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THE IMPACT OF THE ACT AUTOMATED ADMISSIONS  
SYSTEM AS PERCEIVED BY THE HIGH SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS IN UTAH

by

James Rodney Clark

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Psychology

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

1978

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James Rodney Clark

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of the ACT Automated Admission System  
As Perceived by High School Counselors in Utah

by

James Rodney Clark, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1978

Major Professor: Dr. Keith T. Checketts  
Department: Psychology

The ACT automated admissions system was adopted by the Colleges and Universities in the Utah system of higher education in 1974. The automated admission system was conceived at a time when College enrollment all over the United States was decreasing, and thus was viewed by its proponents as a positive step in alleviating some of the articulation problems between post secondary institutions, high school counselors and prospective students.

Educators who developed the program felt that it would be an advantage to prospective students by providing an admissions decision shortly after the ACT was taken. Automated admissions appears to be an advantage to high school counselors because it eliminates the need for a high school transcript in the admissions process, and because it reduces the amount of time the counselor is involved in the mechanics of the admissions process.

This study represents an effort to determine the impact of the Automated Admissions system on the high school counselor and on prospective college students.

The results of this study indicate that a significant number of Utah high school counselors favor the Automated Admissions system as opposed to "traditional" admissions systems formerly in use, because of the reduction in clerical work required of the counselor.

( 50 pages)

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

Background of the problem

Admission of students to institutions of higher education in the United States has been a subject of considerable discussion. Private institutions face the problem of developing criteria for the selection process that will help them determine who can "succeed" at their particular institution. Many systems are in use across the United States, and there have been a number of court cases which have challenged admissions decisions, an indication that the selection criteria used for admission is a subject of debate.

The state institutions in the United States face a different admissions problem. In addition to determining minimum entrance requirements, they also must develop ways to efficiently inform the large number of students who apply for admission of the decision.

The admissions process traditionally has been a source of confusion to students because of the variety of forms and procedures used by most post secondary institutions.

A popular saying among college age students illustrates the confusion caused by many college admissions systems, "If you can complete the admissions forms, then you can graduate from college--the forms are the hardest part of college."

College admissions systems have been confusing to high school administrators and counselors as well as to prospective students. Counselors have had to keep track of numerous forms and remember the appropriate admission deadlines and procedures for the many colleges and universities nearby. In addition, most institutions have required that a high school transcript accompany admissions applications which causes additional expense to the school in reproduction costs and also increases the school clerical load. Unfortunately, much of the increase in clerical work load has become the responsibility of the counselor.

#### Statement of the problem

In 1974, the colleges and universities in the Utah system of higher education adopted a universal admission system based on the ACT. The program which became known as the "Admit by ACT" program is designed to provide the prospective student with an admissions decision as soon as the ACT scores are received by the institution. The admissions program was developed in cooperation with the American College Testing Corporation because the ACT requirement was the one common element in the many different admission systems being used by the colleges in Utah. The ACT reports student supplied background information and high school supplied grade point average for each student tested which allows admission decisions to be made without use of student's high school transcript.

The "Admit by ACT" program is initiated when the high school student takes the ACT and indicates to which institutions the results are to be sent. Verified grade point averages are obtained by the

American College Testing Corporation from the high school and sent to the institution as part of the ACT record. If the student meets admission standards a verification form is printed by the computer from the information provided by the ACT. This form is sent to the students indicating their eligibility for admission with instructions that registration materials will be prepared when the verification form is returned with the appropriate admission fee.

The originators of the "Admit by ACT" plan in Utah envisioned that the system would be advantageous for prospective students, high school counselors, and the admissions offices of the post high school institutions. The program was designed to serve the prospective student by early notification of admissability, by admission forms being mailed to the student's home, and by having much of the information preprinted on the admission forms.

It was assumed that the high school counselor is helped by having fewer forms to handle, less traffic from students with questions on the mechanics of the procedure, fewer transcripts to prepare, and less need for counselor input in the admission process. It was further assumed that the ACT admissions system provides advantages to the colleges and universities of Utah which use the plan. The elimination of the transcript reduces the amount of paperwork handled by the institution. The ACT record provides predictive data on each student which results in savings of time in evaluating credentials. The potential for recruiting is also increased by mailing admissions material to the student which conveys the message that the university is interested and would like him or her to enroll.

The problem that this study addresses is that none of the assumed benefits has been tested.

### Objectives of the study

The "Admit by ACT" system appears to be working well and seems to be based on sound principles of school/college relations. However, in order to determine whether the system is really accomplishing what was intended, a systematic evaluation is needed. The study will attempt to answer the following:

1. Do high school counselors view the ACT admissions system as an aid to their professional function?
2. Does the program reduce the clerical demands on the counselor? If so, does it do so at the expense of personal contact with students?
3. Are high school seniors more inclined to enroll in an institution which provides immediate admissions information?

The data was analyzed by using descriptive techniques and  $\chi^2$  goodness of fit statistics.

### Definitions

ACT. The test battery of the American College Testing Program which provides scores in English usage, mathematics usage, social studies reading, natural sciences reading, and a composite score. In addition, a biographical inventory is included. It is administered to candidates for college entrance at centers across the country (Buros, 1972).

Verification form. Computer printed form from information the student provides when he registered for the ACT. The form replaces the admissions application and is mailed by the college or university directly to the student. The student verifies the information and returns the form with an application fee.

Admit by ACT. The name given to the admissions system which is based on a student's ACT scores and a grade point average collected from the student's high school and furnished to the post high school institution.

Verified GPA. When a Utah high school student takes the ACT, the ACT Corporation obtains the student's grade point average directly from the high school and sends it to the university along with the test scores and background information.



CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The "Admit by ACT" program was conceived at a time when colleges and universities throughout the United States were experiencing decreases in enrollment. The large number of freshmen which flooded the college market during the 1960's had greatly diminished by 1971. Pape (1975) described the college scene as one in which "college doors are closing, and admission officers have become experts in marketing. This is a buyers market and the colleges are out to sell their product."

The greatest enrollment declines occurred in the smaller liberal arts colleges. Shook (1974) indicated that forty private colleges closed their doors between 1972 and 1974. Large universities which had never had to worry about attracting students also faced the prospect of declining enrollment, and began to examine their programs and policies.

Some admission officers, faced with the prospects of their school closing its doors, resorted to extremes in an effort to attract students. Haines (1975) found that a kind of "anything goes" feeling became prevalent among those responsible for attracting new students--and this environment caused ethics to be outmoded behavior.

Sheffield (1974) found that college administrators from a variety of schools both large and small began to place more emphasis on programs designed to give prospective students accurate information on which to make a college choice.

The scarcity of college bound students created a concern among college administrators which has forced post high school institutions to become more introspective of their programs and their public relations. Many schools, realizing that their survival depends on how they treat students, have become more "service" oriented. Most often the changes have effected the process of entry, including recruitment and selection of students. The changes have helped students in their adjustment to the college environment and have helped the institution achieve a position of appearing less hostile and more caring to prospective students.

The ACT automated admissions program was instituted in Utah colleges during the cycle of decreasing enrollment and was intended to make the admissions process more convenient for prospective students and their high school counselors. Elimination of the high school transcript was perceived by proponents of automated admissions as being a primary factor in making the admissions process less work for the high school counselor. This concept is consistent with thinking in other areas of the United States, and has created a pattern which many others have used. A report by the Cooperative for School/College Communication Studies (1974) indicates that large numbers of secondary schools are finding many of the long established school to college ways of reporting student progress are now unsatisfactory.

Colleges and universities are also expressing reservation about the worth of some information they are requiring from high schools. The situation is further complicated because the design of the transcript predates the development of modern equipment used for reproduction of the transcript such as the computer and photo copier.

The transcript has become a concern because of the great variety of forms and processes. High schools have developed "transcript processes" which fit their local philosophy, at the same time, the colleges and universities have adapted their application materials and procedures to fit their individual needs. The result has caused confusion, misunderstanding, and undue pressure on school/college relations at a time when it can be least afforded. Since 1974, the national trend has been a cooperative effort by many professional associations concerned with the application/admission procedure to bring under control the diversity of requirements. The transcript problem as described above and other problems associated with college admission procedures were identified at an early date in Utah and have provided the impetus for development and implementation of the uniform "Admit by ACT" program.

CHAPTER III  
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A questionnaire was developed consisting of ten multiple response items and one open ended question inviting school counselors to respond to any aspect of the ACT admissions system. The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the reaction of the high school counselors in the state of Utah to the "Admit by ACT" program being used by the state colleges and universities.

The questionnaire was developed in response to the stated objectives of the study, i.e., to determine if the ACT admissions system is beneficial to the high school counselor because it reduces clerical work, and provides more time for the counselor to pursue the professional aspects of their job.

The questions were presented to several of the admissions directors in the Utah system of higher education who were asked to make suggestions that would improve the validity of the questionnaire. Their suggestions were incorporated into a revised set of questions which was presented to the Utah ACT Council. Again, suggestions for improvement were made and the questions rewritten. Finally, the questionnaire was reviewed by a representative of the State Board of Education who is a specialist in Career Guidance. Some of the questions were revised to incorporate suggestions made.

### Sample

High school counselors in the state of Utah were chosen as the sample for the study. It should be noted that there are many students from states other than Utah who choose to attend one of the Utah institutions. However, counselors in these out-of-state high schools do not have the numbers of students attending Utah colleges to have an impact on their counseling practices.

### Procedures

The questionnaire was mailed to 200 counselors during April of 1977 with a letter explaining that since the ACT admissions program had been in use for three years, the college community was anxious to know if it works as had been envisioned and in what way it could be improved.

Counselors were asked to respond to the questionnaire and return it in a stamped pre-addressed envelope before May 15, 1977.

The names of the counselors and their present assignment was obtained from the School Services Office of Utah State University. This office maintains a current listing of counselors and administrators which is updated a minimum of once per year when each high school in the state is asked to submit a current list of counselors.

The explanatory letter mailed with the questionnaire requested that the counselor list the name of the school. Counselors were also asked how long they had been counseling in a school situation and whether they were presently working with seniors. They were asked not to list their name so their responses would be confidential.

The fact that names were not requested presented some difficulty in contacting counselors who did not respond by May 15. In anticipation of this problem, a record was kept of the number of questionnaires mailed to each school. In these cases where less than 100% of the questionnaires were returned by the deadline, a written reminder was sent to the counseling coordinator of the high schools asking that they check to see who had not responded. In schools where there was only one counselor, a reminder was sent directly to that person.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do counselors perceive the "Admit by ACT" program?
2. What impact has it on the counselor's time?
3. What effect has the ACT on the quality and timing of student's decisions regarding college.

In order to test the data statistically the assumption was made that if respondents expressed no strong feelings either for or against the "Admit by ACT" program, the responses would be distributed evenly in the response categories for each question. When deviance from an even distribution occurred and the preponderance of the responses are not in the neutral positions then it can be concluded that the respondents favor one or the other of the two admissions systems. As a result it was decided a priori that the expected values on the Chi<sup>2</sup> goodness of fit test should be equal for each of the categories in the question.

#### Analysis

Chi square analysis of question number one indicates that counselors prefer the "Admit by ACT" automated admissions system. The number of respondents indicating satisfaction with the ACT system is greater than would be expected by chance and is significant at the .001 level.

