

March 27, 2024 at 1:30 p.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS North Carolina Livestream

AGENDA

OPEN SESSION

- A-1. Proposed Revisions to Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual,
*Policy on Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Undergraduate
Admission to the University of North Carolina System*Andrew Kelly and David English

- A-2. Adjourn Kirk Bradley

AGENDA ITEM

- A-1. Proposed Revisions to Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual,
*Policy on Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Undergraduate
Admission to the University of North Carolina System*Andrew Kelly and David English

Situation: Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual, *Policy on Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Undergraduate Admission to the University of North Carolina System*, establishes the minimum academic standards that a student must satisfy to be considered for undergraduate admission at a University of North Carolina System institution. These standards have historically included the requirement that students submit an ACT or SAT score to be eligible for admissions consideration, though that requirement has been temporarily waived since July 2020 in response to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Per guidance from the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, that waiver is set to expire after the 2024 admissions cycle (i.e., the incoming first-year class in the 2025-26 academic year would again be subject to the testing requirements in Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual).

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath disrupted the administration of the ACT and SAT admissions exams in North Carolina and across the country. In response, the Board waived this policy requirement on July 23, 2020. The Board has subsequently voted two additional times to extend the waiver, with the most recent action expiring following the fall 2024 admissions cycle. The committee received a presentation on the role of standardized testing and admissions in January. At the February committee meeting, members reviewed data on testing, admissions, and academic performance in the UNC System, and then reviewed and discussed redline amendments to the policy. The committee is scheduled to vote on the proposal in April; this special meeting is for additional discussion only.

Assessment: The committee will review and discuss proposed draft revisions to Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual.

Action: This item is for discussion only.

Section 700.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual Factsheet

1. Overview

The draft policy—

- **Raises standards** by increasing the required GPA for admission while enabling students that do not meet the new standard to “test into” the UNC System based on a standardized test score.
- **Resolves uncertainty** surrounding admissions standards that has left students and families unsure of current admissions requirements.
- Utilizes admissions tests to **address one of our most pressing public policy questions:** ensuring that admitted students are academically prepared to complete a degree.
- **Capitalizes on the state’s investment** in assessing all public high school juniors using the ACT.

2. Details on the Draft Proposal

- Starting in **fall 2025**, students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.5 and less than 2.8 would be required to submit an ACT or SAT score to be eligible for admission to a UNC System institution.
- Starting in **fall 2026**, students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.5 and less than 2.8 would be required to submit an ACT score higher than 17 or an SAT score higher than 930 to be eligible for admission to a UNC System institution. Individual campuses could propose to require admissions test scores for students with a GPA above 2.8, subject to the approval of the UNC System President and the Board of Governors. (The current draft would preclude such proposals taking effect until fall 2026).
 - **Key fact:** *In fall 2023, 3.82 percent of all new, first-time students had a GPA below 2.8 (1,470 out of 38,529 enrolled). Of those, 1,349 (3.5 percent of the total) were between 2.5 and 2.8.*
- The draft policy keeps intact the **Chancellor’s Exception**, which enables chancellors to exempt up to one percent of *admitted applicants* from minimum admission requirements. The draft policy broadens the exception to enable chancellors to *waive the requirement to submit test scores* for those who do not meet the GPA threshold.
 - **Key fact:** *Based on fall 2023 admits, the total number of allowable chancellor’s exceptions was 1,799 (179,941 admitted students), up 63 percent from fall 2018 (110,154 admits, 1,101 exceptions).*

3. Summary of Different Perspectives Regarding the Draft Policy

- Admissions testing should return across the board: Draft proposal in Board materials does not go far enough; tests should be required of all applicants as the information tests provide is helpful to ensure student readiness and compliance with federal policy.
- Test optional: Admissions tests are imperfect measures of student readiness and can cause stress and anxiety among otherwise-prepared students. Requiring tests may also encourage institutions to over-emphasize test scores in admissions decisions to climb in the rankings. Draft proposal potentially puts our institutions at a disadvantage in the market for students and in rankings methodologies, as many universities remain test optional.
- Athletics: A subset of observers has raised concerns that the UNC System requiring testing when the NCAA has permanently removed their requirement to do so could put athletics programs at a disadvantage in recruiting. (Note: based on UNC System Office data, appears that few chancellor's exceptions have been used to admit athletes).

4. Additional Considerations

- Effective date: Draft should clarify that students admitted in *spring 2025* would not be subject to new requirements.
- Effective date: Should testing requirements in the draft policy be implemented later than the draft policy intends?
- Chancellor's Exception: Increase the percentage to two percent or higher, recognizing that institutions could benefit from additional flexibility in this highly competitive enrollment market.
- Chancellor's Exception: Add a "floor," whereby all institutions would have up to one percent of admitted applicants or a fixed number of exceptions (~75), whichever is higher, recognizing that the fixed percentage provides less flexibility for smaller institutions.

5. Next Steps

- Reconvene Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs on March 27, 2024, to review and discuss the draft policy.
- Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs votes on the revised policy, subject to any revisions, at the April 17, 2024, committee meeting.
- Full Board of Governors votes on the proposed policy at the May 23, 2024 meeting.

Policy on Minimum Eligibility Requirements for Undergraduate Admission for the University of North Carolina System

- I. Purpose. The University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors has, since 1988, established minimum requirements for undergraduate admission to any constituent institution. These requirements serve to provide a common set of minimum standards to be considered for admission as an undergraduate student. Exceptions and special considerations to these minimum eligibility requirements are provided in Sections 700.1.1.1[R], 700.1.1.2[R], 700.7.1, and 700.7.1[R] of the UNC Policy Manual. **Subject to the terms of this policy, the chancellor of a**Any constituent institution may set admissions requirements that exceed the minimums established in this policy upon the approval of their board of trustees.
- II. High School Diploma. All students should hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- III. Minimum Course Requirements. The following courses must be completed at the high school level, although those courses may be completed at an earlier time (e.g., middle school).
- A. English: four course units emphasizing grammar, composition, and literature.
- B. Mathematics: four course units in any of the following combinations:¹
1. Algebra I, algebra II, geometry, and one unit beyond algebra II; or
 2. Algebra I, algebra II, and two units beyond algebra II; or
 3. Common core math I, II, and III, and one unit beyond common core math III; or
 4. Integrated math I, II, III, and one unit beyond integrated math III; or
 5. NC Math 1, 2, 3, and one unit beyond NC Math 3 identified as meeting the 4th level

¹Students applying to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts must only complete three mathematics courses in order to be eligible for admission.

mathematics requirement for admission to UNC System institutions.

C. Science: three course units, including at least:

1. One life science unit (e.g., biology, ecology, zoology); and
2. One non-life science unit (e.g., astronomy, chemistry, earth science, environmental science, physical science, physics); and
3. One laboratory science unit.

D. Social Studies: two course units, including one unit in U.S. history.²

[For students applying for first-time (freshman) admission to constituent institutions through the 2024 spring semester:]

E. Two course units of a language other than English.

[For students applying for first-time (freshman) admission to constituent institutions after the 2024 spring semester:]

E. Two additional academic courses from English, mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, or computer science. *(Note: these courses should be selected in alignment with a student's academic and career objectives. Completion of two sequential world language courses is recommended.)*

F. Applicants who require special consideration: Constituent institutions shall develop a policy for evaluating applications from students who have not completed all minimum course requirements and shall at least include provisions addressing students with a documented Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan. The institutional policy shall be approved by the board of trustees in accordance with regulations promulgated by the president.

IV. Recommended Courses. While the minimum course requirements serve as the cornerstone of the UNC System admissions policy, students are encouraged to pursue a challenging and rigorous high school curriculum aligned with their academic and career objectives. Completion of the minimum course requirements does not guarantee admission to any individual UNC System institution. As such, students should consult with their high school counselor regarding additional courses recommended by individual UNC System institutions. Additionally, students should:

A. Consider taking the most rigorous courses available at their high school that they can successfully complete.

B. Ensure to complete an academically challenging course load in their senior year, even if they have completed the minimum course requirements.

V. High School Grade Point Average and Standardized Test Scores. ~~Students must meet either the minimum~~

²An applicant who does not have the unit in U.S. history may be admitted on the condition that at least three semester hours in that subject be passed by the end of the sophomore (second) year.

