ADMISSIONS DECISION-MAKING MODELS

HOW U.S. INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION SELECT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Gretchen W. Rigol

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INTRODUCTION

This report represents the third phase in the College Board's Admissions Models Project. The first two phases of the project are summarized in two monographs published by the College Board. *Toward a Taxonomy of the Admissions Decision-Making Process* (1999) identifies nine different philosophical approaches to admissions and related selection criteria. *Best Practices in Admissions Decisions* (2002) builds on the *Taxonomy* and outlines various components of a best practices model for admissions decision-making. Those documents provide the general framework and background for this document.

The purpose of this phase of the project was to examine exactly how institutions make admissions decisions. The primary source of information was experienced admissions professionals representing a diverse group of public and private institutions throughout the United States. Unlike the earlier phases of the Admissions Models Project, which brought together invitational conferences, this work was conducted primarily through individual interviews, site visits, and examining various internal and published materials about the selection process. Information from more than 100 institutions, representing all levels of selectivity, forms the basis for this report.

The primary conclusion this report reaches is that there are almost as many different approaches to selection as there are institutions. The corollary is that there is no "best practice" that would apply in all situations. It is evident that institutions have approached the development of their individual policies and practices with care and thoughtfulness. At the same time, colleges and universities across the nation are constantly fine-tuning their processes and looking for ways to improve and enhance the ways they practice admissions. Although this report is essentially a snapshot of the different ways admissions decisions are currently made, it is hoped that this document will also stimulate discussion about other ways admissions might be conducted in the future. Another possible use for this document is to inform counselors, students and families, and the general public about the various ways colleges and universities select students.

As this report neared completion, the Supreme Court announced that it would consider the two University of Michigan cases regarding the use of affirmative action in both undergraduate and graduate admissions. When those cases are decided in 2003, all colleges and universities will undoubtedly reexamine their admissions policies and practices. So while this report might soon be out of date, it also may be timely in providing information to help institutions evaluate and possibly revise their practices.

This report was prepared during the fall of 2002 as part of a sabbatical project prior to my retirement from the College Board. I am grateful to the College Board for having given me this opportunity to continue work on a topic that has been one of my particular interests throughout my career.

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Because all research was conducted in a confidential basis, it is not possible to publicly thank the many individuals who contributed to this report. Suffice it say that this document would not have been possible without the help of so many valued colleagues.

After spending considerable time over the past several months reading college viewbooks and other material written for prospective applicants, I realize what a daunting task students face as they apply to college. But I also found myself getting caught up by the uniqueness of so many different institutions and half wished I might really be filling out those applications and making plans to spend four years on any number of the wonderful campuses I've been reading about (if I could get in!)

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The vast variety of ways in which colleges and universities actually make admissions decisions reflects the rich heterogeneity of higher education in this country. While some institutions have long-established practices that are well entrenched in their collegiate culture and underlying missions, the general state of admissions has become increasingly dynamic. Changing demographics, economics, and the political, legal, social, and educational environment of the times have prompted many institutions to review and modify their approaches to selecting students. In addition, shifts in traditional admissions conventions (such as the increase in early decision and early action applications) **and technology** e.g., online applications, electronic transcripts, and imaging, have pressured and undoubtedly will continue to pressure institutions to rethink how to manage their applications.

WHO SHOULD BE OFFERED ADMISSION?

There are a number of ways to approach this question. The first is based in institutional mission and generally incorporates one or more of the nine philosophical models outlined in the *Taxonomy of the Admissions Decision-Making Process* (1999). Institutions that embrace an entitlement or open access philosophy usually have transparent admissions policies. If a student meets certain prescribed requirements (courses, grades, rank, and/or scores), they are admitted. These institutions are more likely to be public institutions (community colleges and universities) with a strong state mandate to provide educational opportunities to all students in the region or state. Other institutions have more narrow institutional goals that seek to identify students with a demonstrated capacity to perform in their specific collegiate setting, to reward exemplar experiences, to identify students most likely to benefit from the particular college's offerings, and/or to enroll students who will enhance the institutional community in some way.

Another way to address the question of who should be admitted is by defining what the institution considers "success." Most colleges want to admit students who will be successful, but does that mean completing the freshman year, getting high grades, conducting independent study, participating in class, being a student leader, athlete, musician or performing artist, graduating, getting into graduate school, becoming productive members of society, and so on? One of the complexities of doing admissions is that there are generally multiple definitions of success—some of which are easier to measure than others. While clearly the admissions office cannot be responsible for assuring the more long-term measures of success (after all, the four years of college should have some impact on nurturing students to be successful), admissions decisions should take into account the institution's desired outcomes for its students.

A slightly different approach to determining who should be admitted is to have a blueprint of the characteristics of the incoming class. At some institutions, this is an annual directive from the president or academic deans, describing enrollment goals, qualifications, and other desired characteristics of the new class. Alternatively, faculty provide information, often through an admissions policy committee, on the characteristics they value in students.

For entitlement or open access institutions, whichever individuals apply and meet the prescribed criteria ultimately define what the student body becomes. The primary way these institutions can shape their student body is through recruitment of an applicant pool that reflects the desired characteristics of academic quality, diversity, or other attributes it desires. (Scholarships and other incentives are also used to achieve these goals).

Most other institutions attempt to shape a class through its selection decisions. Why some students are admitted and others are not is often a function of institutional priorities. Admissions materials provided to students frequently cite the characteristics institutions are seeking in their student body as a whole. Typical statements describe the campus environment they seek to create and the types of students they hope to enroll. Often these statements emphasize a dual interest in enrolling students who will both benefit from and contribute to the collegiate community. Most statements also note the value of enrolling students with a diversity of experiences, talents, viewpoints, and backgrounds. Excerpts from statements in viewbooks, applications, and other communications from ten different institutions are provided as in Appendix A.

College materials further clarify that they do not necessarily seek individuals who possess all of these desired characteristics, but rather they are looking for a class of students who, as a group, will reflect this vision. For many institutions, finding the best balance of students with different academic interests, different talents and skills, and different background characteristics is the ultimate aim of the admissions process. While marketing and financial aid can and do play a role, the class is crafted in large part through appropriate admissions decisions.

FORMULAS AND JUDGMENT

At the most simplistic level, and as often portrayed by the media, there appears to be two basic approaches to selection: formulas (by the numbers) and judgments (also called comprehensive, holistic, or "whole folder" review). The formulaic approach generally includes high-school GPA or rank and possibly test scores; the judgmental approach usually implies a review of the applicant's entire file, including the complete application, essays, recommendations, and other information. In actuality, however, the way admissions decisions are made is considerably more complex. Institutions that utilize formulas generally also review certain files for special consideration, special programs, or scholarships. Institutions that approach admissions from a comprehensive perspective often also utilize numbers in some way, either as an academic index and/or by assigning judgmental ratings to an applicant's various attributes.