Table 1. Chi square analysis of counselors reaction to the "Admit by ACT program

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
I like it	74	40
The idea is good--admission could be improved	34	40
I prefer the traditional system of admissions	12	40
Total	120	120
Degrees of freedom = 2	Chi square = 49.00	( $P > .001$ )

Question number two was designed to determine the counselors' opinion on their students reaction to the "Admit by ACT" program. Again the Chi square analysis indicates the number of counselors reacting in a positive manner to be significant at the .001 level.



Table 2. Chi square analysis of counselors opinion on how their students perceive the "Admit by ACT" program

Response	Observed	Expected
Very positive	24	25.2
Positive	67	25.2
Little or no reaction	32	25.2
Negative	1	25.2
Very negative	2	25.2
Total	126	126.0
Degrees of freedom = 4	Chi square = 115.67	(P > .001)

91 of the 126 counselors responding to this question indicate their students have either a very positive or positive impression of the system. 32 respondents indicate their students have expressed little or no reaction to the ACT admissions system.

One of the major objectives of the study is to determine the effect of the automated admissions system on the counselor/pupil relationship and to determine what effect it has on the counselor's time. It was theorized that since admissions forms and in some cases, housing and financial aid forms, are mailed directly to the student that this would alleviate the need for the counselors to distribute the forms and free them for counseling. Also, since the automated system does not require a high school transcript, counselors would not be required to handle as much paperwork as was the case under the traditional admissions system. Questions three and four were

designed to sample counselor's feelings in regard to the effect of the ACT system on their relationship with students and its impact on their counseling opportunities. Table 3 and Table 4 indicate response to these questions.

Table 3. Chi square analysis of counselors' perception of how the "Admit by ACT" program effects counselor/pupil relationships

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
Almost eliminates contact	2	20.03
Less contact--less effective use of time	24	20.03
Less contact--more effective use of time	64	20.03
No change	25	20.03
More contact--less effective use of time	0	20.03
More contact--more effective use of time	7	20.03
Total	122	122
Degrees of freedom = 5	Chi square = 141.13	(P > .001)

Table 4. Chi square analysis of effect of the "Admit by ACT" program on counselors time as perceived by the counselors

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
Less clerical--more student contact	59	23
Less clerical--less student contact	42	23
No change	22	23
More clerical--less student contact	1	23
More clerical--more student contact	1	23
	Total	115
Degrees of freedom = 4	Chi square = 114.17	(P > .001)

Counselor response to both questions three and four indicate they feel that automated admissions has effected their use of professional time. Favorable responses to each question are greater than would be expected by change and are significant at the .001 level of probability.

The greatest number of respondents to question three (see Table 3) indicated that the automated admissions system has caused counselors to have contact with fewer students, but they indicate that they feel their time is being used more effectively as a result. However, a considerable number of respondents (24) indicated that the automated admissions system not only caused less contact between counselor and student but as a result, felt their time was less effectively used.

Clerical duties which take away from the counselor's opportunity to use professional skills in working with students is a cause of great concern. It was assumed in designing this study that counselors would favor a program which would reduce their clerical duties and one which would not reduce their opportunities for counseling. Results listed in Table 4 seem to indicate that the "Admit by ACT" has been successful in reducing clerical tasks in counseling centers, and as a result, increasing the amount of time counselors can meet with students in "counseling situations." Even though 59 of the 115 respondents indicated that the "Admit by ACT" program reduced the time spent on clerical tasks and created more time for counseling contact, there were 42 who felt that they had less student contact as a result of the ACT admissions program. Also, a significant number of respondents felt that there was no change in either clerical duties or counseling opportunities as a result of the ACT automated admissions system.

The trend among high school counselors is to encourage their college bound students to take the ACT in the spring of the junior year or at least early in the senior year. Such a trend appears to make the ACT more viable as a counseling tool.

Some educators question whether the results from ACT are used enough to warrant high school students taking the test. It would seem that one of the prime uses of the ACT would be a counseling tool in the high schools. The question is do high school counselors really use the ACT. As indicated in table five, a significant number

of counselors in Utah indicate they use the ACT results and over 50% of those responding to the questionnaire use it more extensively since more high school students are taking the ACT on an earlier date than they had previously.

Table 5. Chi square analysis of "Admit by ACT" on counselors use of the ACT as a counseling tool

Response	Observed	Expected
We had not used it previously and we do not use it now	4	31
It has less utility now	1	31
We use it about the same as previously	57	31
We are making greater use of it now	62	31
Total	124	124
Degrees of freedom = 3	Chi square = 105.8	(P > .001)

As stated in an earlier chapter, one of the objectives of this study is to determine the impact of the ACT automated admissions system on the high school senior's choice of a post high school institution. The intent of the questionnaire was to determine whether students, in the opinion of the counselor, devote more thought and research to the question of which college to attend. Counselors were not asked to make a judgement on the quality of the institution chosen.

Table 6. Chi square analysis of the impact of automated admissions on the quality (thought and research) of students college choice

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
Much better (more thoughtful)	60	41
No difference	56	41
Lower quality (less thoughtful)	7	41
	Total	123
Degrees of freedom = 2	Chi square = 42.48	(P > .001)

Counselors indicate that their students do put more thought and research into college choice because they receive an early indication of their admissibility. The number of respondents indicating that the ACT automated admissions system has a positive effect on the quality of students choice is significant at the .001 level of probability.

Response to question seven indicates that counselors feel that students make an earlier choice of college as a result of the "Admit by ACT" program. See Table 7.

Table 7. Chi square analysis of the effect of students receiving early notice of college admissability on the time students choose a college as compared to traditional admission systems.