~~high school grade point average (GPA) or standardized test score in order to be considered for admission. All applicants for admission, except those exempted by current UNC policy or regulation, must submit a standardized test score, even if they satisfy the minimum eligibility requirement through the high school GPA. All applicants for admission, except those exempted by UNC policy or regulation, must meet the following criteria for admission:~~

A. For students entering in the Fall 2025 or Spring 2026 semesters:

a. High School GPA: A minimum weighted GPA of 2.5; ~~or~~

b. Standardized Test Scores:

~~i. A composite ACT score of 19, or combined SAT (mathematics and evidence-based reading and writing) of 1010. Students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.50 and less than 2.80 are required to submit a standardized test score (ACT or SAT)~~

~~ii. For students with a weighted high school GPA of 2.80 or above, the decision to require submission of a standardized test score is delegated to the chancellor of each constituent institution, subject to the approval of their board of trustees.~~

B. For students entering in the Fall 2026 semester and beyond:

a. High School GPA: A minimum weighted GPA of 2.5

b. Standardized Test Scores:

~~i. Students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.50 and less than 2.80 are required to submit a standardized test score of a 17 or higher on the ACT or a 930 or higher on the SAT;~~

~~ii. For students with a weighed high school GPA of 2.80 or above, the decision to require submissions of a standardized test score is delegated to the chancellor of each constituent institution, subject to the approval of their board of trustees.~~

~~The chancellor of each respective constituent institution may, subject to the approval of the president and the Board of Governors, require all students with a weighted GPA of 2.80 or above to also submit a standardized test score. The Board of Governors must grant any such approval before December 1, two years prior to the implementation of the additional requirement.~~

~~B.C. Chancellor's Exceptions: The maximum number of chancellor's exceptions is limited to one percent of the total number of applicants accepted as first-time undergraduates each year.—A chancellor's exception may be applied to the SAT/ACT minimum requirement or the high school GPA minimum requirement.~~

VI. Graduates of Cooperative Innovative High Schools (Early College). Each UNC constituent institution must

offer to any student who graduated from a cooperative innovative high school program with an associate degree and who applies for admission to a constituent institution the option of being considered for admission as a first-time (freshman) or as a transfer student.

A. The constituent institution shall also provide written information to the student regarding the consequences that accompany each option and any other relevant information that may be helpful to the student when considering which option to select.

B. ~~Beginning March 1, 2017, T~~the Board of Governors shall report annually regarding the number of students who graduated from a cooperative innovative high school program with an associate degree and which option was chosen by those students when applying for admission to a constituent institution.

VII. Graduates of North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM). Each UNC constituent institution must offer first-time (freshman) admission to any applicant attending the residential program at NCSSM. Such offer of admission shall be contingent upon the applicant:

A. Successfully completing all NCSSM graduation requirements and remaining enrolled and in good standing at NCSSM through the time of the student's graduation. For the purposes of this policy, "in good standing" shall mean with no pending disciplinary charges or pending academic violations that could lead to dismissal as of the date of graduation;

B. Meeting the academic program requirements as outlined in Section 700.1.1.3[R] of the UNC Policy Manual;

C. Completing all application requirements established by the constituent institution by a standard public deadline; and

D. Satisfying the provisions of Section 700.5.1[R] of the UNC Policy Manual.

This guaranteed offer of admission shall apply only to acceptance to the respective constituent institutions, and shall not apply to any specific school, major, or program of study within the constituent institutions.

This section VI., shall be effective for all NCSSM students applying for first-time (freshman) admission to constituent institutions beginning with the 2022 fall semester.

VIII. Notification of Stakeholders and Educational Policymakers. The president is directed to develop plans and further recommendations to inform key stakeholders and education policymakers of the changes in requirements.

~~IXVIII.~~ Other Matters

A. Effective Date. With the exception of section VII., above, the requirements of this policy shall be effective for all first-time students applying for admission at a constituent institution for any semester beginning ~~with the on or after January 1, 2024 fall semester through the 2025 fall semester (including students who attended the institution for the first time in the prior summer term).~~

B. Relation to Federal and State Laws. The foregoing policy as adopted by the Board of Governors is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this policy.

C. Regulations and Guidelines. This policy shall be implemented and applied in accordance with such regulations and guidelines as may be adopted from time to time by the president.



MINIMUM ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS (700.1.1)

Updated March 21, 2024

Refresher

2008: Board of Governors (BOG) adopts minimum admission requirements (MAR) of **GPA of 2.5 *AND* ACT score of 17** (phased in over 5 years)

In February 2020, Ed Planning revised MAR to require a **GPA of 2.5 *OR* ACT of 19** (Full BoG passed March 2020)

By 2013, MARs fully implemented System-wide

In July 2020, the BOG passed a **temporary waiver on the admissions testing requirement** and has extended that waiver twice through Fall of 2024.

The decision in front of the Committee

If the Board *does not act* this academic year:

- **For incoming class in Fall 2025:** Waiver expires and policy reverts to status quo in 2020—**GPA 2.5 OR ACT 19/SAT 1010**
- Tests required of all applicants, but *minimum score not required* if GPA criteria met.

If the Board *acts* on the draft policy 700.1.1:

- **Fall 2025: Test scores *required*** of students applying for admission in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026 if their weighted H.S. GPA falls between 2.5 and 2.8.
- **Fall 2026 and thereafter: Minimum score of 17 on ACT or 930 on SAT or higher *required*** of students applying for admission if their weighted H.S. GPA falls between 2.5 and 2.8.
- Individual universities could propose to require admissions test scores for all applicants, subject to approval by President and Board of Governors.

Context

ACT assesses student learning in English, Math, Reading, and Science.

- ACT sets benchmarks associated with success in college (defined as having a 50% (75%) chance of earning a B or better (C or better) in corresponding college-level course):
 - English: 19
 - Math: 22
 - Reading: 22
 - Science: 23
- The System has used “Composite Score” for requirements—average across all four rounded to nearest whole number.

Average is “Composite Score” = 21.5

Since 2012-13, the State has administered the ACT to all public high school juniors.

- ACT was implemented as part of North Carolina’s compliance with federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Research has found that, pre-COVID, universal admissions testing in high school improves college access.
- NC DPI has shared data with UNC System Office on postsecondary destinations of NC high school graduates. **As a result, we have DPI ACT scores for students who enrolled during the period the waiver was in place.***

Academic Readiness has Consequences for Students, Institutions, and the State

Students

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

- To maintain access to Federal financial aid, students must maintain a **2.0 cumulative GPA and earn 67% of credits attempted.**
- Students who fail to meet SAP will lose financial aid eligibility until they have either reached academic requirements or been granted a waiver.
- Research indicates that students who did not meet SAP were 3x more likely to stop out than those who do.

Debt but no degree

- Students who drop-out with some credit see little labor market benefit and may experience financial hardship due to student debt.

Institutions

Performance weighted funding model

- Decreases in retention and academic success negatively impact graduation rates and degree efficiency, which has implications for performance-weighted component of the enrollment funding model.

