

Analysis: Some prepsters not ready for college

Associated Press

The high school class of 2003 earned an average composite score of 20.8 on the ACT college entrance exam, matching last year's total, but the test-maker warned that more than half of this year's students may not be ready for college-level coursework in either math or science.

Nearly 1.2 million high-schoolers took the nation's second-largest admissions test, a record number, up from about 1.1 million last year. In Illinois and Colorado, the

exam is part of state-mandated testing.

The ACT score ranges from 1 to the highest possible score of 36.

Richard Ferguson, chief executive officer of the Iowa City, Iowa-based nonprofit, was encouraged that overall scores remained steady even as the number of test-takers grew by more than 5 percent.

"We might expect the average score to decline, since we are likely adding students from a wider range of academic achievement,"

Ferguson said in a prepared statement Tuesday. "Instead, we have seen remarkable stability in the average ACT score."

However, this year the ACT also examined test scores to look at skills students will need for first-year math, science and English courses in college.

Researchers concluded that just 26 percent of test-takers were ready to handle the coursework in science and 40 percent in math. In English, 67 percent of students

were prepared. The ACT said students who take more and tougher math and science courses in high school tend to score better on the exam.

"We've heard a lot of talk recently about the inadequacy of students' writing skills. However, it appears that the more critical problems are in science and math," Ferguson said.

Both the ACT and its rival, the SAT, will offer an essay question in 2005, though the ACT's will be optional.

The results of individual test scores on the ACT and the SAT - the country's larg-

est entrance exam - are used by colleges and universities to gauge a student's academic potential. The SAT, owned by the nonprofit College Board, will release its test results next week.

The average composite score for whites was unchanged this year at 21.7, but it improved for all racial and ethnic minorities for the first time since 1997.

Broken down by the ACT's race and ethnicity categories, Asian-Americans scored 21.8, up from 21.6 last year; Hispanics 19.0, up from 18.8; American Indians, 18.7, up from 18.6; Mexi-

can-Americans 18.3, up from 18.2; African-Americans 16.9, up from 16.8.

Ferguson said Black students were less likely than others to take tough, college-prep courses and "often don't receive the information and guidance they need to properly plan for college."

Looking at the results by gender, male test-takers had an average composite score of 21 with females averaging 20.8, a difference that matched past exam results. The ACT said 56 percent of those taking the test were female and 44 percent were male.

Raid

(Continued from Page 1)

Walker denies any wrongdoing.

"We started a major 34-billboard campaign to expand the circulation and distribution of the 'Augusta Focus,'" Walker explains. "Now this is what the real deal is: We are going to apply to become the legal organ for Richmond County. And that's why we got this investigation."

The White-owned daily, the "Augusta Chronicle," now prints all city and county legal notices.

"It's worth about \$6 million annually," Walker says. "Plus, you get all of those news subscribers and other people will want to advertise with you because of the larger subscriber base."

In a front-page story last week, the "Augusta Focus" recounted a string of investigations that targeted Walker.

"The original probe started out with allegations contained in an article in the 'Augusta Chronicle' and the 'Atlanta Journal-Constitution' accusing former Senate Majority Leader Charles W. Walker of various ethics violations that were later dismissed," the newspaper noted. "The allegations were that Walker had illegally done business with Grady Hospital and the Medical College of Georgia. These investigations obviously have not produced the desired results."

"The feds then moved to an investigation of the non-profit CSRA [Black foot-

ball] Classic where Walker serves as the honorary chairman. The status of that investigation is unknown.

"Now the feds have taken on seemingly a new project: The investigation of the 'Augusta Focus.' Some people close to the investigation have suggested that the outcome is not important. The goal is to financially ruin the Walker Group [which owns the Black, NNPA-affiliated paper] and its subsidiaries."

In its story, the paper blames U.S. Attorney Richard Thompson, a Republican, for what it calls a politically motivated investigation into Walker, as well as other Democratic politicians.

Dan Drake, a public information officer for the U.S. Attorney's office, declined to respond to those allegations or give any details of the investigation. "At this point, I can't confirm or deny that there is an investigation," he says.

Walker's paper left no doubt that an investigation is underway.

"The FBI confiscation of all of the 'Augusta Focus's' electronic files, including those from employees' private laptops, raises serious constitutional questions," the paper says. "How far can the government go in its attempt to neutralize news organizations which represent unpopular political or social views? If the 'Augusta Focus' is silenced today, who do they come for tomorrow?"

Firing

(Continued from Page 3)

on their person ground-up sheet rock, made to look like cocaine. Nine citizens were convicted and served time in jail. Their cases were later dismissed.

Bolton returned to the negative spotlight last July when crime statistics suggested that Dallas might have among the highest crime rates of any large city in the country.

Perhaps the last straw for him took place over the last month in the aftermath of a controversial off-duty police shooting of a teenager. Bolton fired the accused officer, Derrick Evans, after discovering he had a history of domestic violence and driving while intoxicated that was omitted from Evans' application when he joined the force.

It was later discovered that Evans originally had been rejected for employment until a division commander overturned the decision.

"You know I got a little credit for hiring one that I fired here last week, which should have been fired" said Bolton. "But you know, those other 599, I think they've done quite

well. So normally it's not the other part that gets reported as much as the ones that sometimes you have issues with. The department is a wonderful department in that regard."

Within minutes of Bolton's firing, reactions exploded across the city. Responses ranged from accusations that Mayor Laura Miller manipulated the dismissal to the feared prospects of turmoil in the city along racial lines.

Others feel that, as the city's first Black police chief, Bolton was treated differently than his predecessors and possibly had his authority undermined by personnel who didn't want to take orders from a Black superior officer.

"This is a disgrace and an all-out public lynching of a high-ranking African-American public official," said Darren Reagan, president of Black State Employees Association of Texas. "This city clearly demonstrates we are regressing in terms of race relations and basically how you treat a long-term loyal public servant. This is a sad day for the citizens of Dallas."

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