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
Make a choice earlier than they would have	58	29
Make choice later but change mind more often	20	29
Make choice later	2	29
No effect	38	29
Total	118	118
Degrees of freedom = 3	Chi square = 59.72	(P > .001)

Presently, there are three styles of verification forms being used by the colleges and universities in Utah. Since the verification form is basic to the ACT admissions concept to simplify the admissions process for both counselors and students, question eight was designed to determine the counselors' perception of the verification form and whether it contributes to the simplicity of the admissions process. Table 8 lists the counselors preference of three verification forms.

Table 8. Counselors preference of the three verification forms

Response	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>
University of Utah	31	12	23
Utah State University	28	36	2
Weber State College	23	14	29

A study of Table 8 reveals that even though the University of Utah form is rated first by the greatest number of counselors, the Utah State University form was rated either first or second by all but two of the respondents.

The transcript has been a part of the college admissions process for many years. Recently, some educators have begun to question the need for a transcript, especially in cases where students are applying for admission to a state university or college.

The "Admit by ACT" system substitutes a verified grade point average for the transcript. The question that this study attempts to answer is whether the verified grade point average really saves the counselor and other personnel time and inconvenience.

Table 9 shows the Chi square analysis of the responses to question nine which indicates that counselors stated preference for providing verified GPA as opposed to providing transcripts is significant at the .001 level of probability.



Table 9. Chi square analysis of counselors response to whether providing the verified grade point average is more convenient than providing transcripts

Response	<u>Observed</u>	<u>Expected</u>
It is much more convenient to provide verified GPA than transcripts	76	25
It is little more convenient	23	25
No difference	12	25
It is a little more convenient to provide transcripts	7	25
It is definitely more convenient to provide transcripts	7	25
Total	125	125
Degrees of freedom = 4	Chi square = 136.88	(P > .001)

Question ten is closely related to the previous question and is concerned with the question of whether the ACT admissions system saves the counselor clerical time and the high school added expense.

Table 10. Chi square analysis of "Admit by ACT" program on number or transcripts requested from the high school.

Response	Observed	Expected
A significant reduction	84	42
About the same	42	42
A significant increase	0	42
	Total	126
Degrees of freedom = 2	Chi square = 84	(P > .001)

66 percent of the counselors who responded to question 10 said that the "Admit by ACT" program has significantly reduced the number of requests for transcripts. This positive response is significant at the .001 level of probability.

Although 42 respondents indicate they receive about the same number of requests as before the inception of the "Admit by ACT" system, not all Utah institutions are using automated admissions and this accounts for the sizeable number of requests still being received.

#### Summary

This chapter contains the results of Chi square analysis of counselors' response to 10 questions in the questionnaire. Tables illustrating how the results were obtained are included.

All of the questions relate to the impact of the ACT automated admissions system on the high school counselors in Utah. Counselor

response in regard to the "Admit by ACT" program is favorable in each case and is significant at the .001 level of probability.

CHAPTER V  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to determine the feelings of the high school counselors in Utah toward the "Admit by ACT" program being used by most colleges and universities in the Utah higher education system.

Educators who developed the automated admissions system which became known as the "Admit by ACT" program felt that it would be an advantage to counselors because it would reduce the time they spend in processing admissions applications which would include having transcripts made. One of the questions of this study was to determine if the ACT system really does reduce the clerical load of the counselor and if so, does this reduce the counselors contact with students and effect the counseling process.

The "Admit by ACT" program appears to be an advantage to students because it provides them with an admissions decision shortly after the ACT is taken. Another objective of the study is to determine the impact of the automated admissions system on the time the student makes a decision as to which college he should attend and also on the quality of the decision. Quality has been defined as the amount of thought and research the student used to make his decision.

A review of the literature regarding automated admissions systems revealed that there has been little work done in this area. Much of the literature related to the concept of automated admissions dealt

with the concern of college administrators in maintaining enrollment in a time period where college enrollments are declining. The importance of college admissions personnel being skilled in public relations was emphasized by several of the authors reviewed.

A phenomenon called the "transcript problem" was identified in the literature. Colleges and universities are having second thoughts about the worth of some of the information they have been asking secondary schools to provide. The "transcript problem" has been identified as causing undue pressure on school/college relations at a time when it can be least afforded.

A review of the literature indicates that the "Admit by ACT" program is based on sound principles of school/college relations, but to determine whether it is really accomplishing what was intended, a questionnaire with 10 multiple response questions and one open ended question was mailed to Utah high school counselors. (n=200) There was a 72% return of the questionnaire.

A summary and discussion of the results of the statistical treatment of the data is given below. The results of the study indicate that the "Admit by ACT" program is an advantage to high school counselors and students.

### Analysis

The overall reaction to the "Admit by ACT" program by high school counselors was positive. 74 of the 120 respondents indicated that they like the program as it is currently being administered. 34 counselors indicate agreement with the basic concept but feel that administration of the program could be improved. Several

counselors indicated specific concerns which they feel should be corrected in order for the program to be more effective. Among the suggestions made was that the colleges and universities develop a uniform verification form which would reduce the confusion caused when a high school student receives three or more verification forms, each one different than the others. Counselors also indicate that the information the student receives with the verification form needs to be simplified. They report that many students do not realize that the form should be returned to the college they are planning to attend.

Many of the counselors who indicate dissatisfaction with the "Admit by ACT" program are working in the smaller rural high schools in the state. Possibly these counselors do not feel the need for the "Admit by ACT" program because they do not deal with the large number of students seeking forms and asking related questions as do their counterparts in the large metropolitan high schools.

