**Test scores flat, raising concerns about students' readiness**

Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY *12:06 a.m. EDT September 26, 2013*

Average scores on the nation's most widely used college entrance exams barely budged this year, raising anew concerns that today's high school graduates will be unprepared to compete in a global marketplace.

In a report out today, the non-profit College Board says just 43% of SAT takers in the high school class of 2013 earned a score that indicates they will succeed in the first year of college. That percentage has remained "virtually unchanged" for at least five years, said Cyndie Schmeiser, chief of assessment for the College Board, based in New York.

Last month, an annual report by the Iowa-based non-profit ACT found that just 26% of high school graduates in the class of 2013 met college readiness benchmarks in all four of the subjects its tests cover: English, reading, math and science. That's up from 25% last year and 23% five years ago, but far too low, ACT chief executive officer Jon Whitmore said. "As a nation, we must set ambitious goals and take strong action to address this consistent problem."

Reports for both tests sounded familiar themes: Low-income and minority students on average are less likely to be ready for college, though the percentage of black and Hispanic SAT takers who achieved scores indicating college readiness increased.

David Coleman, who was named College Board president last fall, said the persistently stagnant numbers are "a call to action."

"With our country struggling to compete in a global marketplace and millions of skilled jobs left unfilled here at home, it is essential to ensure that our students are prepared for college and careers," the College Board report says.