

Deciding Between the ACT and the SAT:

Can State- and College-Level Data Help?

analysis by Loren Dunn

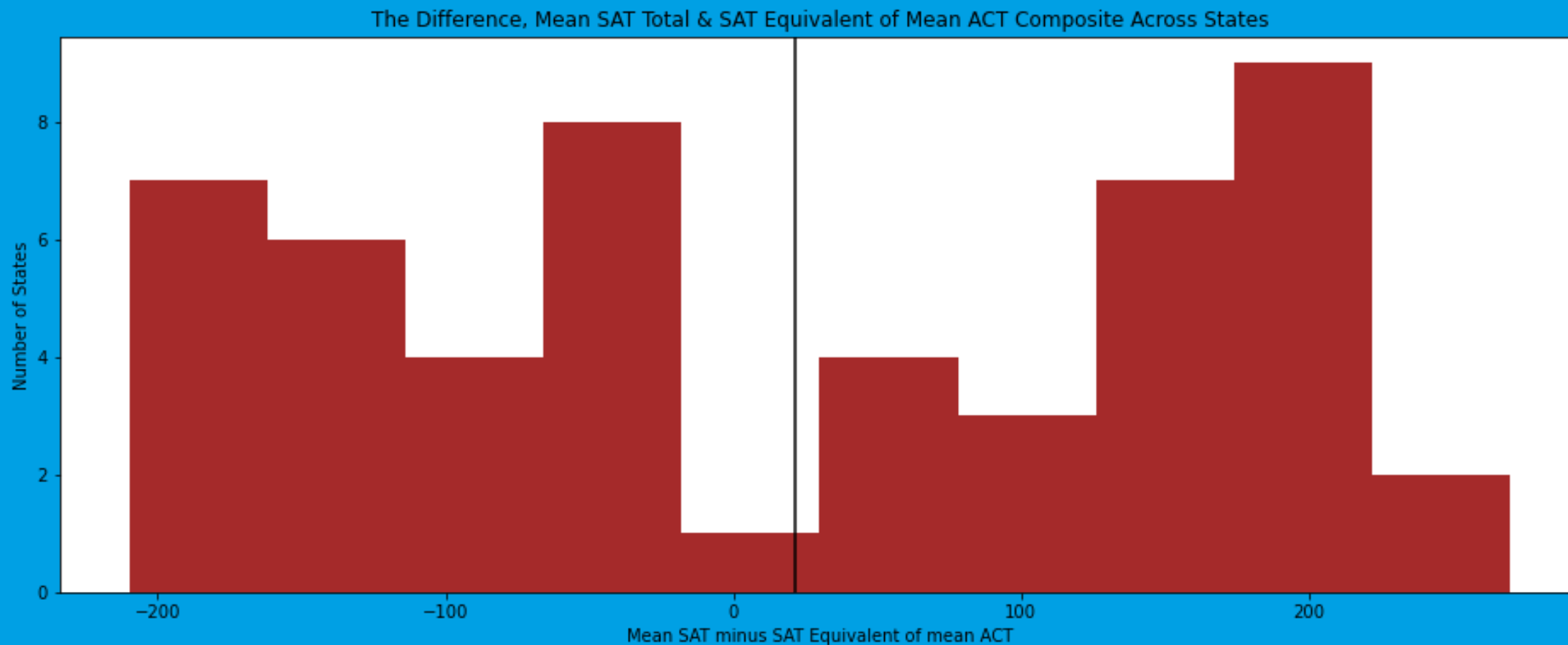


Photos from: <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/New-SAT-testing.jpg>;
<https://www.iii.org/article/do-i-need-insurance-child-going-away-college>