Question two asks the school counselors to express an opinion on how the students in their school "feel" toward the "Admit by ACT" program. Most significant is the fact that only three respondents indicate their students have a negative or a very negative attitude toward the program. Conversely, sixty-seven indicate their students have a "very positive" reaction to the "Admit by ACT" program. However, many of the counselors indicate that students are somewhat confused by the verification form and feel that the process needs more clarification

From the beginning, the proponents of the "Admit by ACT" program have expressed the belief that one of its major benefits would be to

free counselors from some clerical tasks and enable them to spend more time in counseling students. Question three and four both relate to this issue and the responses indicate that the program has been successful in accomplishing the goals that were expected. Of the 122 respondents to question three, 64 felt that they had less contact with students but that the time spent with the students was more productive than it was before the initiation of the program. An additional seven counselors felt that they had more contact with students and also that the time spent was more productive. However, a significant number of counselors (24) indicate that they had less contact with senior students because of the ACT admissions program and that because of the reduced number of contacts their counseling was also less effective. In the words of one counselor, "I miss valuable contacts with students who otherwise would have come in ready and eager for assistance."

59 of those responding to question four indicate that the "Admit by ACT" system has eliminated some of the clerical work previously required of counselors, thus creating more opportunities for contact with students. Several counselors indicated that the most significant factor of the "Admit by ACT" program is the reduction of clerical work. Conversely, 42 of the 125 counselors responding to question four indicate that even though the program helped to reduce the clerical load, it also reduced the counselors' contact with students. One counselor indicates that, "The clerical load has been lightened but there has been a significant decrease in contact which has created a lack of awareness by the counselor."

It seems that the "Admit by ACT" program has eliminated some of the clerical work that has traditionally been required of counselors, but not without effecting the counselors' contact with students in many cases.

One of the concerns expressed by counselors is that because of the current admissions procedure they do not receive notice of where their students have applied or when they apply and so are not able to give as much help regarding colleges and universities as they could under the traditional admissions system. Some counselors feel this is a problem and could be corrected if the counselors were required to sign the verification form before the student returns it to the college. Others would feel a required signature would be counterproductive.

Many high school students are taking the ACT during the spring of their junior year. It would seem that it would be a counseling advantage for ACT scores to be available early in the students' senior year. Question five was designed to determine how the counselors feel about this trend and if, in fact, having the ACT scores at an earlier date encourages greater use of the ACT as a counseling tool.

62 of those responding, or exactly 50 percent, indicate that they are making greater use of the ACT scores now than they did prior to the inception of the "Admit by ACT" program. 57 indicate that they use the ACT about the same as they had prior to the "Admit by ACT" program. Perhaps most significant is the fact that only one respondent indicates the ACT has less utility now. Educators who favor eliminating the ACT requirement for admissions say that it



is not being used by high school counselors. However, the results of this questionnaire do not favor that position.

Even though the majority of the responses to question five were supportive there was some concern expressed that students notified of their college admission "too early" lose their motivation for academic achievement during their senior year. The following quotes from counselors typify their concern. "Senior year programs do not seem to be as valuable to those who take the ACT earlier." "I feel that with the early notification of acceptance there should be a stronger statement indicating the nature and conditions of the acceptance. It is difficult to maintain motivation and hard work."

I wonder about the early admissions notice when they haven't completed high school yet. Do the colleges check up on whether they actually graduate? Most students would graduate, but there seems to usually be one or two who fall down the last semester and wouldn't pass their classes if they saw no need. However, overall, the program works well. I question though if they get housing or scholarship information as well as students who come in for applications.

Question six and seven were designed to sample counselors' opinion as to whether the early notice of admissability has an effect on how the student makes his choice of an institution, and what time he makes the decision. A sizeable number of counselors indicate that the ACT admissions system has no effect on how a student makes his college choice. However, over 50% feel that the program does cause the student to make a better quality decision than he would have made under the traditional system of admissions. This question was designed to determine whether students made thoughtful choices based on their own research and does not ask the counselor to make a judgement on the quality of the institution chosen.

58 of the 120 counselors who responded to questions seven feel that the ACT program encourages the student to make a choice of a post high school institution earlier than they would have under the previous admissions system. An additional 20 feel that students make an earlier decision but also change their mind more often than those students who do not use the ACT admissions system.

I think this initial contact from the university is great for the students. My own opinion is that it acts as a stimulus for those students who may be uncertain about really going to school. It also makes the whole procedure so easy for a student to apply--rather than the old admissions forms.

Presently, there are three styles of verification forms being used in the state. The University of Utah form is the most detailed of the three and also includes applications for financial aid and housing. The Utah State University form is much the same as the admissions form used under the traditional admissions system and is of moderate length, and the form designed for Weber State College, which is also used in the junior colleges in the state, is a "short" form.

Since the verification form is basic to the ACT admissions concept, that is to simplify the admissions process for both counselors and students, question eight was designed to sample the counselors' perception of the verification form and whether it contributes to the simplicity of the admissions process.

The most frequent written response to the questionnaire was concerning the lack of clarity in regard to the verification form and confusion it causes. Although some of the confusion undoubtedly results because the system is new, there seems to be a need for the

institutions to carefully review the information sent to the student. Many of the counselors expressed the opinion that the form contained too much information. Others indicate that more information in step by step order should be provided.

The following quote emphasizes a point that is often forgotten by college personnel who prepare written material for high school students.

A more brief explanatory letter would be helpful with the verification form. Many of the students are snowed by the terms used and especially with the term "verification form", perhaps the form could be designated differently. These students have no experience with the college scene and jargon.

Counselors seem to prefer the University of Utah's verification form because the scholarship, housing, and financial aid applications are included. This makes less work for the counselor because he does not have to keep track of several kinds of applications. One counselor suggests:

I would think that all forms including admissions could be put in one packet for students to fill out and return to the university with the high school providing GPA's. This would, I feel, provide adequate information for admissions and scholarship to the university.

