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All Montana colleges to take part in new program to test college-bound high-school seniors

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FOR RELEASE AFTER 8 A. M. TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

(Note to Editors: Mr. Smith has agreed to coordinate release of this story with announcements that will be made at press conferences in Iowa City and New York on the morning of September 8. The release is for after 9 a. m. CST - or after 8 a. m. MST. We assured Mr. Smith that the Montana media will abide by the designated release time. Thanks.)

ADVANCE - - All Montana colleges and the state university will take part in a new program to test college-bound high-school seniors on their potential for college success, according to Registrar Leo Smith of Montana State University. Montana students will be tested simultaneously with students in a dozen other states on November 7, he said.

Montana's participation in the American College Testing program was announced Tuesday by Smith, who will serve as state coordinator for the program. ACT is designed to provide comparable information on all students seeking college admission, regardless of where they live within the participating states, he said.

Smith said that results of the tests will be used by Montana colleges for admission and placement purposes, for granting scholarships, loans, and other awards, and for counseling purposes. Test results will be used by the high-school senior and his adviser to help in making sound vocational and college choices.

Tests will be administered on the campuses of Montana's private and public colleges and the state university to college-bound high-school seniors in their areas. Test answer sheets will be sent to the American College Testing center at the State University of Iowa for scoring on special high-speed electronic equipment which can score tests and report results at the rate of 6,000 answer sheets per hour. Individual test results will be reported to the colleges designated by the high-school seniors, and also to their high schools, within a short time after the test date.

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Scoring and reporting services required by the cooperative ACT program will be provided by the Measurement Research Center, Inc., a nonprofit corporation directed by State University of Iowa officials and devoted to research in automatic test processing for promoting better testing practices in schools, Smith explained.

Tests to be used in the new ACT program will measure general intellectual ability through testing competence in English, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences. Scores on the English and mathematics tests will be used by many of the Montana colleges to determine which class or sections the incoming freshmen should be assigned to, Smith said. The total score on the four-test battery will provide a comprehensive indication of the student's general scholastic ability and his chances for college success, he added.

Cost of the program will be met by charging each student a \$3 fee, Smith said. The fee will pay for development, administration, and scoring of the tests. There will be no charge to participating colleges. The relatively low cost per student - much less than the cost of many existing programs - is achieved primarily through the use of the high-speed scoring equipment, Smith explained.

One of the chief advantages of the ACT program, according to Smith, is that it will provide colleges with completely comparable admissions and placement tests data on students enrolling from other states - information now obtainable only on a very few students. Other advantages include the economy and efficiency inherent in a widescale program and the feasibility of providing much more useful information to both colleges and high schools, he said.

Participation in the ACT program will also enable colleges to eliminate a number of separate entrance, scholarship, and placement examinations now in use, Smith continued. The present variety of similar tests is costly and frustrating to

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high-school teachers and administrators, college officials, parents, and students, he said.

With testing to be done on a Saturday each time and on college campuses, ACT tests should not interfere with crowded high-school calendars, Smith noted. In addition to receiving reports on the ACT scores, participating high schools will also get reports on their graduates' freshman grades in college, Smith added.

Students who do not participate in the testing program on November 7 will have a chance to take the tests some time next winter, according to Smith. Those who subsequently enroll from states not participating in ACT may take the tests when they arrive at individual colleges.

From 100,000 to 200,000 high-school seniors are expected to take the first year's tests, Smith said. They will be drawn from the following states, each of which will conduct the program on a statewide basis: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Wisconsin. California will begin taking part in the program early in 1960.

With the number of college freshmen expected to increase from 711,000 in 1959 to 1,267,000 by 1969, colleges throughout the country will find it increasingly difficult to select students who may profit most from higher education and to place them in the right freshman classes, Smith noted. He predicted that the ACT program will go far toward solving these problems by providing a single college admissions testing program.

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