To a certain extent, the sheer number of applicants in relation to the number of available spaces affects how institutions approach admissions. If those two numbers are relatively close, it is possible to sort most students into an admit category through some sort of numeric evaluation of academic credentials or through a single reading of the file to look for positive qualities that suggest the student might be successful. On the other hand, where the numbers of applicants far exceed the number of available places, more complex, often multistep, processes that employ both numbers and judgments might be needed. A common misconception is that smaller, private institutions are more likely to review the entire file while large, public institutions are more likely to use formulas. There are all types of institutions (large and small and public and private) that utilize the most complex processes often involving multiple readings and committees. The only safe generalization that can be made is that the process tends to be more complex if the number of applicants is considerably higher than the number of available spaces.

Another aspect of supply and demand is the concept of "yield," which refers to the percentage of accepted students who actually enroll. Unfortunately, during the past decade, yield has become a major factor in college rankings and higher yields are seen as an indicator of an institution's desirability. While many institutions explicitly state that a student's likelihood of enrolling if admitted plays no role in the selection process, there are others who consider the student's level of interest in the institution as an element in the process. In addition, some of the procedures that institutions follow (the proliferation of early decision plans and early notification) are often intended to improve yield, as well as to alleviate some of the pressure on students as they go through the admissions process.

ELEMENTS OF AN ADMISSIONS MODEL

Before describing seven general models that are commonly used to select incoming freshman classes, it is helpful to dissect some of the key elements of the process from an operational perspective. While some of these elements might seem like inconsequential details, they shape the way different models are implemented and may have some impact on the resulting decisions. In addition, most of these elements have logistical and efficiency implications, which are meaningful in order to process applicants in a timely and efficient manner — no small concern given increases in applications (particularly early in the cycle), shrinking university budgets, and increasing interest in implementing enhancements (such as adding essays or inviting students to submit additional information) in the decision-making processes.

Assembling the "file"

What colleges collect about an applicant defines what information they can use in making a decision. At the most basic level, this generally includes:
- *A basic application with background information about the applicant*
- *High school transcript (or student-reported list of courses taken and grades received)*
- *Standardized test results (generally SAT® or ACT)*

Other information that is frequently collected includes:
- *Counselor (or school) recommendation*
- *Teacher recommendation(s)*
- *Essay(s) and/or personal statement*
- *List of extracurricular activities, achievements, work experience, etc. (résumé)*
- *Other test scores (such as SAT II: Subject Tests or TOEFL)*
- *Interview reports*
- *Information about the secondary school the applicant attends*

Additional information, particularly for specialized programs or certain groups of applicants, might include:
- *Portfolios*
- *Auditions*
- *Financial statements*
- *Health examinations.*

Appendix B summarizes the key elements found in a cross section of applications currently in use at public and private universities. Although there is considerable similarity, there are a number of unusual questions that reflect some unique or unusual institutional interests. This is also evident in the range of essay/personal statement questions that many institutions also ask students to prepare. (See Appendix C.)

Increasingly, institutions are interested in understanding as much as possible about the students' personal qualities and contextual background

information, as well as their traditional academic qualifications. In most cases, this information is imbedded in various sections of the application or revealed through recommendations, personal statements, or other supplemental material. Some institutions provide specific guidance to reviewers about where in the file to seek out evidence of certain traits (e.g., leadership, special talents, commitment to community), while others assume that reviewers will identify such information from the application as a whole. Many institutions are also interested in more general character traits, such as maturity, intellectual curiosity, honesty, and motivation—but finding this information usually requires a very close reading of the entire file.

There are different ways files are prepared for review. Although there are a handful of institutions that claim to have developed a paperless application process, the vast majority assembles paper folders containing all of the student's credentials. A few institutions scan the entire file and reviewers do all of their work "on screen." Most, however, pass the paper folder throughout the various review stages.

The order of material in the file is random in many cases (as one director of admissions reported, "we're just lucky to get it all together"), while others have detailed lists of the order in which the material is to appear in the file. This latter approach has the advantage of assuring that each reviewer approaches each applicant from a particular perspective. Common first elements in the file include the actual application, the transcript, or the personal statement.

Many institutions also prepare electronic or paper summaries of basic background information. Some add academic summaries (see below), while a few institutions summarize other information from the file. In some cases, this summary sheet becomes the primary review document, but in most cases it accompanies the file throughout the review process. In addition, many institutions also produce summary rosters of all applicants (frequently by state, high school or intended major).

Customizing the academic record

Some institutions translate information from the transcript onto a worksheet or in a database to exclude courses not considered part of their core college-prep requirements. Because there is no uniformity in the way high schools calculate a student's overall grade-point average (GPA), many institutions recalculate the GPA. In some cases, the GPAs are "weighted," with extra points being given for honors or Advanced Placement (AP®) courses. In other cases, the GPAs are all "unweighted," with all courses treated equally and no extra points given for more challenging courses. Some institutions simply count the number of honors, AP, IB, and other advanced-level courses. A few adjust GPA for select schools known to have particularly stringent grading practices. And still others simply reorganize the transcript information so that it's easy to see

coverage by subject and/or trends over the student's school career.

In most cases, clerks or admissions counselors do this work. In a few cases where institutions receive electronic transcript data (often self-reported), the adjustments or restatements are made electronically.

Although often a labor-intensive process, this customization helps institutions evaluate all applicants on a similar basis. It also has the advantage of making the information easily available for use in other forms, such as in an academic index and for placement reports for individual applicants, and for general summaries of the preparation of the application pool as a whole.

Calculating an academic index

Many institutions use high school GPA (either directly from the transcript or as recalculated), class rank, and/or test results to compute an academic index. The weighting of the components of the academic index is generally based on institutional research about the performance of enrolled students and is often described in terms of a predicted college GPA. As with everything else used in the selection process, the elements and weightings used to create an academic index, and how this index is actually used, reflect institutional priorities.

For institutions that have clear-cut admissions requirements (often state-mandated or based on an "entitlement" philosophy), this index is usually used, in combination with information about course work, to make the decision—particularly admit decisions. (As noted below, there often are more steps involved in a deny decision.)

For other institutions, the academic index is used as one element in a more complex decision-making process. In some cases, it is used to sort applications into possible decision categories; in other cases, it simply becomes an additional element in the student's application.

Organizing and training the readers

Virtually all institutions read at least some complete applications. Some read all several times, some read most files (generally the middle group defined by an academic prescreening), while still others read only a relatively small number of exceptions or candidates for special programs or scholarships.

Readers tend to be professional admissions staff, although in some situations, other members of the administration, faculty, graduate students, seniors, alumni, and outside readers are used.

There are different approaches to training readers. Some institutions have required, formal, multiday, training sessions for all readers. Others pair new readers with experienced staff. In institutions with an early application option, new readers often "read along" with veteran staff to learn the ropes before the majority of applications are received. A number of institutions have comprehensive manuals for readers, outlining exactly what to look for and often providing information about the previous class as a way of assuring that

all readers are using similar standards. Case studies (usually sample applications from previous years) are often used in training sessions.

The preliminary sorting described below usually defines where the file will go for a first reading, although there are a few institutions that assign readers randomly. If there is more than one reader, the files are generally read independently, although later readers usually see the work notes and ratings and recommendations of the first reader. Sometimes teams of readers (generally two or three individuals) are assigned a group of applications and after independent reading they meet to agree on a final decision. Only a handful of institutions use "blind" readings where no reader is aware of other readers' evaluations.