The State

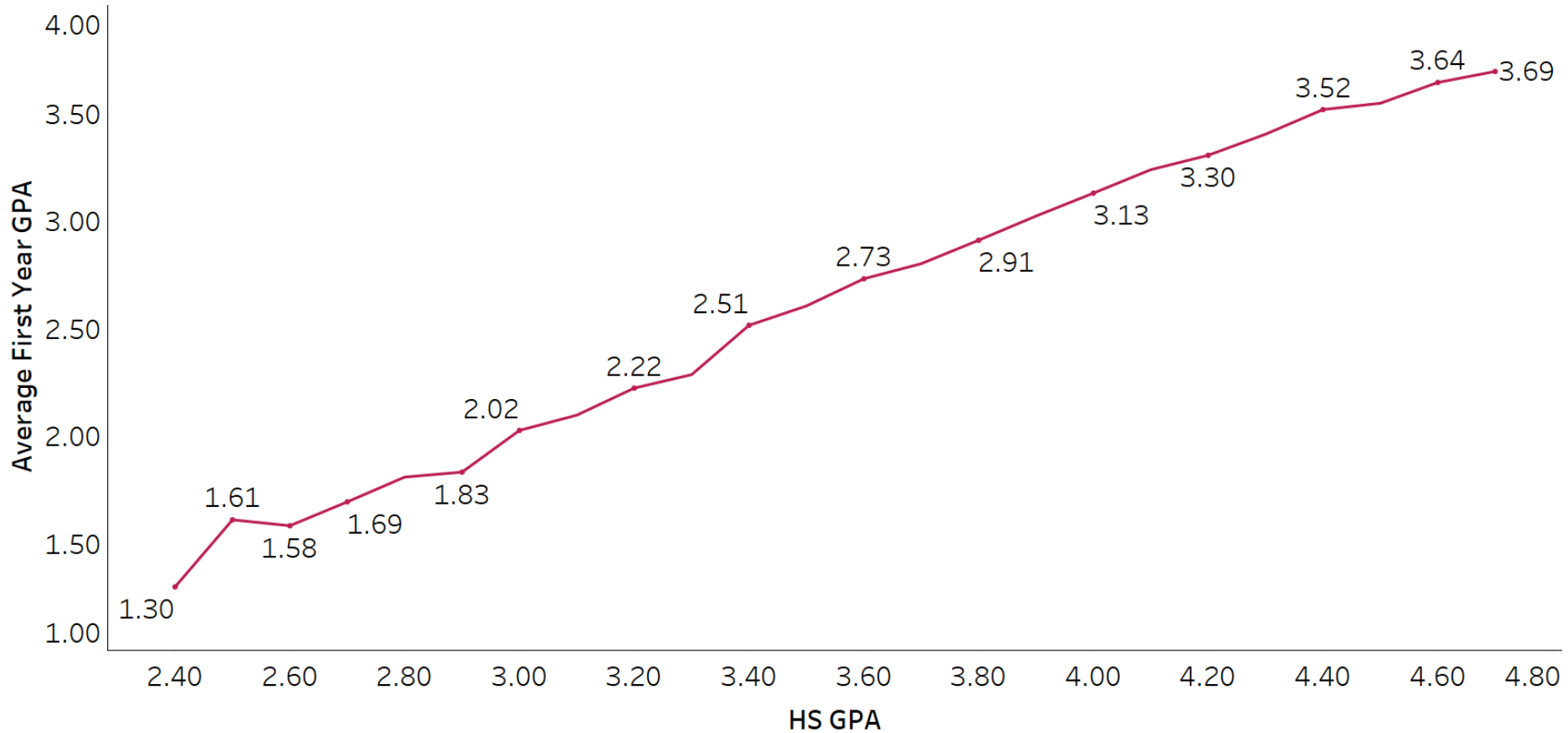
Credits enrolled but not earned

- Students with lower GPAs (and ACT scores) generally have lower ratio of earned to attempted credits
- In-state student credit hours receive state subsidy regardless of student success in the course.

GPA is a Strong Predictor of Student Success...

Average First-Year GPA by HS GPA

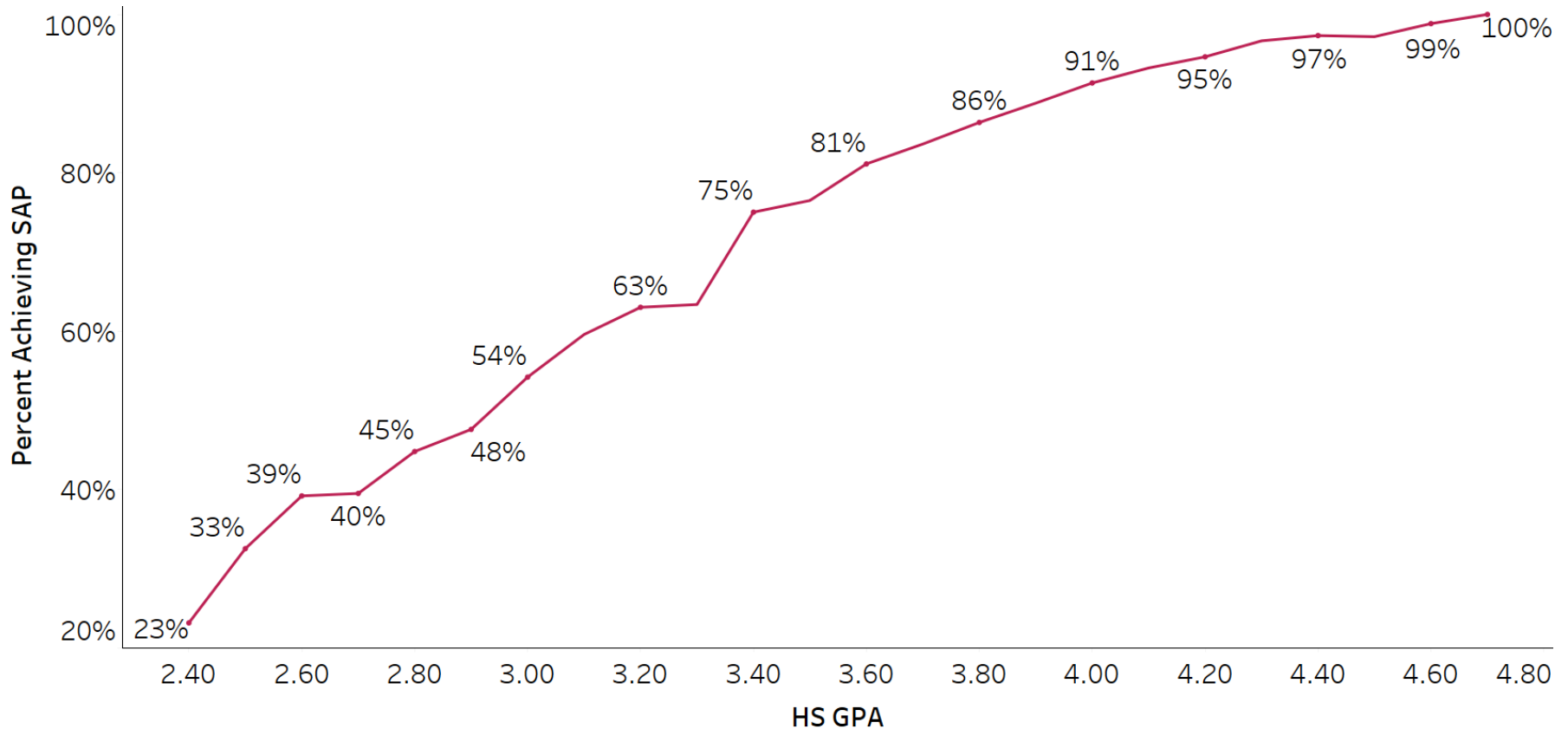
(Incoming Class of NC Public High School Grads, 2022)



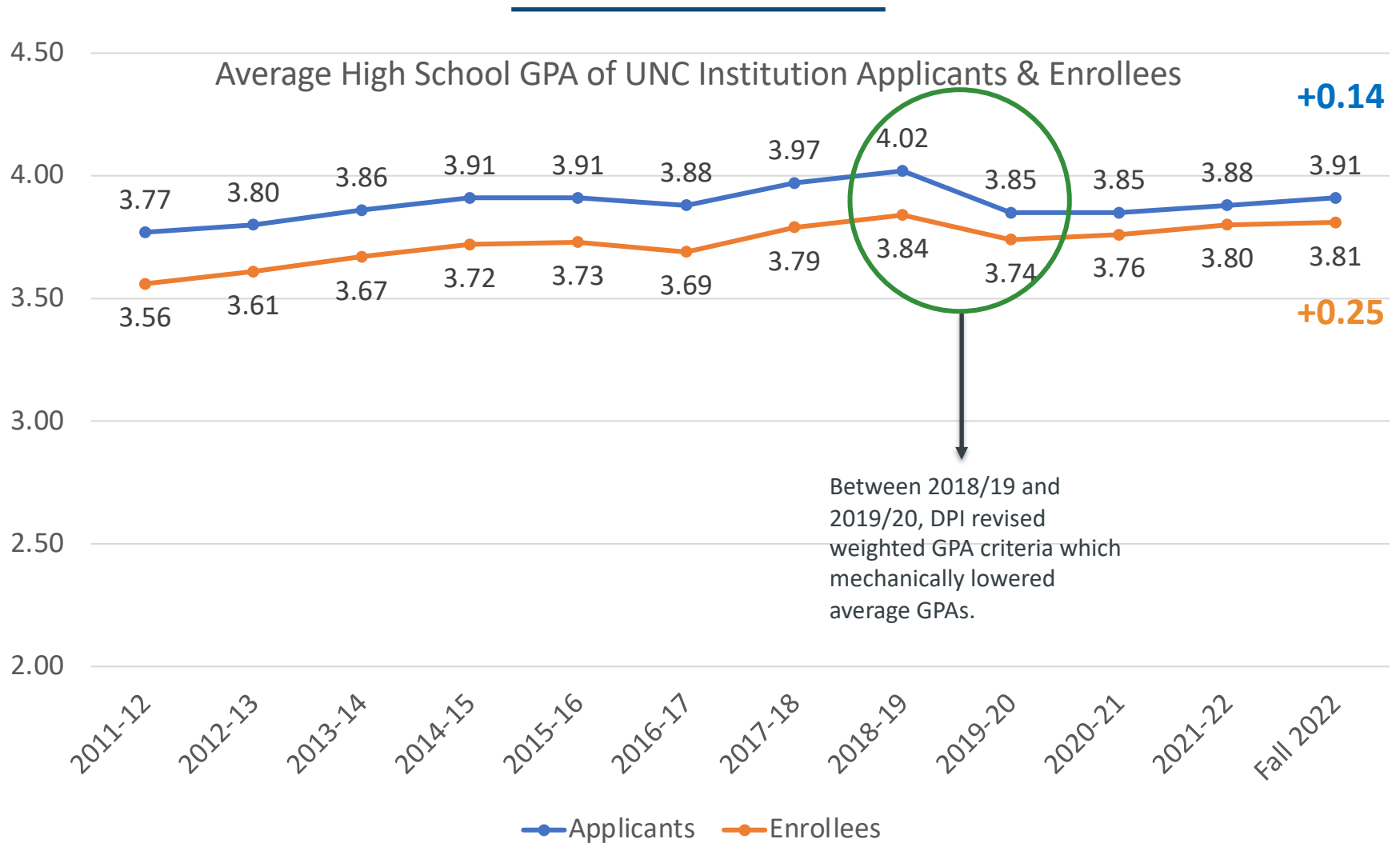
GPA is a Strong Predictor of Student Success...

