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CONTACT: Ken Gullette
Director, Media Relations
Phone: (319) 337-1028
E-mail: ken.gullette@act.org

Ed Colby
Senior Communications Associate
Phone: (319) 337-1028
Email: ed.colby@act.org

NOTE TO EDITORS/REPORTERS: This news release and accompanying documents report information about students in the high school graduating class of 2006 who took the ACT. Districts and schools receive similar information about their students. ACT releases only national and state data; ACT **does not release local district or school data.** You must contact district and school offices for local information.

Virginia ACT Scores Up Significantly in 2006 As Record Number of High School Grads Take Exam

IOWA CITY, IA—The average ACT composite score among Virginia high school graduates increased significantly this year as the number of test-takers in the state continued to rise. The state's 2006 graduates earned an average composite score of 21.1 on the college admission and placement exam, up from 20.8 last year and higher than any previous year since 1994. The ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36.

The Virginia average is on a par with the national average ACT score of 21.1, which increased this year from 20.9 in 2005.

The score results are based on a record number of 11,519 Virginia 2006 high school graduates who took the ACT at some point in their high school career, a 7 percent increase from last year and a 45 percent increase from 2002. This represents 15 percent of the state's 2006 high school graduating class. More than 1.2 million graduates, a record number, took the ACT nationally.

First Year for Writing Test Scores

Results from the optional ACT Writing Test, launched in February 2005, are reported this year for the first time. Forty-three percent of Virginia's ACT-tested 2006 grads elected to take the exam, compared to slightly more than a third (36%) nationally. The majority of four-year colleges and universities in Virginia and across the country

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did not require that students submit writing scores for fall 2006 admission.

Virginia graduates who took the Writing Test earned an average score of 7.6 (on a scale of 2 to 12) on the exam, only slightly lower than the national average score of 7.7.

Virginia Test-Takers Better Prepared for College Courses

Score results suggest Virginia's ACT-tested 2006 high school graduates are better prepared for college than those in recent graduating classes. The percent of the state's test-takers who met or surpassed ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks rose this year in all four subject areas: math (up by 4% each compared to 2005), science, reading (up by 2% each) and English (up by 1%). In addition, the percent of ACT-tested graduates in Virginia who met all four College Readiness Benchmarks increased by 2 percent compared to last year.

ACT results nevertheless suggest many ACT-tested Virginia graduates are lacking at least some of the skills they will need to do well in college coursework, particularly in the areas of math and science, where the majority fall short of the College Readiness Benchmark scores.

- 70 percent met or surpassed ACT's College Readiness Benchmark score in English (a score of 18), compared to 69 percent nationally;
- 44 percent met or surpassed the College Readiness Benchmark score in math (a score of 22), compared to 42 percent nationally;
- 53 percent met or surpassed the College Readiness Benchmark score in reading (a score of 21), compared to 53 percent nationally;
- 26 percent met or surpassed the College Readiness Benchmark score in Science (a score of 24), compared to 27 percent nationally.
- 21 percent met or surpassed the College Readiness Benchmark scores on all four tests, compared to 21 percent nationally.

ACT research suggests that students who reach the College Readiness Benchmark scores have a high probability of earning a "C" or higher and a 50/50 chance of earning a

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“B” or higher in credit-bearing, first-year college courses such as English composition, algebra, biology, and social sciences, respectively.

Importance of Taking Challenging Courses

ACT score results point to the importance of taking a challenging program of courses in high school. Virginia students who reported taking ACT’s recommended core curriculum in high school—four years of English and three years each of math (algebra and higher), science, and social studies—earned an average composite score of 21.7 on the ACT, while those who took less than this core curriculum earned an average score two points lower—19.7.

Fewer than six in ten (58%) of ACT-tested Virginia 2006 grads reported taking the core curriculum, however, compared to 54 percent nationally. Another 22 percent of Virginia test-takers reported taking less than the recommended core, while 20 percent did not provide their course-taking information.

About the ACT

The ACT is a curriculum-based achievement test designed to measure the skills and knowledge taught in school and deemed important for first-year college students to possess. The ACT is made up of four separate exams in English, reading, mathematics and science, plus an optional writing test.

ACT scores are accepted at virtually all colleges and universities across the nation. The ACT is administered in all 50 states and is the predominant college entrance exam in 25 states.

ACT is a not-for-profit organization that serves millions of people in schools, colleges, professional associations, businesses, and government agencies with programs and services that have one guiding purpose — to help people achieve education and workplace success.

For more information about ACT, visit www.act.org.

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