Committees

College viewbooks frequently inform students about what their Admissions Committees look for in reviewing applications. What exactly is the Admissions Committee? At some institutions, it is a policy board that establishes broad criteria, which are then applied independently by the admissions staff or others. At other institutions, the Admissions Committee comprises all admissions staff (and sometimes other administrators, faculty, and even alumni). Files are generally read independently (in fact, I am not aware of a single instance where all files are read by all members during committee meetings) and then recommendations from those independent readings may go to the Committee. At some institutions, decisions are made by a subset (generally two or three members) of the larger Committee.

Sorting and branching

There are six basic ways institutions organize applications for review. Often these are combined, either sequentially or in a hierarchical order. For example, an institution might first review all applications as they become complete, with a second review done in geographical order. An example of a hierarchical approach is an institution that sorts out certain groups of students (such as recruited athletes, music majors, children of alumni or staff, students with low academic indices) for review by senior staff or specialists, while most other applicants are reviewed geographically.

- *Geographical*
  For institutions that apply some sort of judgment in their reviews, one of the most common ways that applications are considered is by geographical region. When there are fixed application deadlines (meaning that all applications are complete and ready for review at the same time), files are often arranged by high school within the region. This assures that the decisions for multiple applicants from a school "make sense." (If there is more than one applicant from the school, a college may not always admit those with the highest GPA or the most number of AP courses, but there needs to be an internal rationale, based on institutional priorities, for why

some students are admitted and others are not.) Generally, the lead reader (and often the applicant's advocate) is an individual who has responsibility for marketing activities in that area. The advantage of this approach is that the regional representative is most likely to know the school, the counselor, and perhaps have met the applicant. Directors acknowledge that there is a potential conflict of interest and that the regional representative might not be as objective as an individual who did not have these potential contacts. On balance, however, the advantages of additional knowledge about an applicant's local situation are seen to outweigh concerns. In some situations, generally in less competitive institutions, this regional reader can make the final decision if the applicant meets certain internal guidelines. In other situations, the file moves through a second and perhaps third reader and sometimes ends in a committee review.

- *Major or school within a university*
  Often institutions have specific and/or additional requirements for certain majors or for the different schools, such as engineering, nursing, architecture, music, art, and business. Sometimes files are read by specialists in these areas, occasionally supplemented by faculty reports based on special requirements, such as art portfolios, music or dance auditions, or interviews. As with the geographical approach, the lead reader might make the final decision based on internal guidelines or the file might go on for additional reviews. Review by academic area is of particular value in situations where there are limited spaces available, as well as to assure that special requirements are being met in a consistent manner.

- *Academic index groupings*
  A few institutions prescreen applicants based on a calculated academic index. Students at the top and bottom are sometimes identified for expedited decisions, thus leaving more time for the middle group of applicants who require additional review. At least one institution uses an index to sort students into three categories—probable accepts, marginal admissions, and probable rejects. The first group is considered by a primary admissions committee, the second group goes to a marginal admissions review committee, and the third group goes to a reject committee. Files may be referred from committee to committee. An advantage of this approach is that each committee is dealing with students with similar academic credentials, thus enhancing consistent decisions.

- *Special categories*
  At some institutions, certain applications are identified for reading by specialists (occasionally a senior staff member). This might include recruited athletes, underrepresented minorities, students with alumni connections, students with special health situations, and other background characteristics. While this special processing can be the first stage in the process, it often occurs as a second or final reading of the file.

- *In the order in which it was received*
  Colleges that utilize a rolling admissions cycle usually process applications as they become complete. While this is necessary to provide students with decisions on a timely basis, it requires constant monitoring and fine tuning to assure consistent application of decision standards and that enrollment goals are met.
- *Alphabetical*
  Some colleges alphabetically assign responsibility for handling applications to different staff members. The primary advantage of this approach is that it is easy to know who is handling which application (no trivial matter with the large numbers that many institutions deal with.)

As noted above, many of these approaches are applied at different stages in the process. For example, the first reader might be the individual responsible for the geographical area where the applicant resides and/or attends school and the second reader might be a specialist in an academic discipline, the person responsible for minority recruitment, or a liaison with the athletic department. At another institution, the first reader might be assigned randomly, with the second reader being the regional representative.

This is the heart of the matter. At one level, institutions might evaluate separately the major components of the actual application (basic application information, essay, transcript, recommendations) and then combine those separate ratings into an overall score on which the decision is based, although relatively few actually approach evaluation in this manner. Equally rare is an overall review of the entire file without breaking out any of its component strengths or weaknesses. The most common approach for institutions that read files is to evaluate certain key factors, but also for each reader to assign an overall recommendation.

Factors considered

Although it would be very difficult to develop a comprehensive list of all of the different factors every college and university uses to evaluate applications for every discipline, there are some common groupings of factors that many institutions currently use. Appendix D provides a list of factors that are commonly used by at least some institutions. It was derived from studying internal evaluation guidelines and other documentation about institutional admissions practices. More than 100 different factors were identified in the following categories:

> Academic Achievement, Quality, and Potential
>> Direct measures
>> Caliber of high school
>> Evaluative measures
> Nonacademic characteristics and attributes
>> Geographic
>> Personal background
>> Extracurricular activities, service, and leadership
>> Personal attributes
>> Extenuating circumstances
>> Other

There is overlap among these categories and, as will be seen below, some institutions consider certain factors in different categories. This is particularly true for communication skills; information obtained from the students' personal statements and essays, and teacher and counselor recommendations. For example, for some institutions, communication skills (often as evidenced through the essay and interview) are considered a component in the academic rating. At other institutions, communications might be rated separately, while at still other institutions, the essay might be seen as a component of a personal or nonacademic rating.

Although the categories used in Appendix D do not use the term "personal qualities," it is apparent that many institutions have been influenced

by Willingham and Breland's, *Personal Qualities and College Admissions* (1982) and Willingham's *Success in College* (1985). (These two books reported on an in-depth study of admissions at nine colleges. The first studied the role of personal qualities (as distinct from academic performance) in admission as well as the relationship of personal qualities to success in the freshman year. The second focused on the relationship among preadmissions characteristics of students, admissions policies, and different measures of success through four years of college.) At one level, this influence is seen simply by the widespread use of various personal qualities in the admissions process. Institutions that may have once focused primarily on traditional academic measures now take personal qualities into consideration. At another level, the influence of these two books is reflected in the emphasis on the quality and depth of the student's experiences (productivity and "follow-through.")

Perhaps more recent is the expressed need to evaluate candidates in light of the opportunities (or disadvantages) they have encountered. Thus, institutions often explicitly consider the quality of the school and the level of offerings when reviewing a student's academic record. Nonacademic achievements are also evaluated in context, and the overall application is viewed in relation to any unusual or extenuating circumstances. This might include family responsibilities or health problems (which might have made it difficult for the student to have participated in extracurricular activities) or the fact that English is not the student's first language.

