



Educational testing service relies on SAS® to shine light on college readiness

ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides assessment, research, information and program management solutions in the areas of education and workforce development. It is best known for administering the ACT college entrance exam to high school students. With SAS, ACT's Department of Education and Workforce Research Services (EWRS) can efficiently provide thousands of customized reports to ACT staff, high schools, school districts, states, regions, and national and governmental organizations.

Industry

Education

Business Issue

The testing service needs to crunch large volumes of data quickly.

Solution

SAS 9.2

Benefit

Using SAS, the department produces thousands of year-end reports.

At A Glance

Organization challenges

- More than 2 million high school students take the ACT each year – some more than once.
- ACT EWRS needs to provide summary reporting at the school, district, state, regional and national levels, being careful not to count students twice. It also provides custom reports to colleges and universities.

Sticking with SAS®

- The testing service is a longtime SAS customer. “We’ve never considered any other product,” says Robert Ziomek, Director, Department of Education and Workforce Research Services, Education Division.
- ACT researchers like the SAS solution’s file-handling capabilities, its ability to manipulate data from multiple sources and the ease of working with very large data sets.

Staying efficient

- ACT researchers can process reports that might take 10 or more hours using conventional processes and do them in a few hours with SAS.
- Annually, thousands of reports are sent to high schools, districts and states; the complex process of starting with millions of student records, selecting only those for the graduating class, edit checking, data analysis, report production, proofing, and mailing is accomplished in 4-6 weeks.
- The organization can also quickly turn out 300 to 500 custom reports each year for field staff, governmental organizations and custom requests.

Providing customized research

- ACT uses SAS to provide customized research to universities on how ACT scores and high school course selection affect readiness for different types of college classes.
- Every year, more than 2,000 “High School to College Success” reports are generated and sent to colleges, universities, school districts and schools.
- The testing service also uses SAS for predictive validity studies as well as course placement studies requested by colleges and universities.

Enhancing customer responsiveness

- “If we didn’t have a tool like SAS, I don’t think we could be as responsive to our customers, because a lot of times we need information right away and often that requires manipulating a lot of data. We depend heavily on SAS to do that,” Ziomek says.

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Director, Department of Education and Workforce Research Services, Research and Development Division

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