Percent Achieving SAP by HS GPA

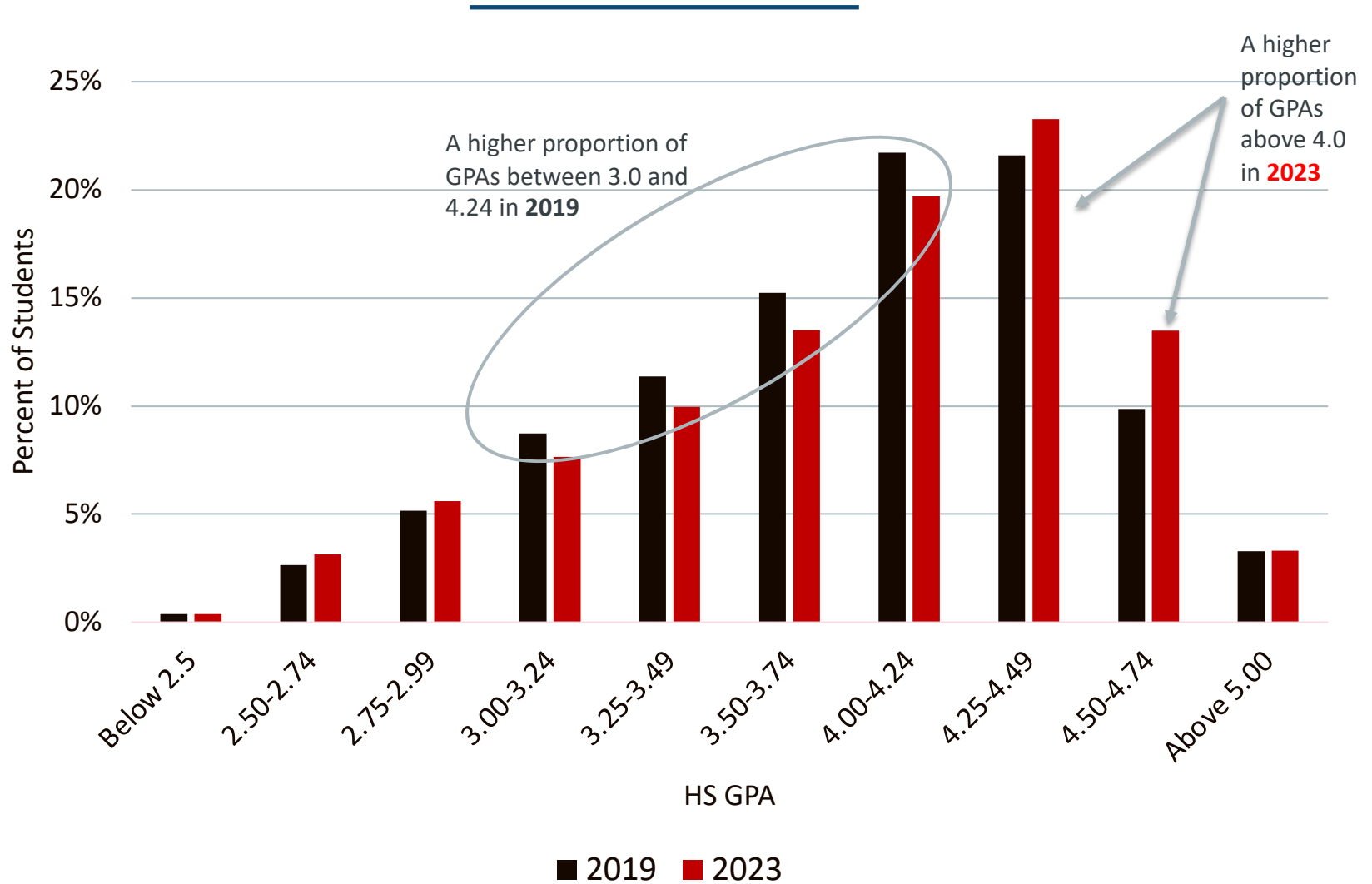
(Incoming Class of North Carolina Public High School Grads, 2022)



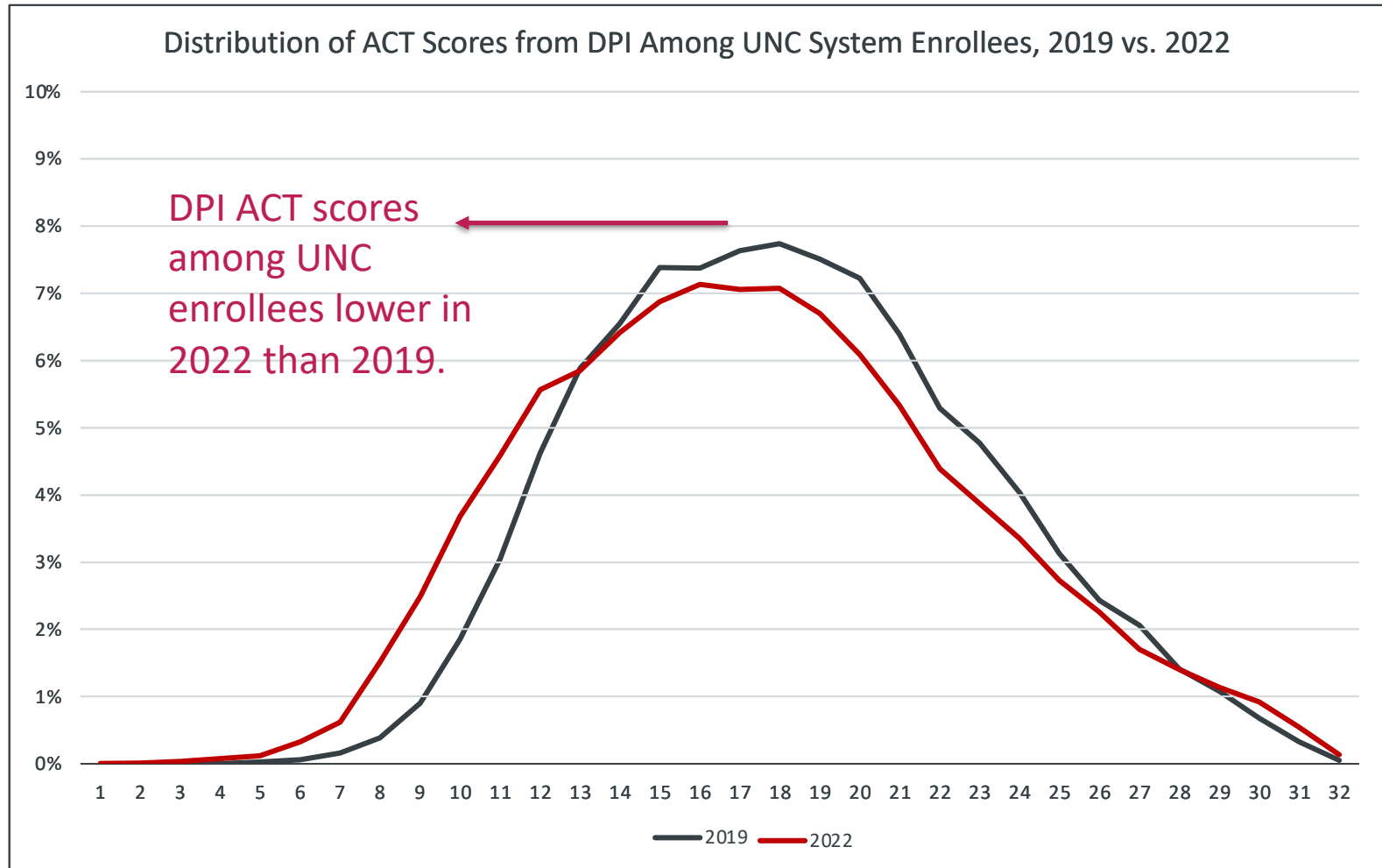
... But There is Evidence of Grade Inflation