Counselors indicate they like the Weber State College form because it is concise and to the point.

Weber State has a very simple form. The form used by Utah State University and the University of Utah are a bit complicated but most students can handle them if they take a little time.

Conversely, the brevity of the Weber State form is also its weakness according to some of the counselors who feel that it needs to be enlarged to include more instructions and information.

Counselors generally regard the Utah State University form to be someplace in between the others in terms of length and clarity. Interestingly only two counselors rated that Utah State University form as least liked.

The high school transcript has been a part of the admissions process for many years. Recently some educators in Kentucky and Utah began to question the importance of the transcript since most state colleges and universities admit students on the basis of their high school graduation.

It was theorized that expense and school employees time (often the counselors) could be saved if instead of routinely preparing transcripts for each student applying to a state college or university a more simplified document could be used. College admissions personnel in Utah agreed that admissions decisions could be made on the basis of the ACT scores and a "verified grade point average" which is provided by the high school counselor. The question to the counselor then becomes does providing the grade point average instead of the transcript really save time and clerical inconvenience? Question none of the questionnaire was designed to help provide answers to this question.

125 counselors responded and 76 of them indicated that it is much more convenient to provide a GPA than to prepare transcripts. An additional 23 said it is a little more convenient. A total of 99 or nearly 80 percent of the counselors indicate they prefer this aspect of the ACT admissions system as opposed to the traditional transcript.

12 counselors indicated that it requires as much time to provide a GPA as it does to provide transcripts and 14 counselors feel that it is actually more convenient to make transcripts. One counselor expressed the opinion that we should do away with the ACT and admit students on the basis of their high school GPA.

Question number 10 also concerns transcripts and relates closely to the previous question. If there is no transcript required for admissions has the number of requests for transcripts decreased correspondingly or are some post high school institutions defeating the system by requiring transcripts for other purposes.

66 percent of the respondents indicate there has been a significant reduction in the number of requests for transcripts.

42 counselors indicate about the same number of requests as before the present system was instituted. It is important to remember that not all institutions in the state are using the ACT admissions system and this probably accounts for the sizeable number who see no difference in requests. Also, some counselors express concern that applications for financial aid still require transcripts and wonder why a more convenient system could not be devised for that purpose.

Question 11 asked the counselors to respond to any aspect of the "Admit by ACT" program and there were some valuable suggestions made, some of which have been discussed in this section. All of the remarks are listed in the appendix.

Summary

1. Counselors generally react favorably to the "Admit by ACT" concept but many feel more explicit instructions to students are necessary.
2. Counselors in larger high schools seem to appreciate the reduction in clerical work caused by the ACT system more than do those counselors in smaller high schools.
3. Counselors generally feel there needs to be more feedback on which students have completed the admissions process. Many suggest the verification form be signed by the counselor before being returned to the university or college.
4. Counselors seem to favor verification systems which include housing and financial aid forms.
5. Some counselors wonder what advantage is gained by eliminating transcripts for admission if they are still required for other purposes such as financial aid.

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix AFirst Letter to High School Counselors

The ACT admissions program was designed to make the transition from high school to college as easy as possible. Now that it has been in operation for three years, we are anxious to know if it has changed the workload on the high school counselor's office and also to get reactions to its utility and acceptance. It was envisioned that the automatically generated admission blank and not requiring a high school transcript would help both the student and the counselor in the college admissions. How is it working and how can it be improved?

Please let us know by responding to the enclosed questionnaire. We would appreciate your written comments as well as responses to the questions. A stamped pre-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please return the questionnaire before May 15, 1977.

Thanks so much for your reactions.

Appendix B  
Questionnaire

High School \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a counselor? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you counsel senior students? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your overall reaction to the "Admit by ACT" program that is being used by some of the colleges and universities in Utah?
  - 74 a. I like it as it is.
  - 34 b. I think the idea of it is good but the administration of it could be improved.
  - 12 c. I prefer the more traditional system of admissions.
2. What, in your opinion, has been the overall reaction of the students in your school to the "Admit by ACT" program?
  - 24 a. Very positive
  - 67 b. Positive
  - 32 c. Little or no reaction
  - 1 d. Negative
  - 2 e. Very negative
3. Traditional college admissions programs have required the student to contact the high school counselor to obtain admission forms and to arrange for transcripts. What effect has the elimination of this procedure had on the counselor/pupil relationship?
  - 2 a. Almost eliminates contact.
  - 24 b. Less contact and also less effective use of time.
  - 64 c. Less contact but more effective use of time.
  - 25 d. No change.
  - 0 e. More contact but less effective use of time.
  - 7 f. More contact and more effective use of time.
4. What effect has the ACT admissions system had on the counselor's use of time.
  - 59 a. Less clerical - more student contact.
  - 42 b. Less clerical - less student contact.
  - 22 c. No change.
  - 1 d. More clerical - less student contact.
  - 1 e. More clerical - more student contact.

5. Students appear to be taking the ACT earlier. What effect has this on the use of the ACT as a counseling tool?
- 4 a. We had not used it previously and we do not use it now.  
 1 b. It has less utility now.  
 57 c. We use it about the same as previously.  
 62 d. We are making greater use of it now.
6. In your opinion, what effect does the early admissions notice received by the student have on the quality (thought and research) of the selection of a post high school institution?
- 60 a. Much better. (more thoughtful)  
 56 b. No difference.  
 7 c. Lower quality. (less thoughtful)
7. Does the fact that students receive notice of college admissability shortly after taking the ACT have an effect on the time the student makes his college choice? Compared to the traditional system most students:
- 58 a. Make choice earlier than they would have.  
 20 b. Make early choice but change their minds more often.  
 2 c. Make choice later.  
 38 d. No effect.