Most institutions have identified the general factors they consider important, and the review process evaluates applicants from those perspectives. Some are grouped (e.g., all information about a student's extracurricular involvement or special talents and awards), while others are evaluated factor by factor. Some institutions might specifically evaluate as many as 20 different qualities, while others group them in only a handful of major areas. The following eight examples illustrate the range of major evaluation categories that colleges use.

Example 1

Academic

Personal characteristics (leadership and
      personal qualities)

Suitability for desired major

Example 2

Academic

Communication

Character, leadership, and initiative

Example 3

Exceptional Academic Achievement

Academic Promise

Potential to Contribute

Example 4

Academic Achievement

Academic Qualities

Nonacademic Achievement

Personal Qualities

Example 5

Quality of Courses

Grades in Core Curriculum

Test results

Activities (inside and outside of school)

Essay

Example 6

Academic performance

Extracurricular activities

Teacher and counselor recommendations

Interview

Personal Inventory

Essays

Example 7

Application and Essay

Academic Performance

Level of Challenge of Academic Record

Recommendations and Interview

Personal Qualities

Special Talents

Example 8

Academic Achievement

Intellectual Curiosity

Potential

Commitment

Communication

Engagement with Others

Out-of-School Activities

Initiative

While most of these factors are relatively straightforward, there are some differences in the way institutions view and assess the quality of the student's secondary school, interviews, and personal statements and essays.

Secondary School Quality

There are several reasons colleges have developed information about secondary schools to include in their assessment of an individual applicant. Because of the extreme variation in school offerings, grading patterns, and the general competitiveness of the student body, it is difficult to evaluate a transcript without some sort of contextual information. Experienced admissions officers have built up considerable knowledge about most of their feeder schools (or schools within the geographical regions they primarily work in), but it is impossible for anyone to know the characteristics of the more than 27,000 high schools in the U.S. For this reason, most schools provide a profile that includes information about the curriculum, honors, AP and other advanced offerings, the proportion of students going to college, and average ACT and SAT scores. Some colleges have collected this information and developed school profile reference guides. Others have gathered some of this information in statistical profiles that actually assign a secondary school "rating" that is utilized in the evaluation process. A few institutions have developed profiles of enrolled students from feeder high schools to provide additional information about how prior students from a school have fared on campus. While strong students from strong schools generally have an advantage in the evaluation process, there is increasing interest in attracting and rewarding students who have excelled in poorer schools. Thus, while sometimes students receive a "plus factor" for coming from a strong school, others will receive a similar "plus" if they are from a school that rarely sends students to the institution or that has limited resources.

Interviews

Some institutions encourage or even require interviews, either on campus or locally with alumni, and utilize the interview report as part of the review process—as an additional way to find out more about the student than what is revealed on paper. While a laudable objective, there are few training programs for the staff or alumni who conduct interviews. Some particularly competitive or specialized programs (e.g., nursing and architecture) require interviews, often with members of the faculty. In some cases an interview is optional and appears to be used for the purpose of assuring that the student has an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the institution and as a general measure of student interest. Recently, a few institutions have begun requesting certain borderline students to come to campus for an interview. Most institutions, however, do not routinely provide individual interviews for applicants, either because they simply don't have sufficient resources or because of a concern that all applicants should have the same opportunities to submit information and that many

would not be able to make arrangements for a personal interview. Some have also expressed concern that certain students might "shine" through the interview, while others, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds, might be unduly intimidated and ill at ease in a formal interview setting.

Personal Statements and Essays

Increasing numbers of colleges and universities are asking students to submit personal statements and/or essays as part of their applications. At some institutions, particularly the most selective, these writing assignments are required and an integral part of the application. Supplemental essays are also generally required for consideration for honors programs and special academic scholarship programs. But an increasing number of institutions, of all levels of selectivity, invite students to submit a personal statement or essay as an optional component of the application. There are also a number of short answer questions on applications that require students to write several paragraphs about their experiences, aspirations, and other issues.

The personal statement tends to be either open ended or about a choice of topics that asks students to discuss how an individual, work of art, event, or other situation has influenced them. Occasionally this statement asks students to discuss how and why they are interested in that particular college or their intended field of study. If essay(s) are required, there are often lists of topics that students may choose from, although some institutions have unique required topic(s) while others invite students to submit an essay on any topic they wish. A sample of actual personal statement and essay assignments from selected institutions is provided in Appendix C.

Personal statements and essays serve two primary purposes—as a measure of the student's writing ability and to provide readers with information about the student's personal background beyond the basic biographical information from the application and the student's academic and extracurricular credentials. In most cases, the writing assignments are used for both of these purposes, but there are some institutions that focus primarily on elements of writing, and others that encourage readers to look beyond the student's writing skills and to seek out personal and contextual information about the applicant.

At some institutions, the essay is evaluated holistically, frequently following guidelines similar to those used by ETS in grading SAT II: Writing and AP essays, and a single rating (often on a 5 or 6 point scale) about the student's writing ability is given. Generally this reading is a part of the review of the overall application, but at least one institution has a separate trained group of readers who only evaluate the essays. In other situations, readers evaluate the essay on topics such as content, style, and originality.

Admissions officers generally believe that writing is an essential component of the application, despite the fact that some express concern about not

knowing if the student received substantial assistance in preparing the essay. One director noted that readers understand that they cannot be 100 percent certain that the applicant wrote a superb essay, but they can be quite sure that the applicant was responsible for a mediocre one. And most note that the essay and personal statement need to "fit" the other information they have about an applicant and that a bogus essay is likely to "jolt." As a way to further understand how an essay was written, at least one institution asks students to describe the process they used in preparing their essays, including whose advice they sought and whether suggestions were incorporated. Many institutions also ask students to sign a statement indicating that the essay submitted represents their own work.

Approaches to evaluation

For the sake of organization, the discussion that follows is divided into two major categories: academic and nonacademic evaluations. Although institutions have unique evaluation guidelines, these can be grouped into several common approaches. More than one approach can be used by a single institution for different groups of applicants. For example, if a decision is not clear-cut in a formulaic academic evaluation, a second type of evaluation might be employed. In other cases, two approaches are routinely used, often with a more formulaic review of the academic credentials and a judgmental approach for personal qualities. But even academic review often requires some level of judgment and the personal review can be somewhat formulaic.

Academic evaluation

Virtually all institutions utilize some measure of academic preparation. As indicated below, some stipulate a minimum threshold, while others seek out gradations and/or separate out various elements of the applicant's academic achievement and potential. Outlined below are some common approaches that are utilized. For the sake of illustration, these examples include specific criteria (number of courses, grades, or test scores), but the actual numbers used by different institutions vary considerably.

Example 1

Graduation from an accredited high school **or** taken at least
  14 courses in certain academic subjects
Cumulative GPA of at least 2.5
Combined SAT scores of at least 910 (or 19 on the ACT)
  if GPA between 2.0 and 2.49

Example 2

Successfully completed state-mandated core course requirements
Minimum high school GPA of at least 2.8
Rank in class: top 40%

Example 3

Completion of college-preparatory course requirements of the applicant's home
  state.
Admissions Index of 90 or above (represented by the shaded section of the
  chart) based on a two-way matrix of ACT/SAT scores and GPA.

