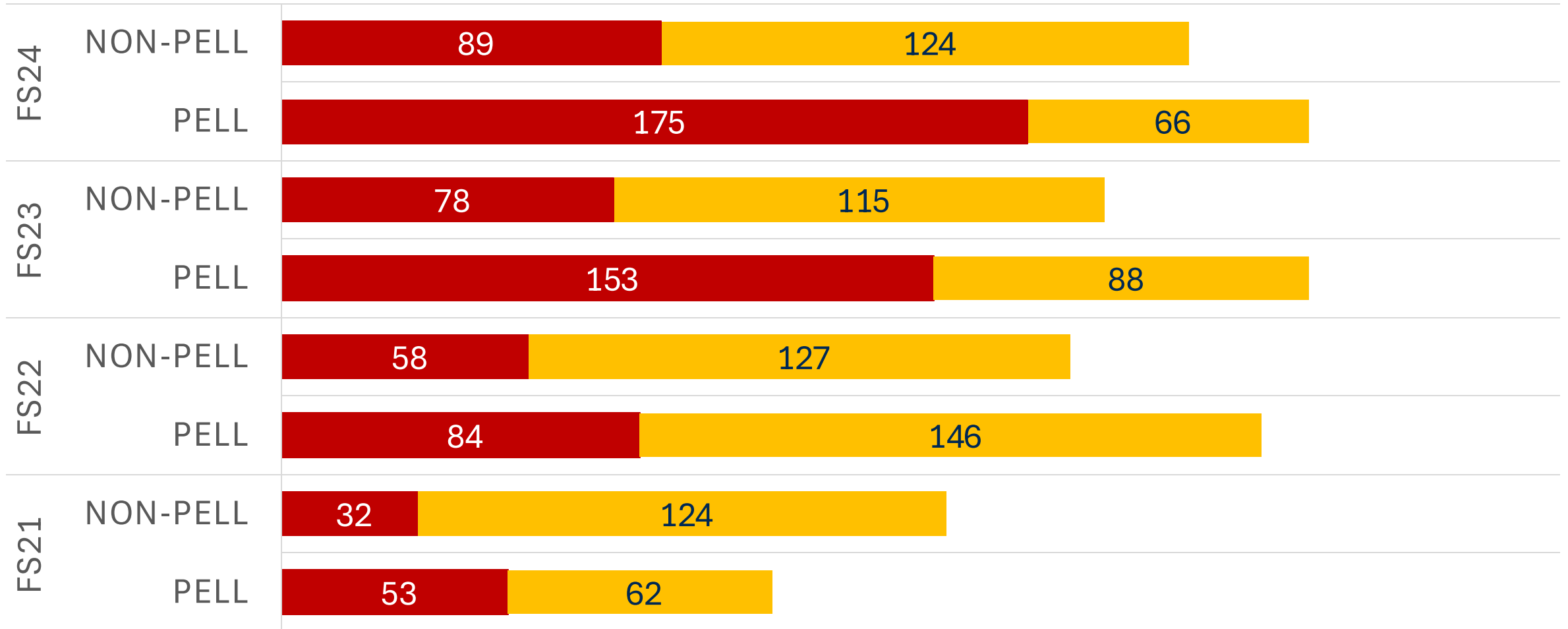
Why Test-Optional Matters to UMSL's Future

Key Points:

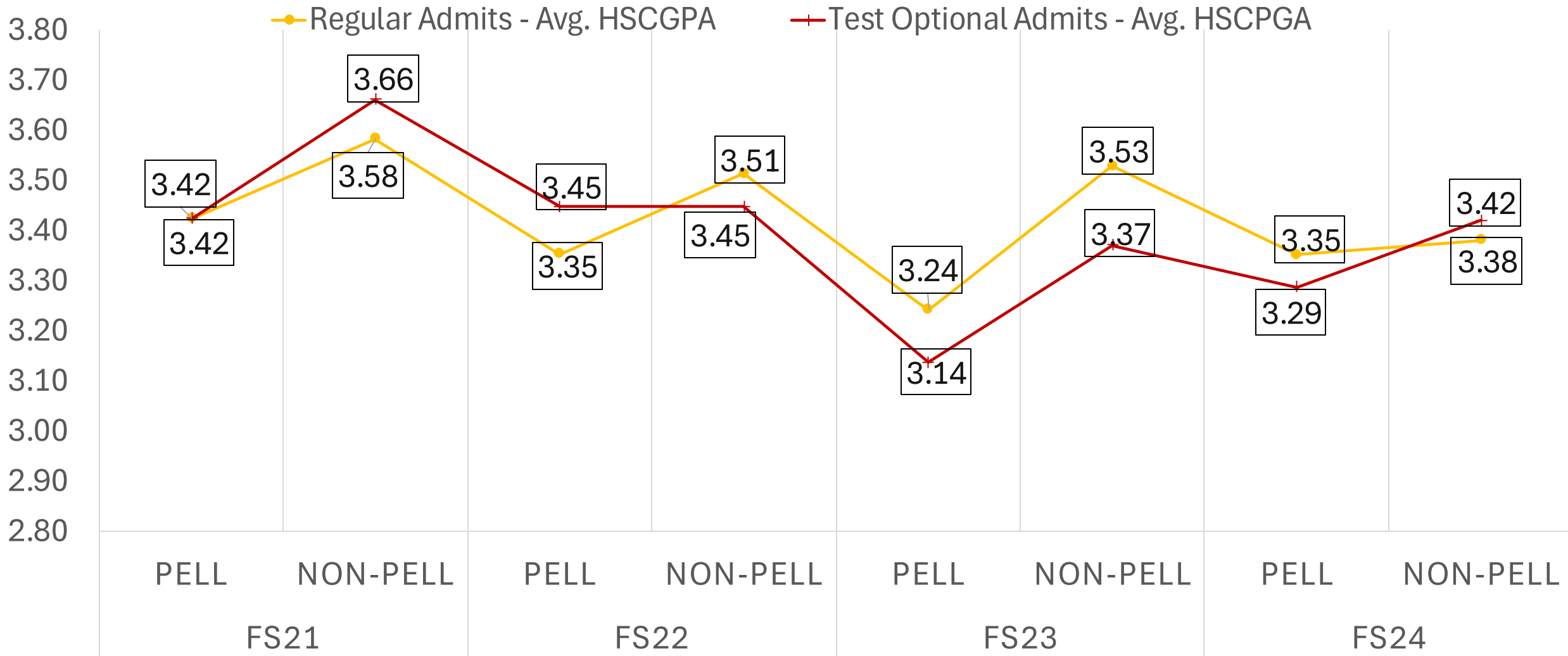
- UMSL serves a diverse student population, including adult learners, Pell-eligible, and transfer students, earning recognition as a top school for social mobility by *U.S. News & World Report*.
- With a median family income of \$35,000, UMSL serves students with significant financial challenges. The university fosters social mobility by enabling graduates to earn an average starting salary of \$47,000, highlighting its transformative role in creating economic opportunities.
- Continuing to serve these students is central to UMSL's mission. At the same time, we aim to transform UMSL through the creation of a School of Engineering and investments in capital projects, making the campus more cohesive and appealing to traditional first-time-in-college populations.
- This progress is reflected in UMSL's rise of six places to No. 135 on the U.S. News & World Report list of top public universities.