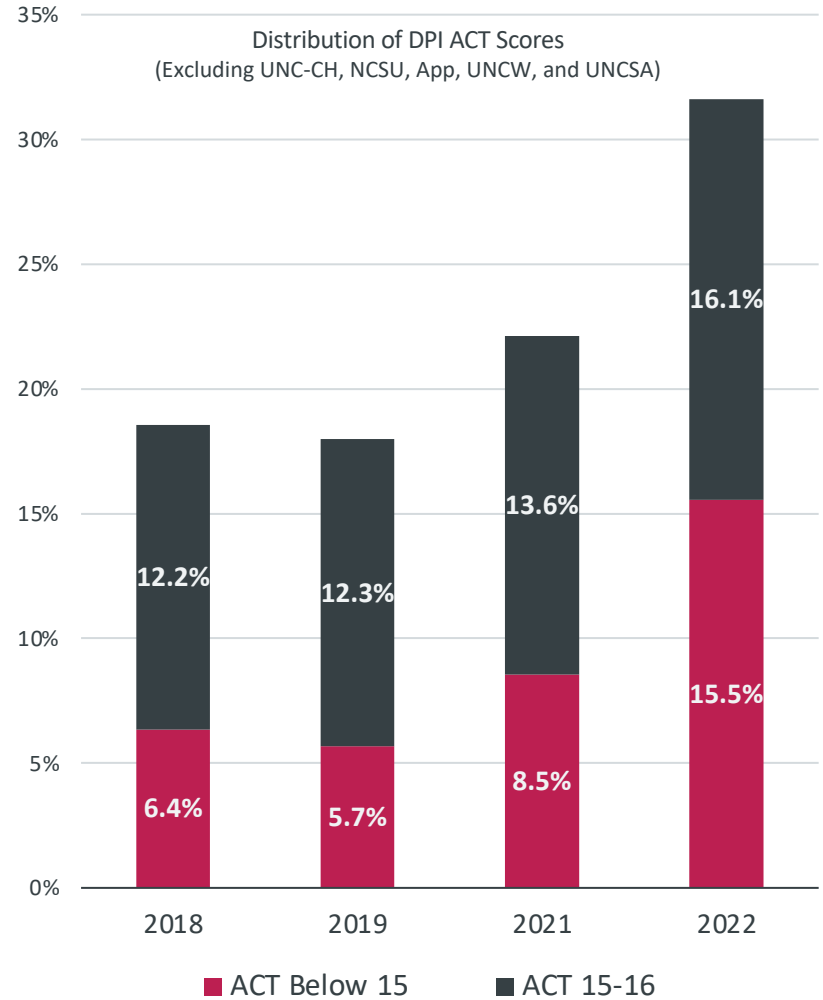
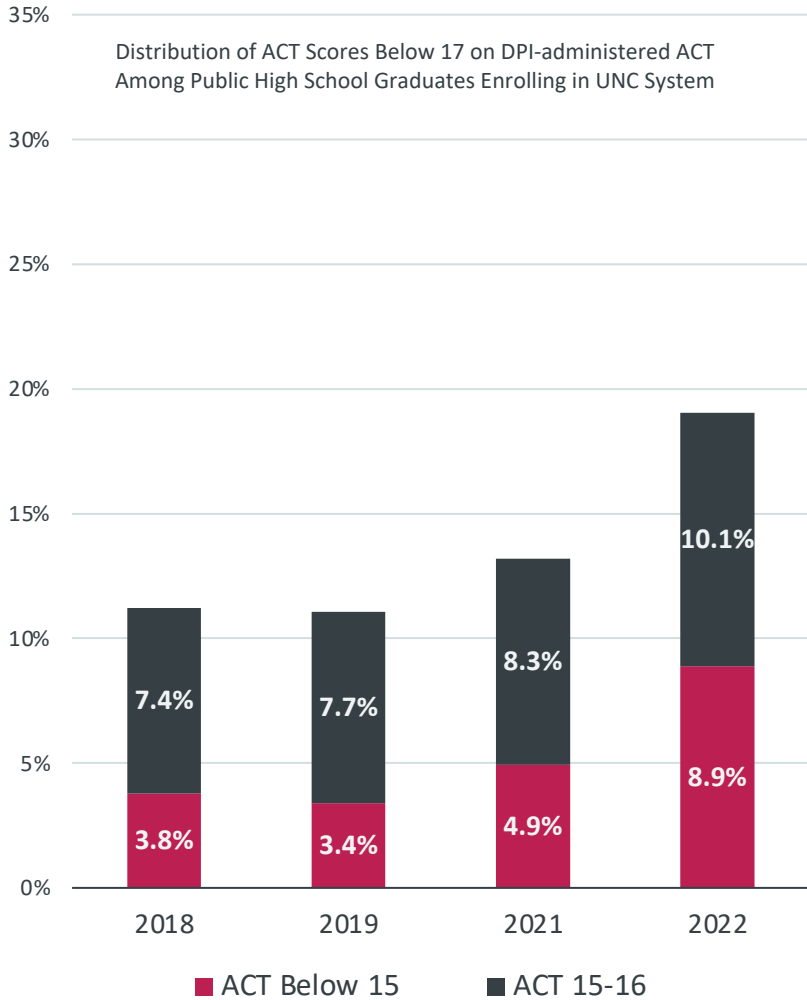
Evidence of Increased GPAs Among UNC Enrollees (2019 vs. 2023)



Trends in ACT Scores Among UNC System Enrollees (DPI Data)