Admissions Index Chart

TEST SCORES		GPA																				
ACT	SAT	4.0	3.9	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.1	2.0
36	1600	142	140	139	137	135	133	132	130	128	126	124	123	121	119	117	116	114	112	110	108	107
35	1580	140	138	137	135	133	131	130	128	126	124	122	121	119	117	115	114	112	110	108	106	105
34	1530	138	136	135	133	131	129	128	126	124	122	120	119	117	115	113	112	110	108	106	104	103
33	1460	136	134	133	131	129	127	126	124	122	120	118	117	115	113	111	110	108	106	104	102	101
32	1410	134	132	131	129	127	125	124	122	120	118	116	115	113	111	109	108	106	104	102	100	99
31	1360	133	131	130	128	125	124	123	121	119	117	115	114	112	110	108	107	105	103	101	99	98
30	1320	131	129	128	126	124	122	121	119	117	115	113	112	110	108	106	105	103	101	99	97	96
29	1280	129	127	126	124	122	120	119	117	115	113	111	110	108	106	104	103	101	99	97	95	94
28	1240	127	125	124	122	120	118	117	115	113	111	109	108	106	104	102	101	99	97	95	93	92
27	1210	126	124	123	121	119	117	116	114	112	110	108	107	105	103	101	100	98	96	94	92	91
26	1170	124	122	121	119	117	115	114	112	110	108	106	105	103	101	99	98	96	94	92	90	89
25	1140	122	120	119	117	115	113	112	110	108	106	104	103	101	99	97	96	94	92	90	88	87
24	1100	120	118	117	115	113	111	110	108	106	104	102	101	99	97	95	94	92	90	88	86	85
23	1060	118	116	115	113	111	109	108	106	104	102	100	99	97	95	93	92	90	88	86	84	83
22	1030	117	115	114	112	110	108	107	105	103	101	99	98	96	94	92	91	89	87	85	83	82
21	990	115	113	112	110	108	106	105	103	101	99	97	96	94	92	90	89	87	85	83	81	80
20	950	113	111	110	108	106	104	103	101	99	97	95	94	92	90	88	87	85	83	81	79	78
19	910	111	109	108	106	104	102	101	99	97	95	93	92	90	88	86	85	83	81	79	77	76
18	860	109	107	106	104	102	100	99	97	95	93	91	90	88	86	84	83	81	79	77	75	74
17	820	108	106	105	103	101	99	98	96	94	92	90	89	87	85	83	82	80	78	76	74	73
16	770	106	104	103	101	99	97	96	94	92	90	88	87	85	83	81	80	79	76	74	72	71
15	720	104	102	101	99	97	95	94	92	90	88	86	85	83	81	79	78	76	74	72	70	69

Example 4

Academic Evaluation based on qualitative review of transcript, for a maximum of 35 points (which will subsequently be combined with a review of other criteria).

Cumulative GPA in Core subjects (recalculated)

3.85–4.00	10 points
3.70–3.84	9
3.55–3.69	8
3.40–3.54	7
3.25–3.39	6
3.10–3.24	5
2.95–3.09	4
2.80–2.94	3
2.65–2.79	2
2.50–2.64	1
Below 2.50	0

Curriculum Quality

Exceptional (with at least 5 or more AP courses)	7 points
Strong (with several honors or AP courses)	5
Above average (exceeds core minimums)	3
Average college-prep curriculum	2
Below average (minimal core completed)	1
Poor (deficiencies in core requirements)	0

Course Load

5 or more core courses each year	5 points
4.75 to 4.99 courses each year	3
4.50 to 4.74 courses each year	2
4.00 to 4.49 courses each year	1
fewer than 4.00 courses each year	0

Senior Year Courses

Strong	3 points
Average	1
Weak	0

SAT Scores

1400–1600	5 points
1200–1390	4
1000–1190	3
900–990	2
700–890	1
690 of below	0

Scholastic Awards and Achievements

Exceptional (numerous recognitions)	5 points
Above average (several recognitions)	3
Moderate (in at least one area)	2
None identified	0

Example 5

This two-part Academic Evaluation will be combined with ratings for nonacademic achievement and personal qualities. Each is evaluated on a 1–5 point scale. Although the first grid below appears relatively clear-cut, judgment is required to determine the ratings, particularly if an applicant's record falls in several categories.

Classroom Performance				Test Scores		Strength of Course Work	
Academic Achievement Rating	GPA	Class Rank (0–50% to 4-yr coll.)	Class Rank (51–100% To 4-yr coll.)	SAT I (V + M)	SAT II: Subjects (Sum of highest 3)	No. of Academic Semesters 10–12 grade	Program Rigor (in relation to what's available)
5	3.9+	Top 2%	Top 10%	1500 +	2100+	32+	Most demanding
4	3.8	3–5%	10–20%	1400–1490	1950–2090	30–31	Very demanding
3	3.7	5–10%	20–30%	1300–1390	1800–1940	27–29	Demanding
2	3.5–3.6	10–25%	30–50%	1200–1290	1600–1790	24–26	Average
1	Below 3.5	Bottom 75%	Bottom 50%	Below 1200	Below 1600	Below 24	Weak

Academic Qualities Rating	
5	Extremely impressive and clearly demonstrated intellectual qualities.
4	Strong intellectual activity. Much evidence that candidate is fully engaged in learning.
3	Shows some intellectual depth, initiative, and curiosity.
2	Demonstrates routine academic interest and activity.
1	Little evidence of seeking intellectual challenges, either inside or outside the classroom.

Example 6

The following basic academic evaluation is used to sort students into broad categories. Further evaluations of other academic and personal criteria are applied on a matrix in determining admissibility.

"A" students will have the following characteristics at the minimum:

Recalculated GPA of 3.8
Minimum SAT of 1180 with both V and M 540 or higher
Three SAT II: Subject Tests totaling 1620 with each score 540 or higher
10 semesters beyond core high school course requirements
Minimum of 8 semesters in both English and college-prep mathematics
At least 20 semesters in the junior and senior years, with a minimum of

6 semesters in the senior year.

No D/F grades in 9th to 11th grade.

"B" students will meet the following:

Recalculated GPA of 3.6

Minimum SAT of 1100 with both V and M at least 530

Three SAT II: Subject Tests totaling 1530 with each score 510 or higher

8 semesters beyond the core high school course requirements

Minimum of 8 semesters in both English and college-prep mathematics

At least 18 semesters in the junior and senior years, with a minimum of 6 semesters in the senior year.

No D/F grades in 9th to 11th grade.

"C" students will meet the following:

Recalculated GPA of 3.4

Minimum SAT of 1010 with both V and M at least 460

Three SAT II: Subject Tests totaling 1380 with each score 460 or higher

8 semesters beyond the core high school course requirements

Minimum of 8 semesters in English and 6 semesters of college-prep mathematics

At least 16 semesters in the junior and senior years, with a minimum of 6 semesters in the senior year.