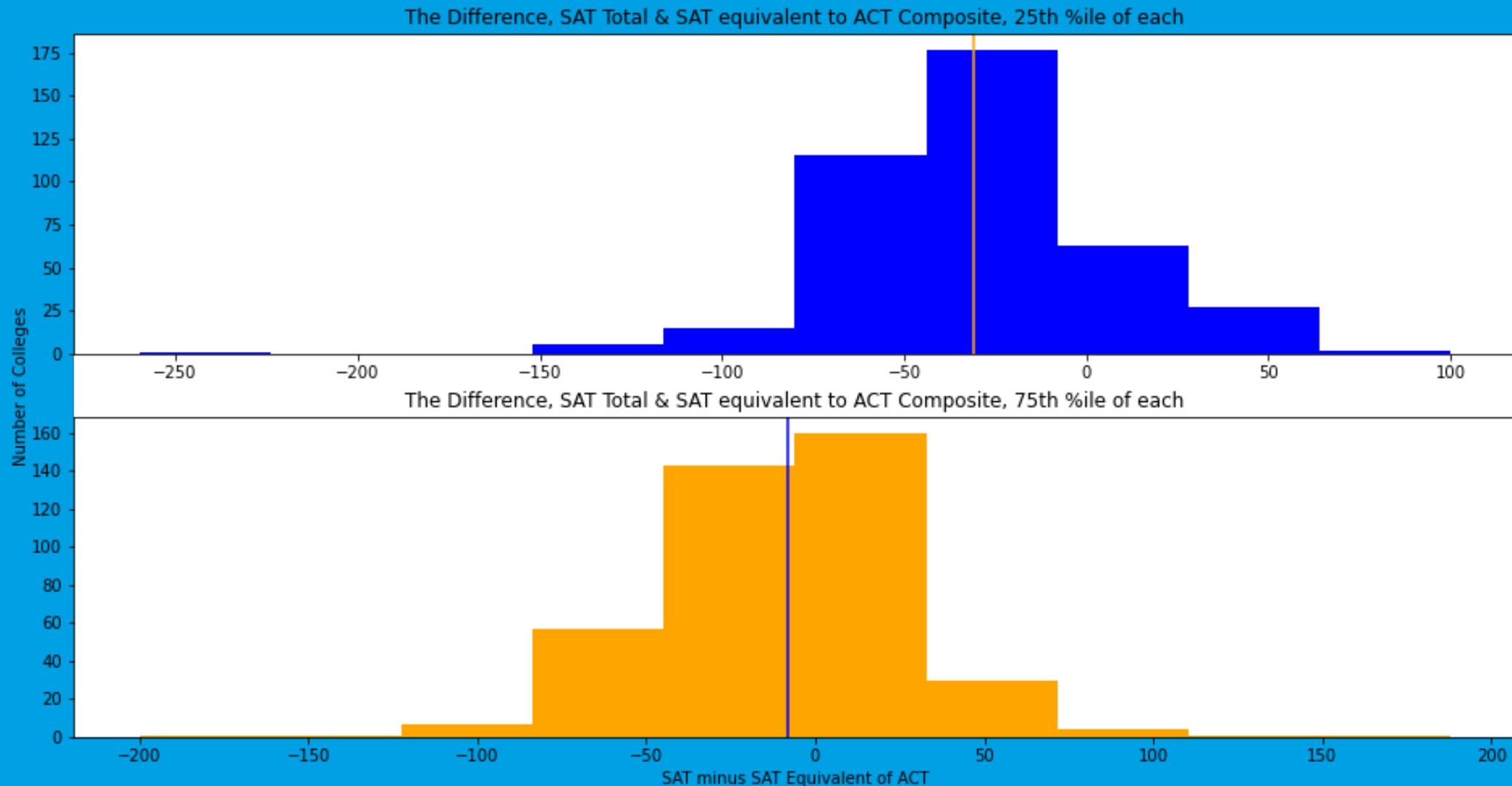
The Answer:

Yes, it appears state- and college-level data can provide helpful guidance for students deciding between the ACT and the SAT.