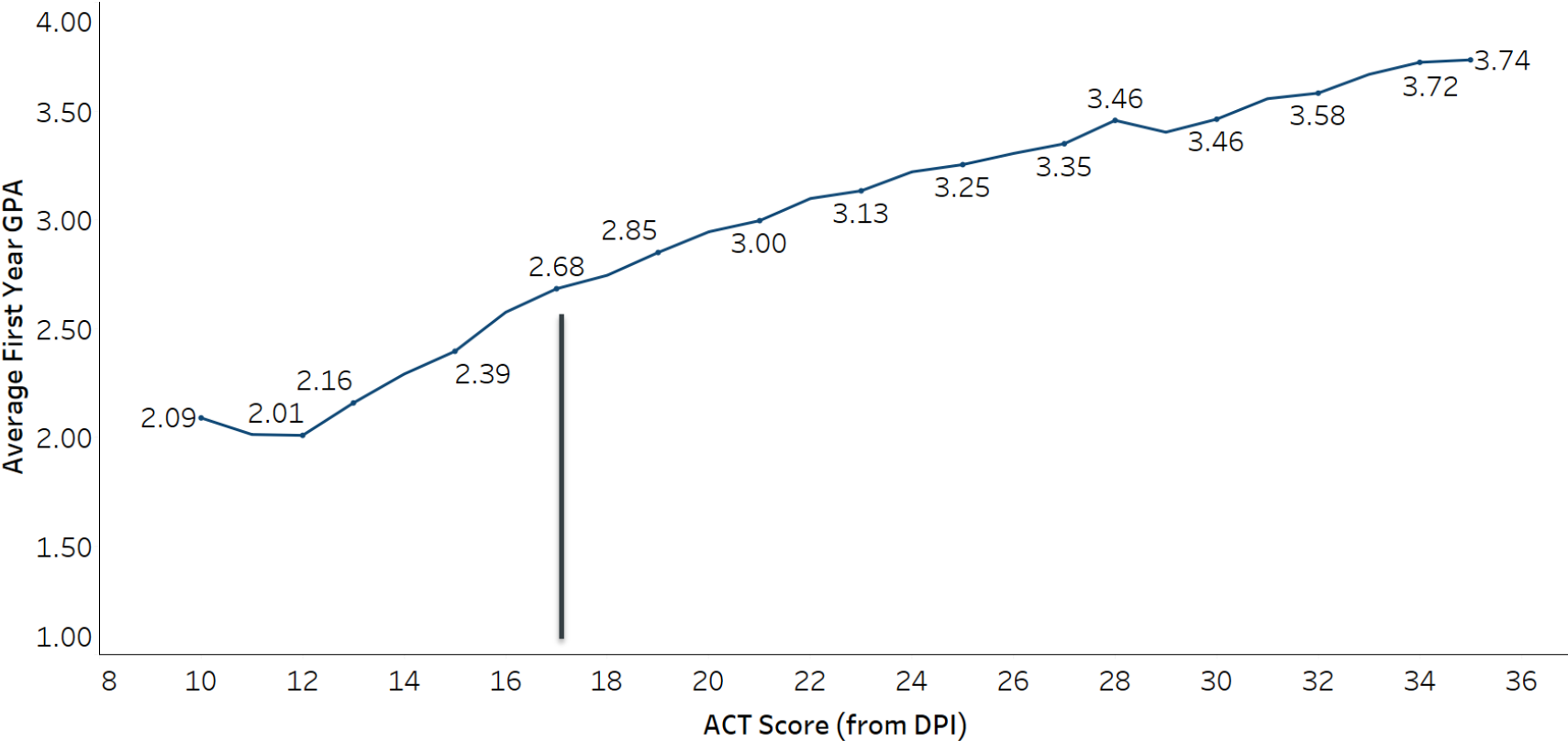


Distribution of DPI ACT Scores Below 17 Among Enrollees Over Time



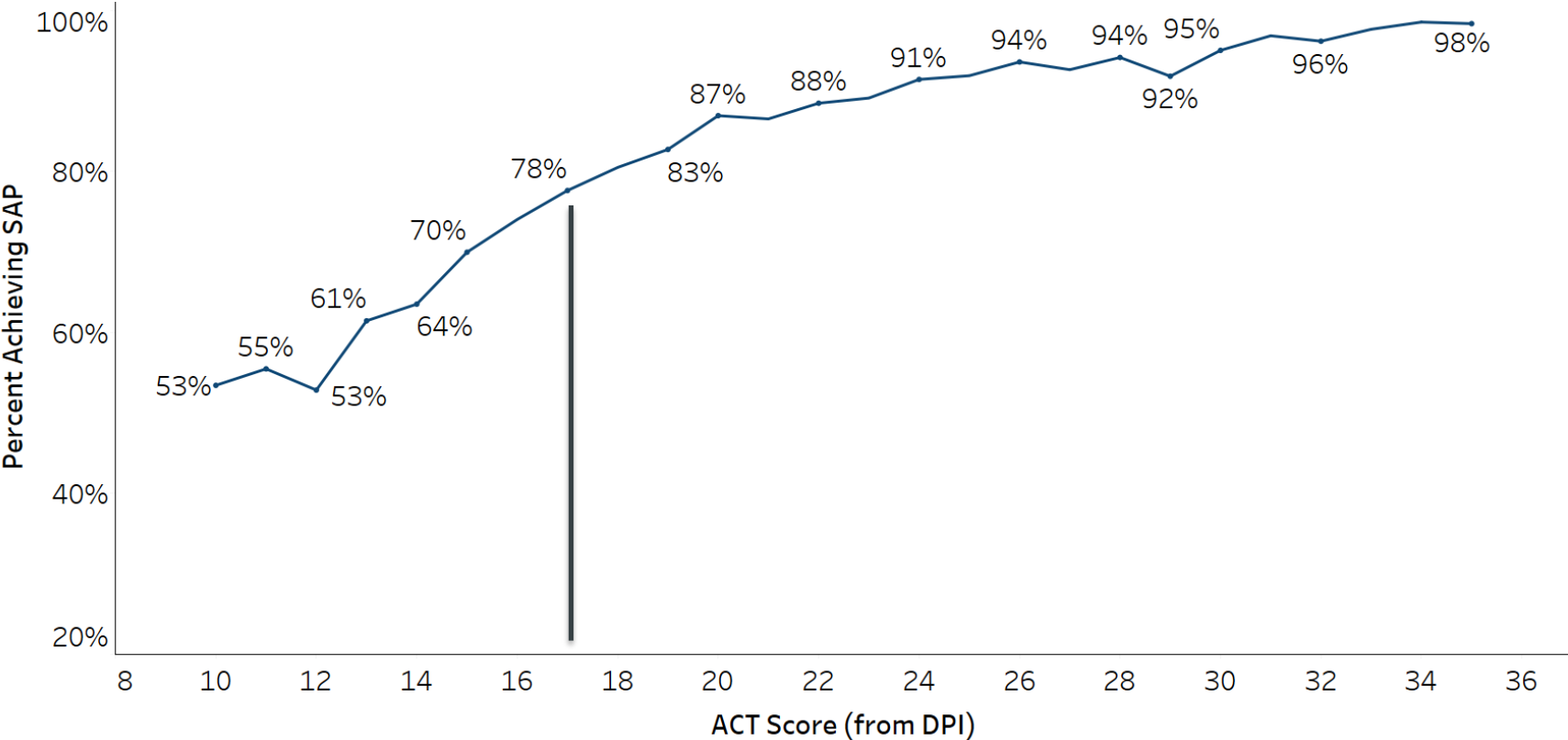
ACT Scores are Also Predictive of Student Success

Average First-Year GPA by DPI ACT Score



ACT Scores are Also Predictive of Student Success

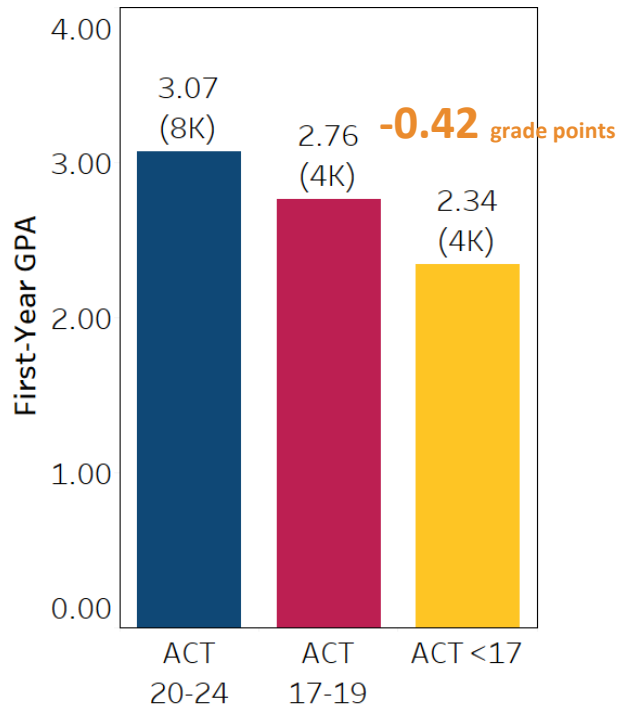
Percent Achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress by DPI ACT Score



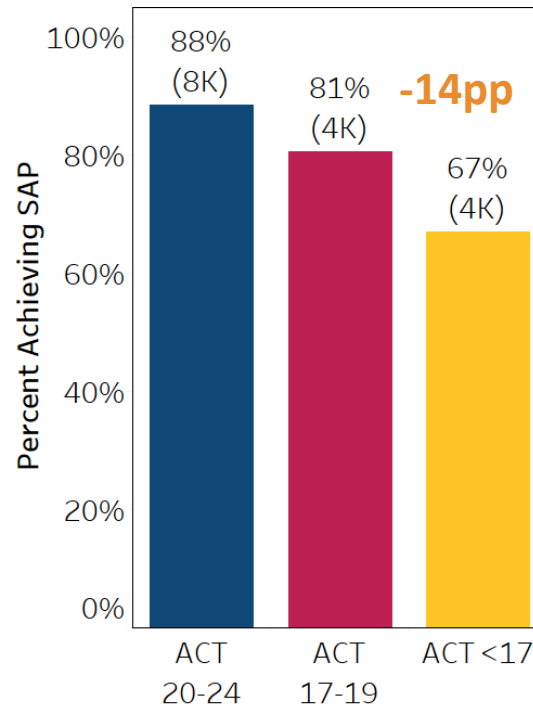
What Happened Under the Waiver?

Outcomes for First-year Students by DPI ACT Score
(Fall 2022 Incoming Class--NC Public High School Graduates Only)

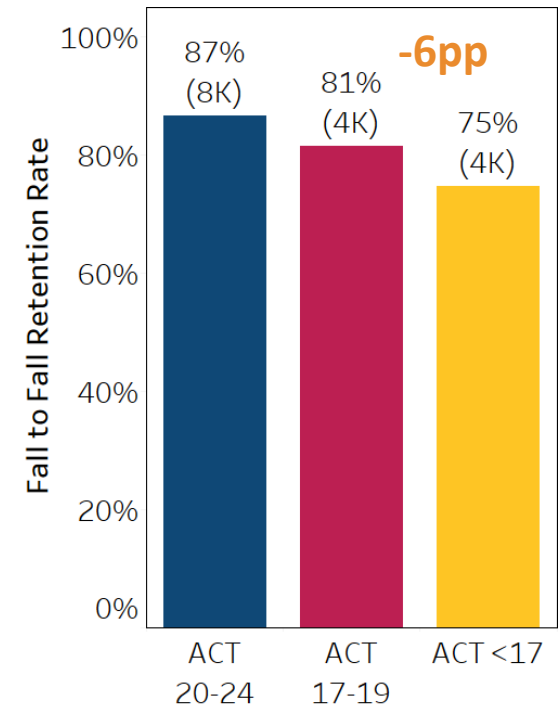
First-year GPA



Satisfactory Academic Progress



Fall-to-Fall Retention



Notes: Differences between the three groups are statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

What Impact Would Draft Policy Have?