A maximum of one D/F grade in 9th to 11th grade.

"D" students will meet the following:

Recalculated GPA of 3.2

Minimum SAT of 920 with both V and M at least 460

Two SAT II: Subject Tests with scores of 460 or higher

Minimum of 8 semesters in English and 6 semesters of college-prep mathematics

At least 14 semesters in the junior and senior years

A maximum of two D/F grade in 9th to 11th grade.

Example 7

Another set of guidelines for evaluating academic achievement is somewhat less quantitative in appearance and it includes a review of the applicant's essays and recommendations, in addition to the transcript and test results. A 9-point scale is used, although no guidelines are provided for the lowest ratings.

8 or 9

- *Flawless academic record in demanding curriculum*
- *Numerous AP/IB/honors classes, if available*
- *Top of class (top 10% in most competitive schools; top 1–4% in less competitive schools*

- *Mostly A grades*
- *Superior writing ability*
- *Superior/outstanding recommendations*

6 or 7
- *Excellent academic record in demanding curriculum (4–5 solids with several advanced classes, if available)*
- *Top 25% in most competitive schools; top 10% in less competitive schools)*
- *A's and B's*
- *Excellent writing ability*
- *Very strong recommendations*

5
- *Top 35–40% in most competitive schools; 15–20% in competitive, and upper 10% in average school environment*
- *Solid academic load (4 solids with some APs and honors, if available)*
- *Very good writing ability*
- *Good recommendations (hardworking, consistent)*

3 or 4
- *Top 50% in most competitive schools; 25% in competitive, and upper 20% in average environment*
- *Fair academic load (usually 4 solids each year)*
- *Competent writing ability*
- *Fair to good recommendations*
- *Some weakness apparent in application*

Example 8

This academic evaluation looks separately at course selection, recommendations, essay, reader reactions, and an overall academic rating. (An additional category of school quality is also considered.)

Quality of Course Selection
(High school curriculum availability, restrictions, or limitations must be taken into consideration.)
1. *Few academic courses and weak level of course work. Often deficient in English or math.*
2. *Taken prerequisites, but little beyond the minimum. Weaker curriculum given availability at high school or average curriculum with weak senior year (usually only 16 or 17 units).*
3. *Taken more than the prerequisites and some honors or AP courses. Solid preparation. At least 4 academic units for the senior year unless unusual circumstances exist. (Note: A student who has taken all available college-prep courses should receive no less than this rating.) (usually 18–20 units)*

4. *Has taken predominantly advanced courses, usually 3 or more AP/IB courses and advanced study in foreign languages, sciences, and/or mathematics (usually 20–22 units).*

5. *Typically 5 or more AP or IB courses. At least 4 years of the same foreign language (unless not offered). Balanced courseload, having pursued extra study in all academic disciplines. Went beyond what high school offered by going to summer school, taking courses at a college during the school year or independent study work (usually more than 22 units).*

Recommendations and Evaluation

(of academic performance and ability) (Don't go only by ratings on the form. Be sure your rating reflects both recommendations. Note discrepancies. Look for specific examples of intellectual curiosity elsewhere in the file. Don't penalize student for a poorly written evaluation lacking detail.)

1. *Not recommended by school. Mismatched.*

2. *Hardworker, but questionable ability. Ability, but an underachiever with promise—a late bloomer. A lukewarm recommendation.*

3. *Solid student, hard worker, no particular positives or negatives noted. Average student in the applicant pool.*

4. *Enthusiastically recommended. Academically motivated student. Taken the better courses offered by school and has performed well. Seeks academic challenges outside of school setting. Intellectually curious. Responds positively to a challenge.*

5. *"One of our very best this year or in an exceptional group of seniors" kind of comment from a superior school. Also, indications of real intellectual promise—"a keen and curious" mind. "Excited about learning and challenges his/her instructors."*

Essay

(The essay should be judged on mechanics, style, and content. Your rating for this category should reflect the writer's ability to organize his/her thoughts in relation to the topic answered. Short answer responses from elsewhere in the application may also be considered in this rating.)

1. *Short. No effort, Inarticulate, Poor grammar.*

2. *Superficial. Token effort. May be grammatically sound, but has no substance. No insight into the writer.*

3. *Typical essay. Effort and sincerity evident. No masterpiece, but obvious thought put into essay. While it may not be unique or special, writer comes across as interesting.*

4. *Very-well written. Flows. Person may write about the typical topics but does it better than most. Does something a little different or creative and does it well. Insightful. Essay enables you to get to know the applicant better.*

5. *Extremely well written. Creative. Original. Memorable. You want to share it with the rest of the staff.*

Nonacademic evaluation

Most institutions assign some sort of ratings to their evaluation of a student's nonacademic experience and accomplishments and other background characteristics. This part of the evaluation tends to be more judgmental than the academic evaluation. Outlined below are some examples of different ways colleges approach this review. As with the academic evaluation, the nonacademic evaluations range from a single rating to complex evaluations on numerous dimensions.

Example 1

This institution assigns a single rating for personal characteristics, with the following general guidelines.

- A. *Demonstrated national/regional-caliber talent or leadership in many areas.*
- B. *State-level achievement or talent in at least one area*
- C. *Demonstrated school talent or leadership in many substantial areas*
- D. *School talent or leadership in one substantial area*
- E. *No demonstrated talent or leadership*

Example 2

The following example evaluates students on their nonacademic achievements and personal qualities.

Nonacademic Achievement Rating	Depth of Achievement	Breadth of Achievement
5	National or international level achievement	4 or more areas of significant achievement
4	State or regional achievement	3 areas
3	Significant at the area level	2 areas
2	Significant at the school level	1 area
1	No significant achievement	No significant involvemen

Personal Qualities Rating	Description
5	Inspirational. Leaves a strong positive impression. To be used only in special circumstances.
4	Clear evidence of excellent interpersonal qualities. An example in the school context.
3	Relates well to others. Well adjusted and a "team player."
2	Neither clearly positive nor negative qualities.
1	Evidence of negative personal or interpersonal qualities.

Example 3

This is another set of guidelines for evaluating similar components of a nonacademic evaluation.

Extracurricular Activities

1. *Little or no involvement in school, community, etc. Apathetic.*
2. *Some involvement. Perhaps in a few clubs or athletic teams with no real commitment to the activity or limited leadership roles. (May lack persistence through the years.) "Member of" is the extent of most involvement.*
3. *Average for the applicant pool. Has been involved in several clubs, participated in a few sports, some volunteer work, perhaps part-time job, or may have expertise in a particular club or activity with leadership positions.*
4. *Very active in diverse areas, plays quite a few sports or significant volunteer activities and perhaps a class officer. Significant leadership recognition. Committed. Special talents standout. May have consistent commitment to a part-time job.*
5. *Exception. A real leader. Recognition in high school for talents or accomplishments. Would definitely make an impact on campus. Major leadership roles. Involved actively in organizations, sports, etc. Devotes extraordinary amounts of time/effort to activities.*

Note: Take into consideration whether or not the student spends a significant amount of time at a part-time job, since activities might be limited by this commitment.