8. At this time there are three basic verification forms being used. Please rank them in terms of clarity and overall effectiveness.

University of Utah - First choice - 31  
 Second choice - 12  
 Third choice - 23

Utah State University - First choice - 28  
 Second choice - 36  
 Third choice - 2

Weber State College - First choice - 23  
 Second choice - 14  
 Third choice - 29

9. Each high school provides a verified grade point average for its students who take the ACT. The verified grade point average takes the place of the high school transcript for admission purposes. What is your opinion of this new procedure?
- 76 a. It is much more convenient to provide verified GPA than transcripts.  
 23 b. It is a little more convenient to provide verified GPA than transcripts.  
 12 c. No difference.  
 7 d. It is a little more convenient to provide transcripts than GPA.  
 7 e. It is definitely more convenient to provide transcripts than GPA.

10. What effect has there been on the number of requests for high school transcripts?
- 84 a. A significant reduction.  
42 b. About the same.  
0 c. A significant increase.
11. Please respond to any aspect of the "Admit by ACT" program you feel is appropriate.

Appendix CResponses to Question ElevenQuestion early admissions--student motivation

I wonder about the early admissions notice when the students have not completed high school yet. Do the colleges check up on whether they actually graduate? Most students would graduate, but there seems to usually be one or two who fall down the last semester and would not pass their classes if they saw no need. However, overall the program works well. I question though, if they get housing or scholarship information as well as students who come in for applications.

At one time students taking the ACT during their junior year were overlooked by the "Admit by ACT" program, receiving no information at all during their junior or senior year. If this has not been remedied, it should be.

Senior year program does not seem to be as valuable or as strong to those who take the ACT earlier. The "Admit by ACT" is more convenient but we don't have our finger on where the students go because we do not see them as often concerning colleges and universities.

I do not like the "early admission" test or tests taken in the junior year. We like our seniors to feel that what they do will reflect on college admission. The long registration form is really a problem. Students cannot complete them without much help. I do not know why we should take our time rather than the ACT representatives when they take the test. This year I have not known who has applied to college. Ordinarily I can discuss colleges, scholarships, etc. with them. Subsequently, our applications for scholarships are down. We have had some students accepted to colleges that should have been counseled otherwise. Example: We had a special education student last year take the ACT test. She got a 02 composite, her GPA was 2.63, but her classes were all special education and tutor programs. The college did not see her transcript. She did go to college, two weeks into the year one of the advisors called and asked what he should do with her. I don't think you are getting a good look at what you are accepting and some good kids are missing out on applying for scholarships.

Early college admissions and basing the GPA on six semesters of work tends to make seniors feel the last year of high school is not important. Later admission and GPA based on seven semesters had an advantage for the high school.

Program has little effect

Our high school is a four year small school. The ACT admissions program has had very little effect either on the students or counselors. Most of our students attend a nearby junior college and then go on to larger universities. The local college has asked for transcripts for all new freshmen.

I suppose because I work with Brigham Young University, the ACT results are not so effective. I have not noticed much change in the workload. Students have been confused at being accepted to schools they will not be attending.

We are a small school 120 miles in the salt flats. The program made no difference to me as I have to be very close to my students.

Students do not understand the process--more clarification needed

Students really do not understand it fully. Needs to be explained better in letter they receive when admitted. Also, there should be no ACT test anyway.

Some students do not seem to understand the instructions they receive. Could they be made any more clear or easy to read? Students always want to know about scholarships. How does it work through the ACT program? Do anything that might be possible to make this easier for the students to understand the procedure and what to do. Many students list a least three schools and some even more. All of these schools will be doing the same thing, sending information to the student. Is this a costly factor that can be cut down somewhere? Is it pretty certain that any of the state schools will accept the students? If so, there is a lot of duplication, costly use of postage and materials. I think something could be worked out to reduce this burden on the taxpayer, or use the money in some other way.

It seems to cause students to forget about scholarship deadlines.

A more brief explanatory letter would be helpful with the "verification form." Perhaps the form could be designed differently. These students have no experience with the college scene and jargon.

My students take their ACT in the spring of their junior year. By the time they decide what college or university to attend or apply to they do not know what they did with their college admissability notice. If they then want to attend the University of Utah they need to fill out the standard application form. I do not seem to have many forms on hand anymore.

Several students will still come in for admission forms fearing that a form will not come which defeats the program. If some process could be developed to inform the students about the program at the test time or prior it may help them understand what it is all about.

Students sometimes fail to respond immediately to the verification form and misplace it. It might be additionally marked, "ADMISSION VERIFICATION--RETURN IF PLANNING TO ATTEND."

Students frequently do not understand what steps to take after the verification form has been sent to them. Perhaps a step by step simple procedure in bold print would help, including such things as how to sign up for classes, orientation procedures, etc.

The question still comes up, "Do I need a transcript for scholarship?" Some students still miss the point that a section of that report and the money must be returned.

As you know, we gave the ACT to all juniors and the juniors have had a more difficult time understanding the ACT admissions. There needs to be more clear instructions to all students to be sure and return the admittance slip. Our students think it is automatic.



Verification sent earlier

Colleges and universities should send verification to student sooner.

Some schools have been a little slow in sending verification forms to students.

I like it

I generally like it. Wish counselors received notice as to which students received your forms and the dates.

I endorse this plan.

Sure beats BYU!

I like it. I don't have a current USU verification form to compare the three universities. While I realize it is more expensive, I personally like the University of Utah's form because it includes scholarship information. This is a real time saver for the high school. Weber's, while short and brief, could be enlarged to include more instruction and information.