We estimate that **548** first-year students from North Carolina public high schools would not have met the proposed 700.1.1 in 2022 (out of 23,565 total first-year students from NC high schools).

Of those, **346 of them (63%)** did not make SAP, were not retained anywhere in the System through their sophomore fall, or both.

That is **3.7x** the rate (17%) among the first-year class that made proposed MAR.

All **548** students would have been admitted under the policy that will be in place if waiver expires (GPA>2.5)

Options

- **Let waiver expire:**
 - Returns to MAR of 2.5 GPA **OR** 19 on ACT/1010 on SAT for Fall 2025.
 - Test scores required, but do not matter for minimum admission requirements if GPA is over 2.5.
 - The 2020 policy set to expire before Fall 2026, putting the issue back on the Board’s agenda.
- **Consider proposed draft of 700.1.1 in April (pending any further revision):**
 - By Fall 2025, requires test scores from students between 2.5 and 2.8 GPA.
 - By Fall 2026, enables students between 2.5 and 2.8 to “test in” by providing evidence of readiness (ACT>17 or SAT>930)
 - Enables individual campuses to require tests of all applicants, conditional on approval of President and BOG.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Follow-up Questions

Q: How many applicants have submitted test scores while the waiver has been in place?

A: Under the testing waiver, majority of applicants *did not* submit a test score:

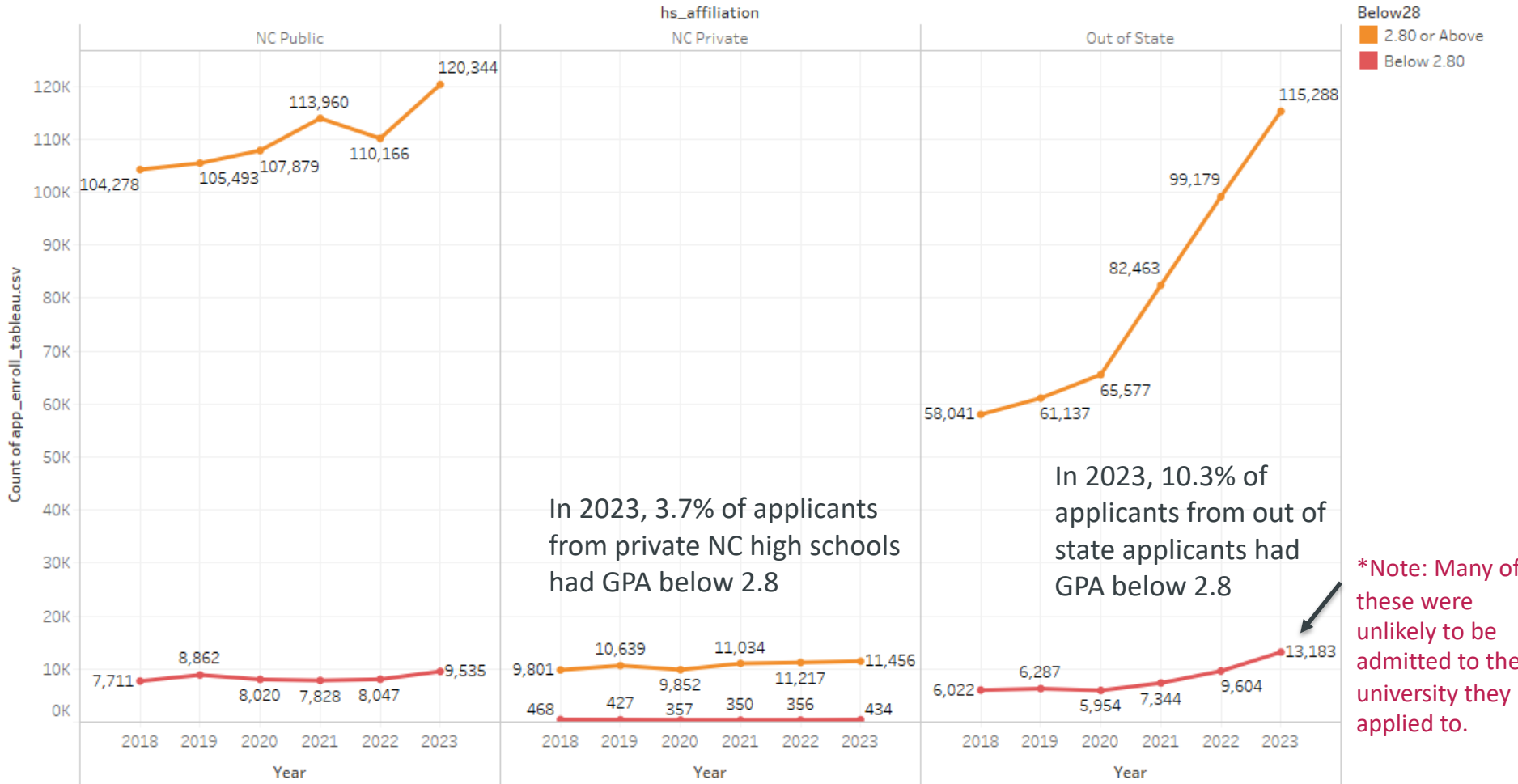
	Percentage that <i>did not</i> submit a score	
	2021	2022
Applicants	59%	64%
Enrollees	44%	49%

Note: Under a data-sharing agreement with the Department of Public Instruction, campuses are provided ACT score data for public high school students (with parental consent) for recruiting purposes. Data are typically provided in the fall.

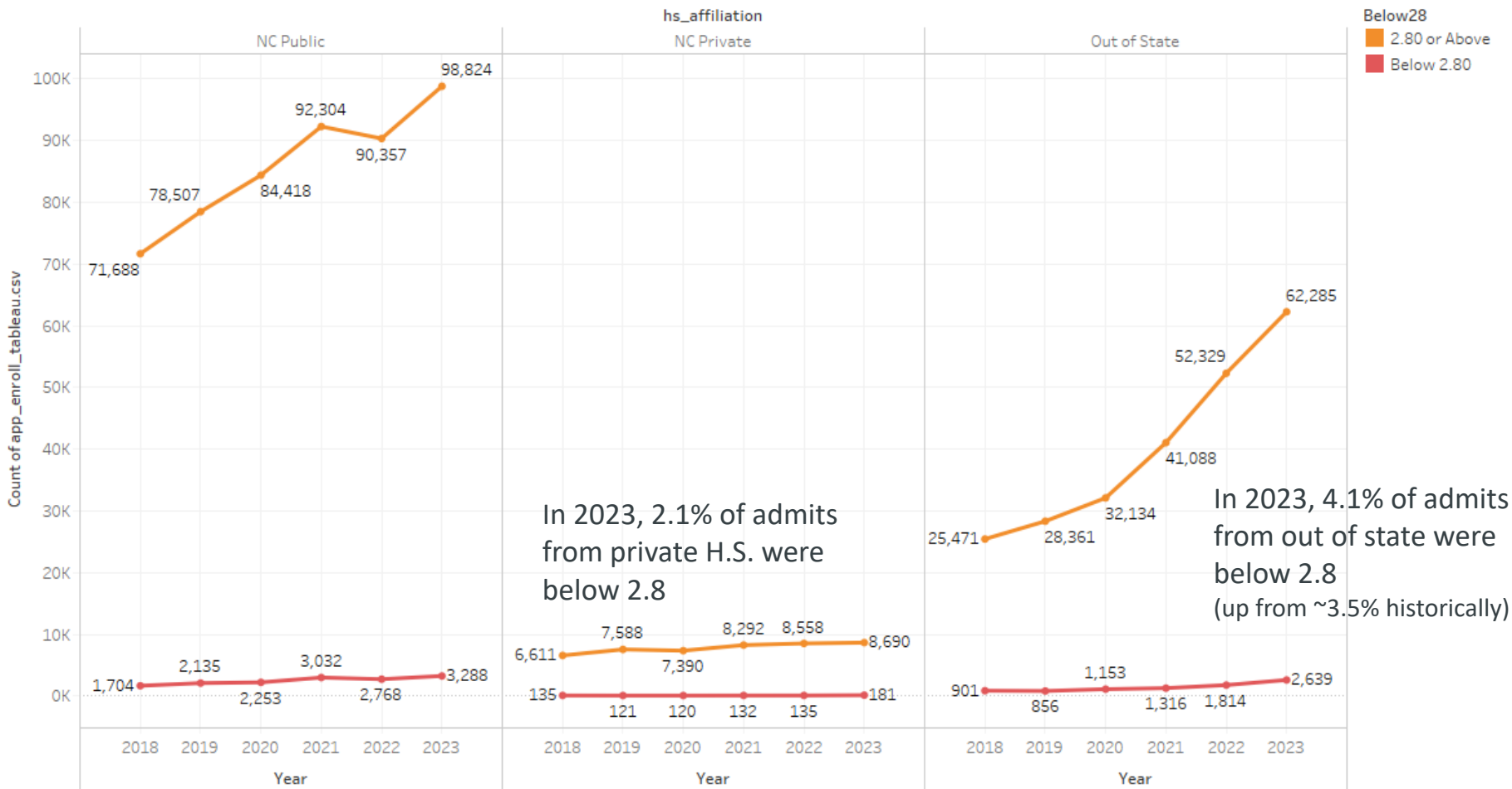
Q: (Peer institutions) How many applicants to UNC universities also consider attending a (BOG-approved) peer institution?

