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SAF's Practice ACT and SAT Tests are Important Resource

(HELENA) It's no surprise that practice makes perfect, and ACT and SAT tests are no exception to that rule, according to Kelly Chapman, executive vice president of Foundation Activities at Montana nonprofit Student Assistance Foundation (SAF).

"Recently, College Board — the nonprofit company that owns the commonly used SAT test — reported that the average combined scores on the SAT's mathematics and critical-reading sections for the graduating high school class of 2006 declined seven points from the previous year," she said. "While that drop may not be too drastic, any drop should be noted and taken seriously."

Chapman said her concern is based in the fact that Montana students who are taking the ACT and SAT tests may not be taking full advantage of the preparatory resources available to them — namely practice ACT and SAT tests located on SAF's program Web site, www.smartaboutcollege.org.

"On the Smart About College Web site, students can take three, free ACT tests and three, free SAT tests," she said. "By doing that, students become familiar with the types of questions they will be asked, receive detailed explanations of the answers, and identify areas where they should concentrate their study efforts."

Chapman added that College Board research indicates that students who take the SAT more than once typically see a 30-point increase in their combined score. ACT research shows similar results.

Chapman said the practice tests could be particularly helpful to Montana students because the state's Board of Regents of Higher Education has changed how it distributes honor scholarships in the Montana University System. In the past, the scholarships were awarded to students based on class ranking using grade point average. The new formula gives greater weight to ACT and SAT scores.

Student Assistance Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit Montana corporation that provides students with knowledge and tools to finance and pursue their postsecondary education. Funds generated by SAF are

returned to Montanans in the form of education grants and public benefit programs - to date more than \$10 million. For more information, visit www.safmt.org.