PELL ELIGIBLE

■ Enrollment – Test Optional ■ Enrollment – Regular Admits

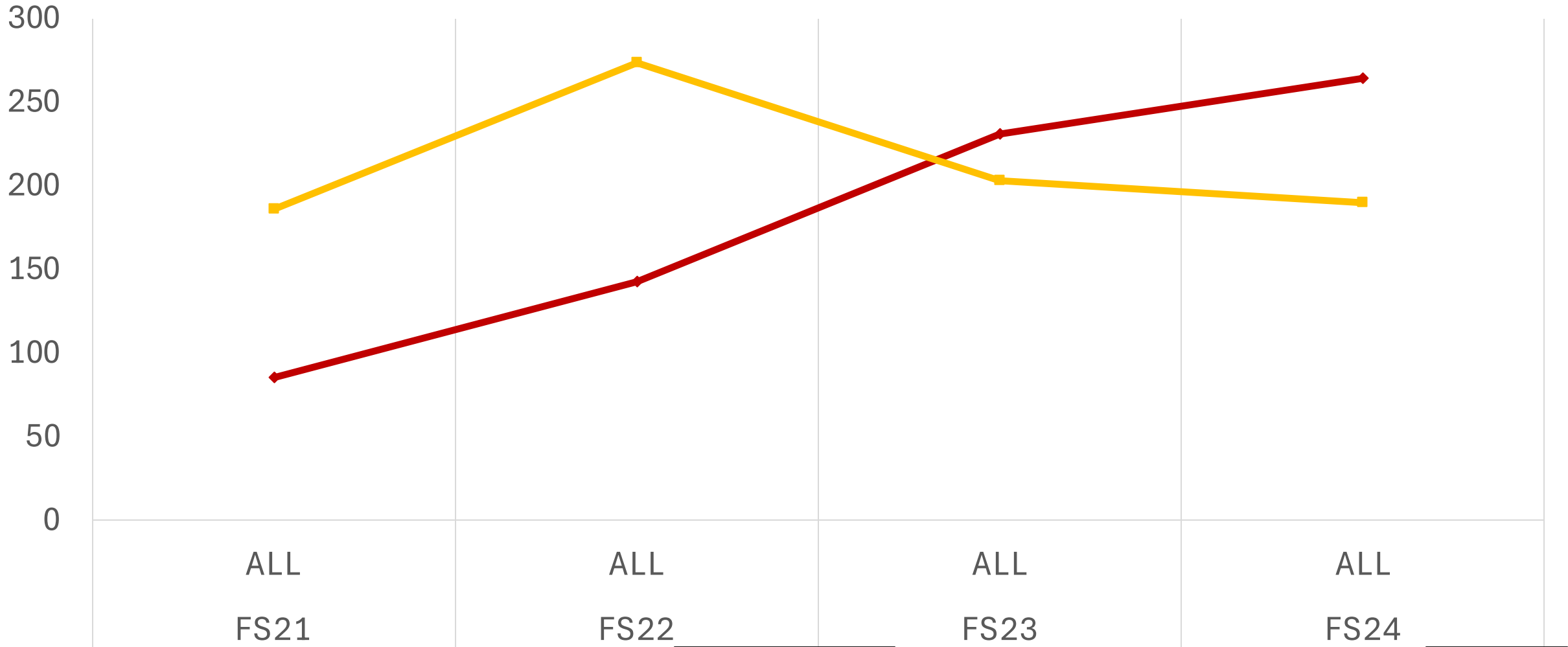


PELL ELIGIBLE & ACADEMIC PREPAREDNESS



FIRST-TIME-IN-COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

Enrollment – Test Optional Enrollment – Regular Admits



Rapidly Changing Demographics at UMSL

Key Points:

- Our efforts are showing results. In Fall 2021, UMSL enrolled just over 250 new FTC students; by Fall 2024, this number has nearly doubled to 500. UMSL has momentum, and maintaining a test-optional policy – aligned with peer institutions – is vital for staying competitive.
- This is especially true for remaining competitive with Pell-eligible students, who, in the current enrollment environment, are drawn to test-optional institutions because they often lack the resources to invest in test prep courses or retake the test to improve their scores
- Test-optional policies also broaden access for first-generation college students, who may be discouraged from applying to universities with strict testing requirements. By removing this barrier, UMSL can attract a wider pool of talented students, further strengthening enrollment and supporting its mission.

Access as a Core Value

Key Points:

- As previously noted, UMSL has the potential to distinguish itself as the leading institution for social mobility in St. Louis, the region, and across the nation.
- **ACCESS – OUR CHALLENGE AND OUR PROMISE:** Access is something we constantly seek to better understand and to improve. We believe that a learning environment free from barriers for any one person makes that environment better for all people. We recognize that our commitment to access demands continual change. We embrace it. Always.

National Trends and Institutional Alignment

Key Points:

- Universities reversing test-optional policies (e.g., Brown, Yale, Stanford) are outliers that differ significantly from UMSL in mission, resources, and structure.
- Test-optional policies reflect broader higher education trends: 2,095 institutions nationwide and all 9 Missouri regional public universities are test-optional.
- Maintains UMSL's competitive edge by aligning with national and regional peers while meeting the needs of a growing first-time-in-college student population in St. Louis, across Missouri, and nationally.
- Enhances UMSL's role as a leader in promoting social mobility locally, regionally, and nationwide.