Personal Qualities/Character

1. *Has added nothing to the school environment; trouble working with others; major concern about character of student.*
2. *No problems, but does not stand out in any way or some concern about the moral character of the student. "Will blossom in college environment" sort of comment can earn a plus.*
3. *A valuable part of a specific activity at school or in the community. May be a student who has faced adversity and has overcome it or become stronger. This student may be in a very special circumstance.*
4. *A real contributor, joy to have at the school. Leadership ability. Responsible. Ready to do jobs nobody else will do. Has shown the ability to meet obligations.*
5. *Unique. A leader. Charisma. Will make an impact on campus. Fully committed to any enterprise undertaken. Consistently exceeds expectations. One of the best ever. A rare breed. Compassionate. Relates well to others. Utmost respect of and for others (peers, teachers, etc.)*

Note: Look for other specific examples of personal strength and leadership in the file. Don't penalize the student for a poorly written recommendation from a teacher or counselor.

Example 4

Rather than assign a numerical or alphabetical rating, some institutions evaluate each applicant's personal qualities on a grid on a summary sheet.

	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Exceptional
Maturity				
Enthusiasm for learning				
Tolerance				
Leadership potential				
Concern for others				
Creativity				
Determination				
Other _____				

Example 5

At some institutions, points are added to the applicant's academic index for certain specified other factors. For example:

- *Essay (up to 5 points for exceptional writing, judged on the basis of content, style, and originality)*
- *Personal achievement (up to 5 points, based on evidence of persistence, character and commitment to high ideals, and level of awards. In addition, points may be added if there is evidence of barriers overcome, significant employment while maintaining academic excellence, service to school and community, evidence of having taken advantage of opportunities, displaying maturity, and evidence of being a self-starter and role model).*
- *Geography (up to 5 points for coming from an underrepresented school.)*
- *Strength of school (up to 5 points for coming from a highly competitive school.)*
- *Background characteristics (up to 5 points for first generation going to college, underrepresented minority, interest in major that attracts the opposite sex, such as males in nursing or females in engineering.)*
- *Alumni relationships (up to 5 points)*

Ratings and weightings

As is clear from the preceding sections, there are myriad rating schemes used in evaluating applicants. In some cases these are used as a reading guide, with the final recommendation based on the overall impression that the reader has gained about the applicant. In other cases, the ratings are combined to come up with an overall selection index. Institutions use a variety of methods to develop or confirm the appropriateness of the way they evaluate applicants. Validity studies and other research are frequently used to help colleges define the relative importance of an applicant's credentials. Another common method

in determining how to evaluate applicants is by faculty consensus or governing body action.

The following examples illustrate the range of rating and weighting scales used by different institutions.

Example 1

Academic Index	0–35 points
Supplemental points from nonacademic ratings	0–25 points
Total	0–60 points

Students that receive a total rating over 45 are generally admitted. Students between 20 and 45 are reviewed by Committee.

Example 2

Two readers assign overall rating of 1 (high) to 5 (low) based on the following guidelines:

Academic (60% of composite)
Communication (20% of composite)
Character, leadership, and initiative (20% of composite)
If the two readings are within one point, the following actions are taken:
1's and 2's are admits
3's are held until end of process; may become admits or waiting list
4's are usually waiting list or deny
5's are denied

Example 3

One reader assigns points on each of the following factors:

Grades	1–3
Strength of Curriculum	1–3
Senior year	1–3
Test Scores	1–3
Essay	1–3
Recommendation	1–3
Personal	1–3
Total	7–21

Students with 2 or 3 ratings in the first three categories and a total of at least 15 points overall are automatically accepted. All others are reviewed by a second (or third) reader to determine action.

Example 4

Quality of Curriculum (in relation to what school offers)	1–15
Grades in core courses	1–15
Test scores	1–12
Activities, work, and leadership	1–9
Essay	1–9
Total Index	5–60

Each year (based on previous year's experience), there are guidelines on what index is the accept level. In recent years, applicants with 45–60 are almost always admitted. Depending on size and quality of applicant pool, students with a lower index may be admitted or placed on the waiting list.

Example 5

The following evaluation process is computer generated based primarily on individual ratings entered by an admissions counselor. These values represent the maximum number of points a student might be awarded for each factor.

Basic Academic Index:

Class Rank	10
Grade-point Average	45
SAT verbal	17
SAT math	23
Quality of school	5

Bonus points are added for:

Targeted States	5
Female (in Engineering)	5
Minority	5
Top 10%	10
High Interest in Institution	5

Points are deducted for:

| Bottom half of class | 40 |

For this institution with rolling admissions, the Index is computed once a week and rosters in rank order are prepared for the Director of Admission. Depending on the number of applications received and the stage in the process, students above a particular score are offered admission, with a middle group held over for evaluation in relation to future groups of applications, and the lowest group denied admission.

Example 6

The following unusual five-point scale is used to evaluate students "on the margin" after other reviews have taken place. Each file is read by two readers; the ratings are averaged, and some number of students in the highest category will be admitted if space is available.

    2 This is the highest rating you can give a student. It indicates that, based on your review, you feel this student should be offered admission without question.

    1 This is a positive rating, but without as much conviction. If you think it would be appropriate for this student to be admitted but you wouldn't spend much effort trying to convince a colleague of this, then this is probably the rating to use.

    0 You may find yourself unsure of a rating or you may feel neutral about this student's chances for success or fit at the university.

   -1 Some students may appear not to be very promising candidates for admission in comparison with others, but you could see how another reader might find merit in the application.

   -2 This is the lowest rating given. It means you cannot find indications in the student's file that advocate for offering admission to this student. You would argue strongly not to admit this student.

Multiple entryways

While most institutions have procedures in place to evaluate multiple characteristics of students, some also provide applicants with a variety of ways to gain admission. In recent years, several states have adopted class rank plans, whereby all students who have met basic course or other application requirements and who rank in the top 4, 10, or 20 percent of their high school graduating classes are automatically admitted. Many institutions also have set aside a small percent of their entering class for students who may not meet traditional criteria but who have unique talents or personal situations. The following is a list of background characteristics that might qualify for special consideration.

    First generation in college
    Geographic location (such as inner city or rural areas)
    Socioeconomic status
    Academic endeavors outside the classroom
    Breadth of experience (military, Peace Corps, returning student)
    Children of faculty
    Children/Sibling of alumni
    Community service
    Extenuating circumstances
    Language background
    Work experience

Denials

Despite the various rating and weighting methods described above, many institutions employ special final reviews for students who have been placed in a "reject" category. Sometimes this entails additional reading(s) to confirm the decision. In other cases, the file goes to the Director or other senior staff member to sign off on the decision. Sometimes students are requested to submit additional information (or to come for an interview) and occasionally they are provided with a course of action (such as successfully completing specified courses at a community college) they can follow to qualify for admission in the future.

At the risk of oversimplifying what really happens on college campuses as admissions officers make decisions about which students will be accepted, the different approaches observed have been grouped into seven major models. These models have been defined by the process through which decisions are reached. Within each model, institutions consider a variety of factors and employ many different methods to evaluate an applicant's credentials, experiences, and background.