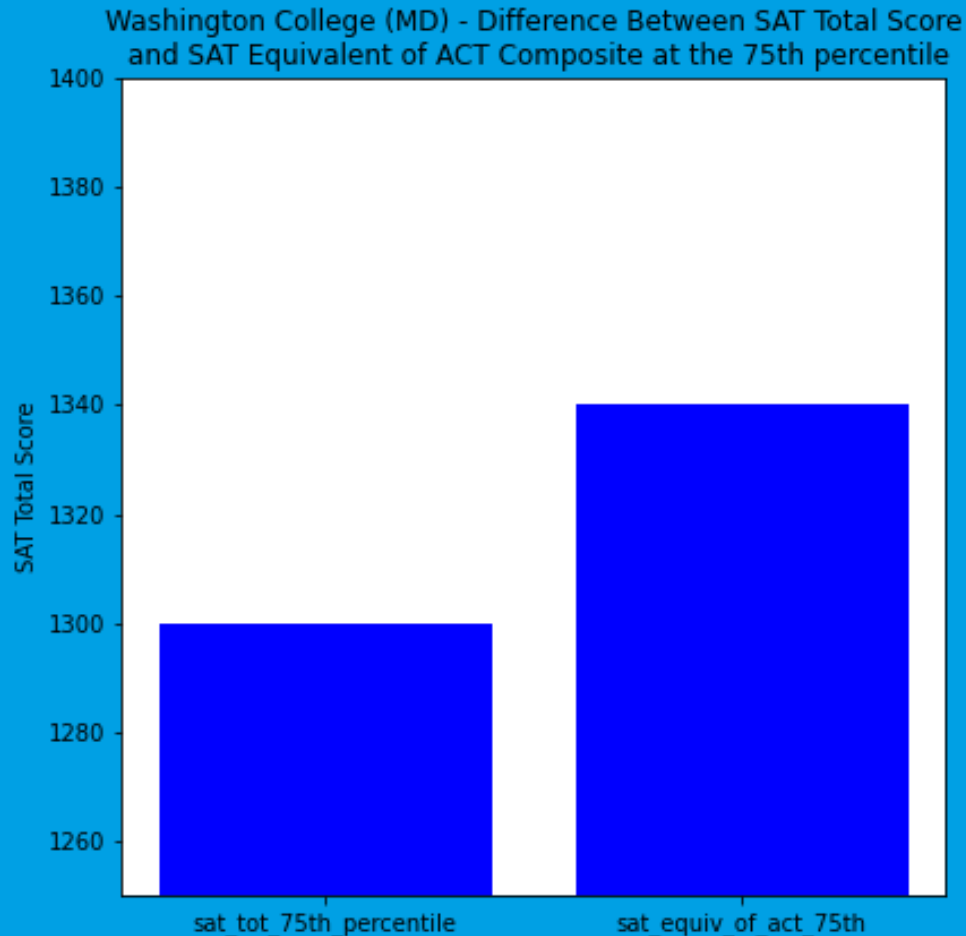
When converted to an equivalent SAT score, the mean ACT Composite can vary by over 200 points from the mean SAT Total Score



This pattern is less pronounced when looking at college-level data at the 25th and 75th percentiles, but there are still meaningful variations, especially at the 75th percentile.



Applicants are being compared to each other...
...so a student can gain an advantage by using the “weaker test”.