U N I V E R S I T Y O F
MISSOURI—ST. LOUIS



University of Missouri – Kansas City: Test Optional Student Success Indicators Update

Doug Swink, Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment Management

Competitive Regional Landscape

UMKC implemented a test optional policy in Fall 2020 to grow enrollment in a competitive market that aligns with our top regional competitors who are test optional.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ROCKHURST UNIVERSITY
TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL MISSOURI
MISSOURI UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY

Source: NSC Tracker Data – Fall 2024

Test Optional Admission at UMKC

Admission determined by cumulative UM Core GPA and completion of all Core Requirements and a minimum High School Core GPA of 2.75.

Programs excluded from test optional admission include the Six Year B.A./M.D. (BAMD), Bachelor of Science in Nursing and home-schooled students in any Academic Unit.

Note: The School of Science and Engineering accepts test optional with prior review of high school transcripts for computer science and engineering majors.

Regular Admit & Test Optional Average High School Core GPA

	Regular Admit* High School Core GPA	Test Optional High School Core GPA	Difference High School Core GPA
Cohort 1 (FS21)	3.60	3.45	0.15
Cohort 2 (FS22)	3.58	3.49	0.09%
Cohort 3 (FS23)	3.56	3.49	0.07%

**Regular admit column includes only first-time, full-time students which includes 100 - 115 high achieving students from UMKC's Six-Year Medical School which make up 10% of UMKC's incoming freshman class.*

Demographic Makeup of First-time College Class

FTC Student Type	Cohort 1 (Fall 2021)	Cohort 2 (Fall 2022)	Cohort 3 (Fall 2023)	Cohort 4 (Fall 2024)
Enrollment	1148	1165	1289	1343
Test Optional	26.9%	42.6%	44.5%	40.1%
Pell Status	44.9%	45.5%	45.5%	51.7%
First Generation	46.1%	52.6%	54.3%	57.9%
Male	35.0%	34.8%	35.9%	37.8%
Part-time	2.6%	2.2%	3.6%	3.1%

Regular Admit & Test Optional Retention Difference

	Regular Admit* Percent Retained	Test Optional Percent Retained	Difference Percent Retained
Cohort 1 (FS21)	80%	69%	11%
Cohort 2 (FS22)	82%	72%	10%
Cohort 3 (FS23)	78%	72%	6%

**Regular admit column includes only first-time, full-time students which includes 100 - 115 high achieving students from UMKC's Six-Year Medical School which make up 10% of UMKC's incoming freshman class.*

Regular Admit & Test Optional Average High School Core GPA and Average Cumulative First-Year GPA Differences

	Regular Admit*	Test Optional	Difference
Cohort 1 (Avg. High School Core GPA)	3.59	3.44	0.15
Cohort 1 (Avg. Cumulative GPA by end of AY)	3.25	2.75	0.50
Cohort 2 (Avg. High School Core GPA)	3.65	3.41	0.24
Cohort 2 (Avg. Cumulative GPA by end of AY)	3.32	2.88	0.44
Cohort 3 (Avg. High School Core GPA)	3.63	3.41	0.22
Cohort 3 (Avg. Cumulative GPA by end of AY)	3.24	2.84	0.40

*Regular admit column includes only first-time, full-time students which includes 100 - 115 high achieving students from UMKC's Six-Year Medical School which make up 10% of UMKC's incoming freshman class.

Statistical Analysis: Predictors of 1st Year Retention at UMKC

(Fall 2022/2023)

Factors that Increase the Odds of Retention*	Factors that do not Predict Retention
Higher High School Core GPA	Test Optional Status
More Credits at Entry	First Generation
Pell Grant Received	Ethnicity
High School Math Core Met	
Gender (Male)	

*These factors were found to be statistically significant during predictive modeling

Lessons Learned and Future Plans

1. UMKC is committed to making college accessible and reducing barriers for students who may not have the means to pay for tests scores or engage in test preparation.
2. Strong support systems are necessary for students with lower core high school GPAs.
3. Continued review of metrics to ensure students will be successful.