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Diversity in higher ed. The University of Chicago received [some good publicity](#) this month when it announced that it would no longer require applicants to submit an SAT or ACT score.

Chicago became the first elite college to stop doing so, and the university's leaders described the change as an effort to attract a more diverse student body. Inside Higher Ed, a widely read industry publication, [called the new policy](#) part of an "ambitious plan to attract broader range of applicants."

I'm more skeptical of the move. For one thing, the University of Chicago happens to be the least economically diverse elite college in the country. And its new admissions policy is not guaranteed to change that.

Let's take those points one by one:

[Only 10 percent](#) of first-year Chicago undergraduates in 2016-17 received Pell grants — the largest federal aid program, which typically go to students in the bottom half of the country's income distribution. No other top-ranked college has such a small share of Pell students.

That same year (the most recent for which there are comparable statistics) 13 percent of first-year students at both Duke and Johns Hopkins received Pell grants, [according to the Education Department](#). The share was 14 percent at Stanford; 15 percent at Harvard; 16 percent at Yale; 17 percent at Columbia and M.I.T.; and 18 percent at Northwestern, which is just a short drive up the Lake Michigan shore from Chicago. [Princeton led elite private colleges](#), with 21 percent.

Chicago officials claim that the Pell numbers don't fully capture the economic diversity of its student body. But after writing about this subject for more than a decade, I can tell you that's what *every* college with an unimpressive Pell share claims. The truth is, Chicago isn't doing a very good job of attracting [the many extremely talented and hard-working disadvantaged teenagers](#) who live in the United States.

As for the ACT and SAT: Abandoning them does not guarantee that a college will become more economically diverse. (That [Inside Higher Ed article](#) has a good

overview of the research.) Why not? An admissions policy that puts more weight on personal statements and extracurricular activities may actually help affluent students.

The University of Chicago is a fantastic college, which is why this situation is dispiriting. Chicago could be a much more powerful engine of economic opportunity if it adopted a fairer admissions policy. Its splashy announcement last week doesn't guarantee such a policy.

Yet there is one modest piece of good news. When I asked Jeremy Manier, a university spokesman, about all of this, he pointed out that Chicago's Pell share had risen to 12 percent for the most recent two entering classes.

That may still leave the University of Chicago with the dubious distinction of being the country's least economically diverse top college. But at least it's not as far behind as it used to be.