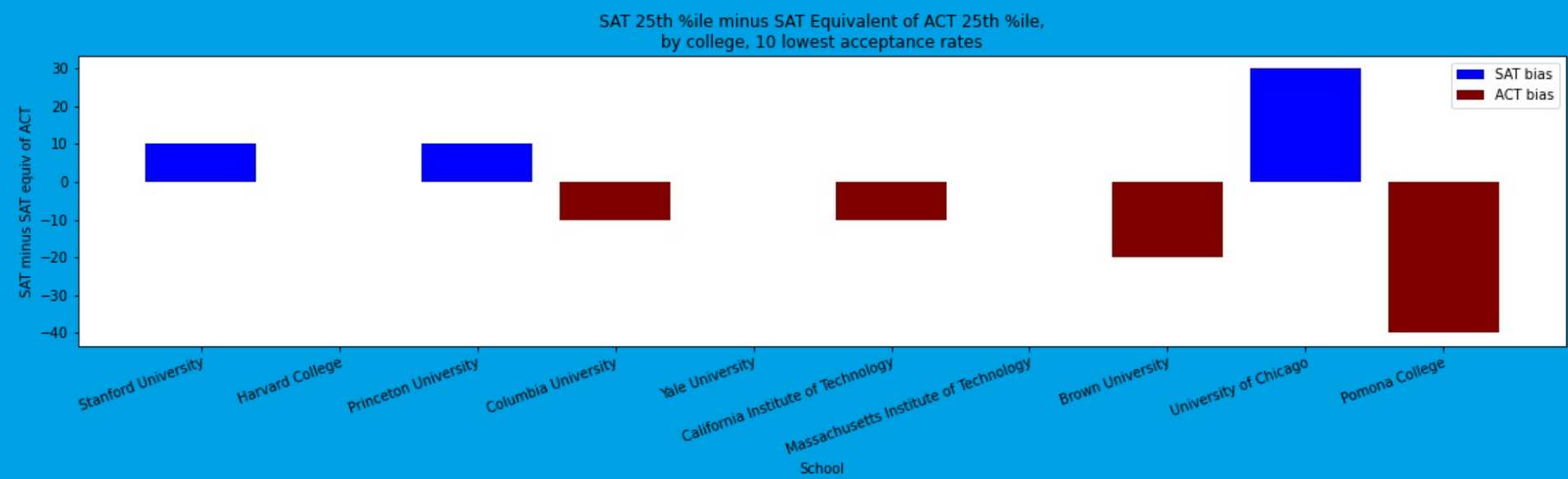
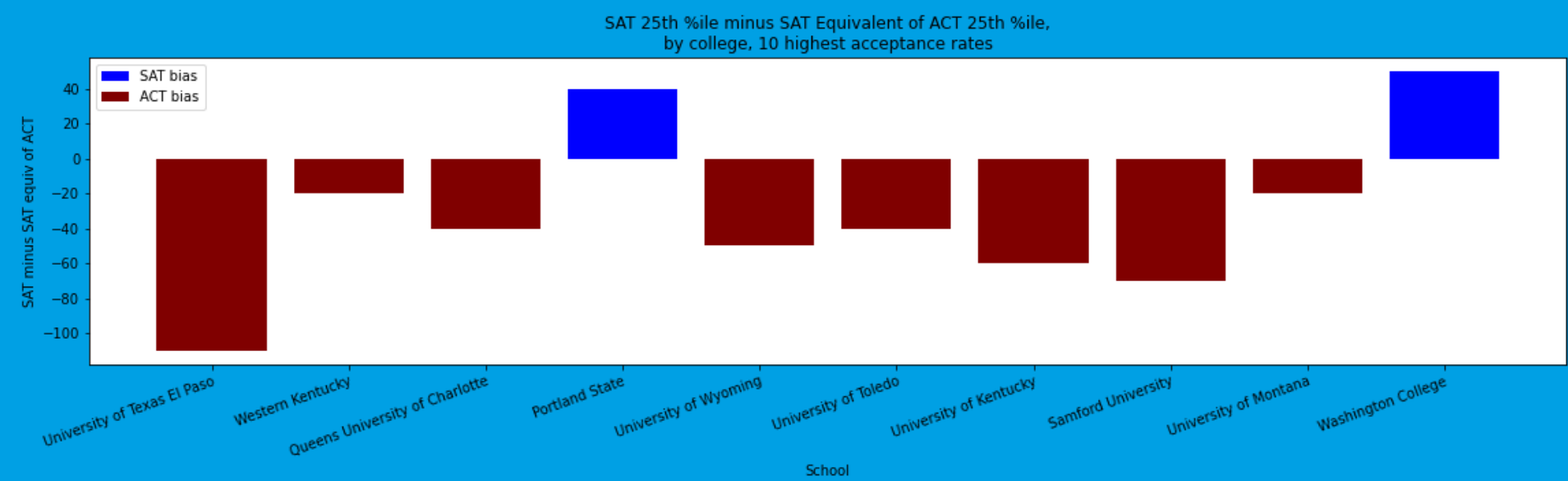


Example:

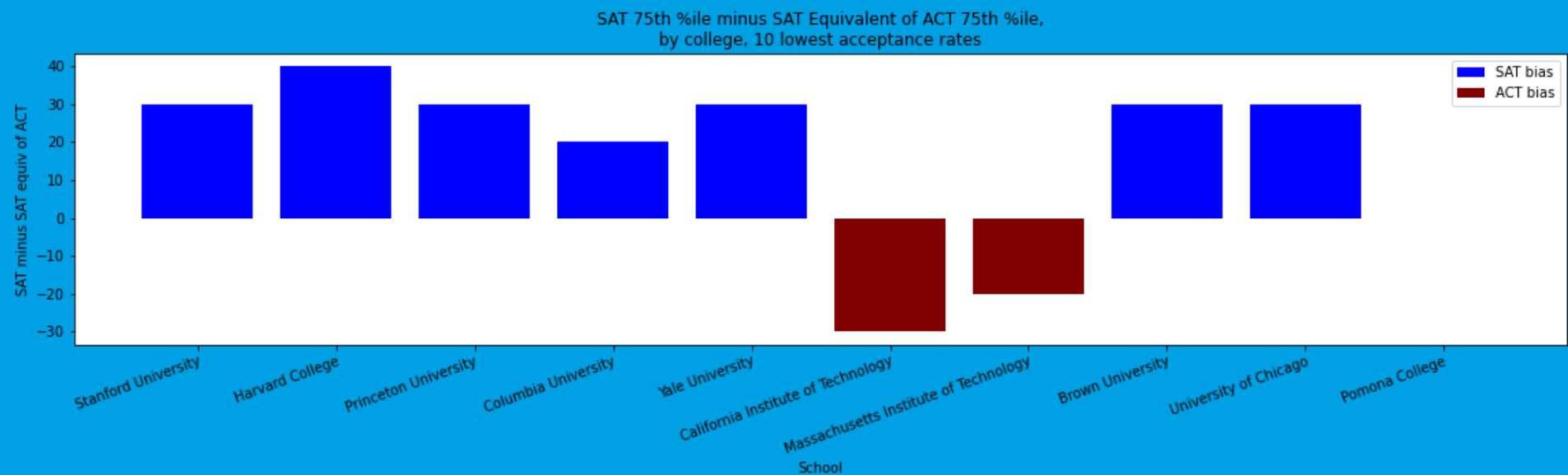
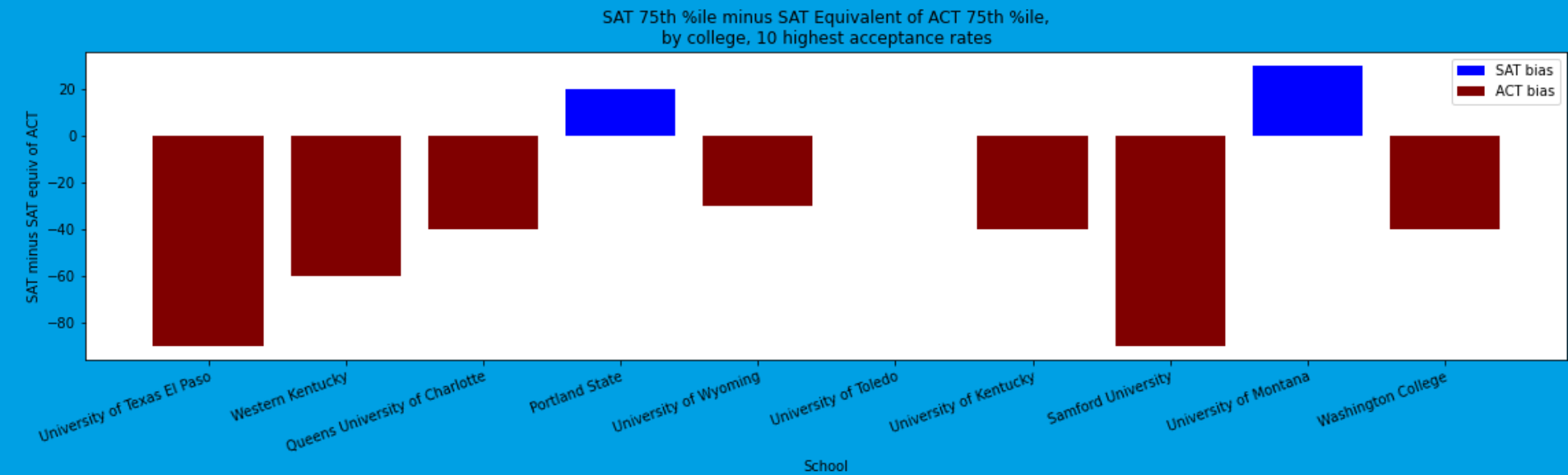
Among Washington College (MD) applicants:

- the ACT equivalent of a 1340 is the 75th percentile
- an *actual* SAT 1340 would be above the 75th percentile among their applicants

25th Percentile, 10 Highest, 10 Lowest Acceptance Rates



75th Percentile, 10 Highest, 10 Lowest Acceptance Rates



Conclusion:

Applicants may be able to get an advantage over competitors from their geographic region and at the colleges they're applying to by selecting their test accordingly.

With more data, we could build a tool to advise students internally, or to build brand recognition by making it available publicly.

Additional information to seek:

- how much can 30 total points on the SAT or 1 composite point on the ACT benefit a student? In what situations?
- at what level of geography are colleges focused?
- What data is available about the student's high school's SAT/ACT scores?
- Can we get college data on successful applicants states/regions to compare?