It seems to be working well.

I like it because it is easier and requires far less time than traditional registration.

I feel it is an excellent program and saves a lot of hassle for the students.

We like it.

I like the program.

Very fine approach. Other Utah schools who do not respond to ACT as you do, such as BYU and Westminster, need to emphasize that they do not admit by ACT. Many students are confused because they do not respond the same as other schools.

The most significant factor is the reduction of clerical work.

I really do like the program but I believe there is some misunderstanding with the program. I have had schools request transcripts.

It is good.

I support the program.

Students dislike providing information for ACT--defeats purpose

Students react to filling in all the information asked. Why not just give the test.

The verification form that I saw seemed to ask for as much information as a complete admissions form. If so, it defeats the purpose. The question of applying for financial aid seems misunderstood. Financial statements, BEOG, etc., seem very confusing to most students when they think ACT form solved all of their problems.

Counselors do not understand the program

Why couldn't all the state schools, at least, get together on a verification form. Also, some students are not clear on having to send back the verification form with the fee. At least, many students put it off indefinitely whereas under the old system they usually sent the application and fee in with the financial aids application.

I would think that all forms including admissions could be put in one packet for students to fill out and return to the university with the high school providing verified GPA's. This would, I feel, provide adequate information for admission and scholarships to the university. As you can see, I am not too high on the ACT. I feel it eliminates some good students because they are either poor test takers or have a poor test day when taking the ACT. Generally most universities and colleges put too much emphasis on the ACT in regards to scholarships, programs students can or cannot be involved in. All of these decisions seem to be based upon the four hour test rather than twelve years of knowledge. I would rather see educational institutions measure students more on academic ability rather than test taking expertise.

Would be helpful that all administrations can work out a standard verification form for all post high schools.

Thanks for reducing the administrative workload. Now let's try for a "one form" application. A uniform application that will be accepted at any college in the state of Utah.

Dislike ACT

KILL IT! All colleges are not consistent. Some still require transcripts, others do not. Some send out admissions via ACT, others do not. Seems very confusing. I, as a counselor, do not know when and if admissions have been sent and received by students. I prefer the old system. Gives me much greater knowledge and control over situations.

I feel that all post high schools should be on admissions notice or none at all. I also feel that the old admission application has a great deal of merit because the student is more realistic in responding to questions dealing with his goals and choice of institution later in his senior year. Also, I think that a complete transcript will give more academic information and background than a test score.

Should be no ACT--doubt validity--too expensive

Students really do not understand it fully. Needs to be explained better in letter they receive when admitted. Also, there should be no ACT test anyway.

I feel too many times the ACT does not show a true picture of a student's ability to succeed in college.

I think the colleges should forget all about the ACT test and admit strictly on GPA.

I think that the "Admit by ACT" is not as valid as high school transcripts. The test is geared for the middle class population and is not culture free. It is too bad a student has to take a test on a certain day of the year to determine how smart he/she is. There has to be a better way of doing this.

What about the individual's effective skills. Cognitive expertise is useful but you need to look at the total person. The ACT does not help in effective evaluation.

I think the overall admissions policies have been "watered down" to where the ACT means nothing.

Admission procedures are getting very expensive. Why not cut out one cost or the other.

I would think that all forms including admissions could be put in one packet for students to fill out and return to the university with the high school providing verified GPA's. This would, I feel, provide adequate information for admission and scholarships to the university. As you can see, they are either poor test

takers or have a poor test day when taking the ACT. Generally most universities and colleges put too much emphasis on ACT in regards to scholarships, program students can or cannot get involved in. All of these decisions seem to be based upon the four hour test rather than twelve years of knowledge. I would rather see the educational institutions measure students more on academic ability rather than test taking expertise.

Students just do not want to take the test. They would rather go to schools that do not require it.

Now that admissions acceptance is so available to anybody, why go to the expense and time of the ACT? So few students receive scholarships based on the ACT, I wonder if this is another financial rip off for students. From my observation, fewer schools are using the ACT as a counseling tool for entering students. Seems to be the colleges and universities getting the services at the expense of student dollars and high school counselors time.

#### More communication on residual ACT

More communication needs to be developed between the high schools and colleges where residual exams are given so that the high schools learn the results of the ACT. Otherwise, the program seems to be working very well.

#### Program causes counselor to lose student contact

I miss valuable contacts and counseling with some students who would otherwise have come in, ready and eager, to get assistance.

The clerical load has been lightened but there has been a significant decrease in contact which has created a lack of awareness by the counselor. I feel there is a need for feedback prior to graduation from colleges. I have had students indicate that their records were properly processed prior to the deadlines and then I have found they did not complete the necessary prerequisites for financial aid. It is difficult to have the sixth semester grade point average available prior to the June test date since we rely on a computer to process our report cards. In order to insure more contact with students without creating additional clerical chores, perhaps all applications could require the signature of the counselor. I also feel that with the early notification of acceptance there should be a stronger statement indicating the conditional nature of the acceptance. It is difficult to maintain motivation and hard work.

Like fact that all forms are together

It has been helpful for students to receive acceptance and any needed forms at the same time. Because students are encouraged to list three colleges they have made choices earlier and students bound for out of state schools as first choice have been picked up as later entries more easily by state schools.

Concerning question eight: I prefer the University of Utah's form because the scholarship and financial aid form is part of it. This makes it far easier to handle than when the scholarship and financial aid forms are separate.

Miscellaneous positive comments

I think our students are more serious about taking the ACT and doing well. It has put the responsibility on the student and each year we see an improvement with your admission policy.

As students become more familiar with the process I think it will give us fewer problems.