

UNL admission test scores rising

By Jim Fullerton

While college admission test scores have been dropping each year nationally, the average scores at UNL are rising.

According to Al Papik, director of admissions, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores during the past year for UNL have improved 5% to 10%. The SAT is required as the qualifying examination for the regents scholarship program.

Papik said that, of 6,800 scores submitted last year, 90% of which came from Nebraska high school students, the mean score was 465 in verbal skills and 521 in math.

The mean score is the point at which half the scores were above and half below.

On the national level, mean scores over the last 10 years have dropped from 478 to 445 in verbal skills and from 502 to 481 in math.

Papik said the Nebraska study reflects only a 1-year increase and that a valid study would have to cover at least 10 years of Nebraska SAT scores.

Still, he said, reasons for the national decline and the local improvement, if it continues, will be important topics for educators to consider.

Papik said more students are taking the tests in their junior rather than senior year, and more low income students are being tested.

Papik said more high schools are gearing their curriculum toward vocational education and there is concern over whether or not this is affecting the overall education of high school students.

SAT administrators say they have no evidence that the decrease in mean scores is because of a liberalization of high school curricula.

In a recent story in the *Washington Post*, Dr. Lee Munday, vice president for research for the American College Testing Program (ACT), said experiments and changes in the high school curricula have made it harder to measure scholastic ability nationwide.

UNL educators are encouraged by the rising SAT scores, Papik said.

"We think that incoming freshmen are getting prepared for their college careers, and this is showing up on the test scores."

Some headway made in freshman courses

By Wes Albars

An Academic Planning Committee (APC) study of freshman courses hasn't led to overnight improvements, but some headway is being made, APC member Jim O'Hanlon said Thursday.

He said there has been a reduction in some class sizes and a broader course selection now offered to freshmen in some departments, and said the outlook for further improvements is good.

"The time is right," he said. "Faculty response is positive. In a few years, freshmen will have many more choices of courses and teaching methods."

O'Hanlon was appointed in September 1973 by Virginia Trotter, vice chancellor of academic affairs, to follow up recommendations submitted last April to the APC by a freshman study commission.

In its report, the 13-member commission called for smaller classes, more course options and more use of senior faculty members to instruct freshman courses.

It also called for improved methods of determining freshman needs.

O'Hanlon said courses such as the College of Arts and Sciences' small-group freshman seminars are examples of what the commission considers improvements.

"I provide encouragement to people doing things in line with the commission's report," he said. "The wheels turn more slowly than I like sometimes, but I haven't found any department where freshmen aren't considered important."

O'Hanlon said the committee realizes it would be impossible to limit all class enrollments to 25 to 30 students. But in a few areas it easily could be done, he said.

"Rather than a big, general program that not everyone may be able to accept, we're stressing a lot of little projects," he said.

O'Hanlon said he is helping conduct a series of surveys to determine freshmen's interests.

Information obtained from the surveys is used to help departments make good decisions about how to structure freshman courses, he said.

daily nebraskan

The Daily Nebraskan is published by the Publications Committee on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday throughout the autumn and spring semesters, except on holidays and during vacations.

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