A: Of the 217,170 unique applicants from NC public HS students to the UNC System between 2018 and 2022, **1.4%** (2,986) wound up enrolling at a university on the BOG-approved peer institution list.

Follow-up Questions: Implications for Private H.S. and Out-of-State *Applicants*

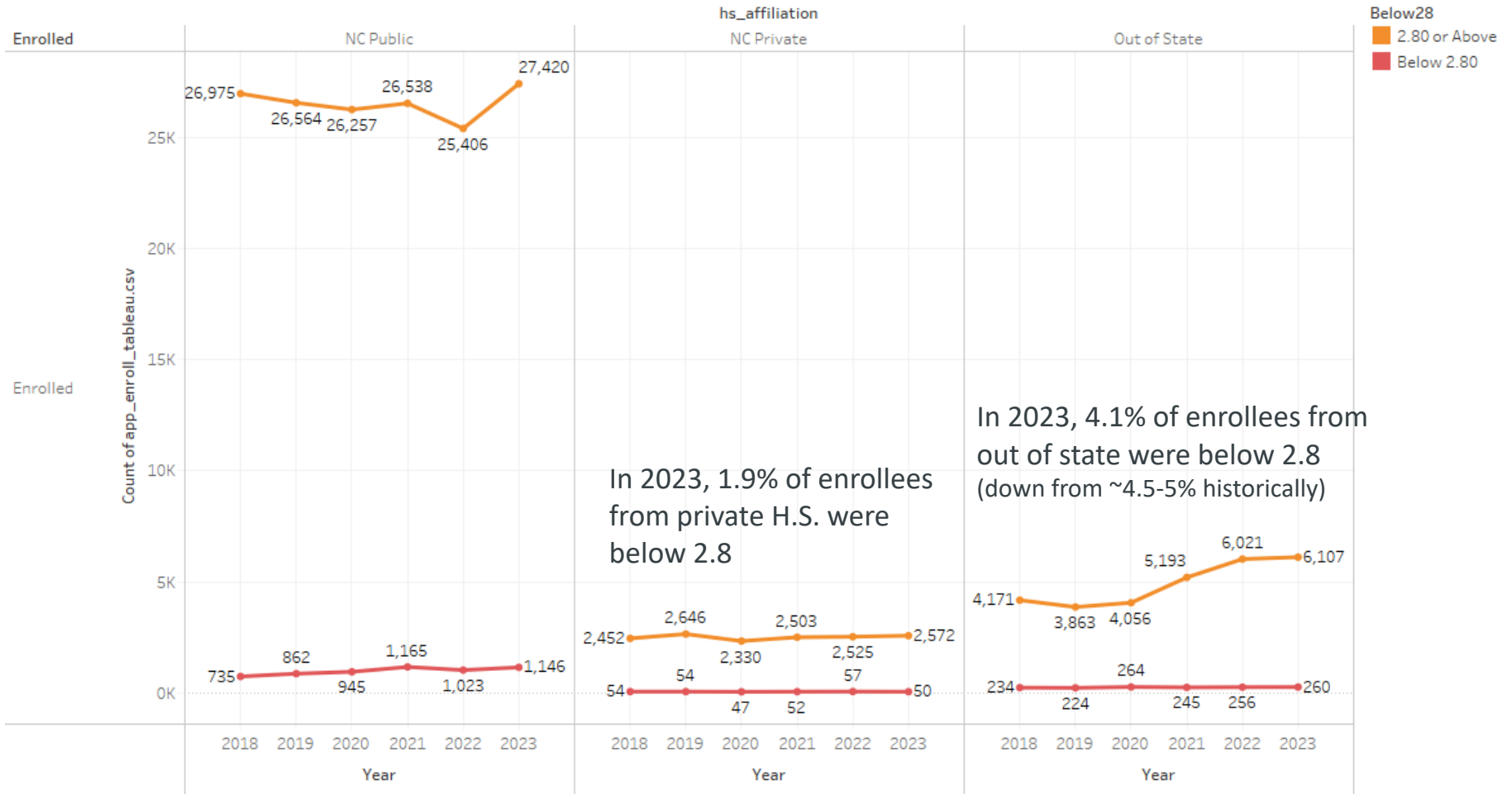


Follow-up Questions: Implications for Private H.S. and Out-of-State *Admits*



Follow-up Questions: Implications for Private H.S. and Out-of-State *Enrollees*

Count of Enrolled By GPA Cutoff



Follow-up Questions: Implications for Private and Out-of-State Students

Note that a subset of these Private H.S. and Out-of-state applicants submitted ACT scores *above 17* and would be eligible under the draft policy.

In-state Private H.S.				Out of State H.S.			
	Below 2.8 HS GPA	Below 2.8 H.S. GPA & Below 17	Difference		Below 2.8 HS GPA	Below 2.8 HS GPA & Below 17	Difference
Applied	3.7%	3.2%	0.5pp	Applied	10.3%	9.5%	0.8pp
Admitted	2.0%	1.8%	0.2pp	Admitted	4.1%	3.8%	0.3pp
Enrolled	1.9%	1.7%	0.2pp	Enrolled	4.1%	3.5%	0.6pp

Additional Considerations

- **Effective date:** Draft should clarify that students admitted in spring 2025 would not be subject to new requirements.
- **Effective date:** Should testing requirements in the draft policy be implemented later than the draft policy intends?
- **Evaluation date:** Should a scheduled report and update be included in the policy draft?

Additional Considerations

- **Chancellor's Exception:** Increase the percentage to two percent or higher, recognizing that institutions could benefit from additional flexibility in this highly competitive enrollment market.
- **Chancellor's Exception:** Add a “floor,” whereby all institutions would have up to one percent of admitted applicants or a fixed number of exceptions (~75), whichever is higher, recognizing that the fixed percentage provides less flexibility for smaller institutions.



DISCUSSION

Alternate Proposal #1

- V. B. For students entering in the Fall 2026 semester and beyond:
- a. High School GPA: A minimum weighted GPA of 2.5
 - b. Standardized Test Scores:
 - i. Students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.50 and less than 2.80 are required to submit a standardized test score of a 17 or higher on the ACT or a 930 or higher on the SAT;
 - ii. The chancellor of each respective constituent institution may, subject to the approval of their Board of Trustees ~~president and the Board of Governors~~, require all students with a weighted high school GPA of 2.80 or above to also submit a standardized test score. The Board of ~~Governors~~ Trustees must grant any such approval before December 1, two years prior to the implementation of the additional requirement, and report the decision to the UNC System Office.

Alternate Proposal #2

- V. B. For students entering in the Fall 2026 semester and beyond:
- a. High School GPA: A minimum weighted GPA of 2.5
 - b. Standardized Test Scores:
 - i. **All students must submit a standardized test score (ACT or SAT).** Students with a weighted high school GPA greater than or equal to 2.50 and less than 2.80 are required to submit a standardized test score of a 17 or higher on the ACT or a 930 or higher on the SAT.
 - ~~ii. The chancellor of each respective constituent institution may, subject to the approval of the president and the Board of Governors, require all students with a weighted high school GPA of 2.80 or above to also submit a standardized test score. The Board of Governors must grant any such approval before December 1, two years prior to the implementation of the additional requirement.~~