There are several basic elements in most models: Readers, Committees, Computers, and Further Review. As noted earlier, readers are usually members of the admissions staff, but can also be faculty, other administrators, and others. Committees sometime include the entire admissions staff or are a separate faculty committee or a subset of one of these larger committees. Computers play different roles in the process, but as used in this section, the Computer stage generally refers to some sort of index calculated on academic information (grades, courses, rank, test scores) that are entered directly by clerks or electronically. In some cases, ratings for other factors are also incorporated into the index. Further review often requires an additional reader, special review by the Dean of Admissions or other senior staff, or referral to committee.

A. Multiple Readers to Committee for Decision

This is the model that is most commonly documented in articles and books about the admissions process. It is most often used by private selective institutions. Typically, the review begins with at least two independent readers (one of whom is usually the individual responsible for the geographical area where the applicant comes from). Generally, the first reader rates various factors, prepares a written summary highlighting significant information about the applicant, and gives an overall recommendation. This first reading is frequently in greater depth and the summaries more detailed than subsequent readings. The second reading tends to build on the first, either agreeing or disagreeing with the ratings of the first and adding written comments with reasons for the recommendation. If there is disagreement between the first two readers, a third reader might be called in. All of the reader comments are generally summarized on a separate review or recommendation sheet or on the front of the folder.

Following the readings, files are prepared for the Committee. Generally, this entails the preparation of a roster with key elements of the application summarized. As noted earlier, there are various ways the roster can be organized, but most of the institutions that utilize this particular decision-making model tend to review files geographically and by school. Usually, all members of the committee have a copy of the roster of candidates being considered during that session.

At the committee meetings, one member (generally the first reader) presents the applicant to the committee and makes the case for a particular decision. During the subsequent discussion, the actual file is available for consultation and review by members of the committee who had not read the entire file. The committee then votes on the final decision. In addition to "accept" and "deny" categories, most institutions have several in-between categories (leaning toward admit, leaning toward deny, waiting list) so they can revisit cases at the end of the process to come up with the right numbers needed to enroll a class of the correct size. This fine-tuning is often made by the Director of Admissions, although in some cases the "in between" files are returned to the Committee for final decision.

B. Team Readings to Decision or Further Review

Similar to the model described above, this model differs in that decisions might become final after two or three readers have evaluated the file and agree on the action to be taken. It is the most common model used by both public and private selective institutions of all sizes. Often, one member of the team (and the final reader) is a senior member of the admissions staff. Although the descriptor does not mention a committee, the team might be construed as a committee and indeed usually is comprised of a subset of a larger committee. While the readings and resulting recommendations may occur independently, these teams do occasionally meet, in some cases once a week to discuss unusual cases or simply to "calibrate" to assure that all readers are applying consistent standards.

At one institution that follows this general model, the first and second readers write summaries and provide ratings, and recommendations. If they agree, the file goes to a senior admissions officer for confirmation.

At several other institutions, the first two readers rate the applicant on numerous factors. The ratings are totaled and applicants that receive ratings above a certain threshold are admitted and those below another threshold are denied. (If the ratings do not agree by a certain number, a third reader is brought in.) A small middle group goes to a senior admissions officer for decision.

At still another institution, the first two readers (one of which is the geographical representative) provide summaries and ratings on the following scale: an A (definite admit), B (perhaps admit), C (perhaps W/L or deny), or D (Deny). (There are stringent guidelines for each category and only about 40 percent of the applicant pool may be assigned the top and bottom two ratings.) Applicants that received double A ratings are admitted without further review. Applicants that receive double D ratings receive a third reading for confirmation or further review. After all preliminary readings have been completed, a committee of the entire admissions staff reviews the middle 60 percent of the applicant pool (those with B, C, and mixed recommendations). The committee meets for a full week and reviews and makes recommendations on applications

from each geographical region. After that, geographical representatives take their remaining files and, following guidelines established by the full committee meeting, make final recommendations. Fine-tuning at the end of the process is made by the Director.

C. Single Reader to Decision or Further Review

This model is most commonly used by public and private institutions that are moderately selective (accepting 50 to 90 percent of their applicants). The assigned reader is usually either the individual with responsibility for that geographic region or a specialist in the academic department to which the student is applying. Readers have specific guidelines about course requirements, high school performance (grades and/or rank), test scores, and other factors that are required for admission. There are frequently different guidelines for different programs within the institution. If the applicant clearly meets all criteria, the reader may admit. Generally, if the applicant does not meet all criteria, the file is sent with a recommendation to a senior staff member for final decision.

While the emphasis in this model is on meeting specified academic standards, it can also include other factors. For example, at one institution, the reader evaluates the academic record and also assigns ratings for the essay, school recommendation, and personal qualities. Applicants with a combined numerical rating above a certain number can be admitted on the first reading. Others go to senior staff for further review and decision.

D. Reader(s) to Computer for Decision or Further Review

This model is used by a broad array of institutions with all levels of selectivity, including some very large public institutions, as well as smaller public and private institutions. It is a perfect example of how admissions can be both formulaic and judgmental.

One or more readers rate each applicant on a variety of both academic and nonacademic factors. The academic review includes the traditional academic indicators (GPA, class rank and courses taken), but normally also considers numerous additional factors, such as the strength of the curriculum, whether or not the student has taken advanced courses if available, the quality of the senior year, and school quality. Nonacademic ratings cover factors such as the quality of essay and personal statements, leadership, character, and other personal qualities. The ratings may also reflect institutional interests in enrolling a class with diverse backgrounds and talents who will contribute to the institutional community and support its mission. This could include recognizing and rewarding students from underrepresented geographic regions, from rural or inner city schools, low socioeconomic status, those with alumni (or staff) connections, underrepresented minorities, first generation going to college, athletes, all in-state students, and so forth. While most attributes are either positive or neutral, some institutions deduct points for certain factors—such

as being in the bottom half of the class, taking easy courses if more challenging courses were available, and a weak senior year (either grades or courses).

Ratings are applied in different ways to determine who will be offered admission. In some cases, there are separate academic and nonacademic ratings, which are applied in a grid format similar to this example. Students in the Hold category are reviewed at the end of the process and decisions are based primarily on whether space is available.

Academic Rating	Nonacademic Rating					
	Below 20	20–30	30–40	40–50	50–60	Above 60
1	Deny	Deny	Deny	Deny	*Hold*	*Hold*
2	Deny	Deny	*Hold*	*Hold*	Admit	Admit
3	Deny	*Hold*	*Hold*	Admit	Admit	Admit
4	*Hold*	*Hold*	Admit	Admit	Admit	Admit
5	Admit	Admit	Admit	Admit	Admit	Admit

In other cases, the academic and nonacademic ratings are combined to create a single selection index. Sometimes there is a single line that divides the admits from the rejects. Sometimes, applicants above a certain point are admitted; those below another point are denied, and those in the middle are held until the end of the process or sent for further review.

E. Computer to Committee(s) for Decision

This is a somewhat unique model that is used by a moderately selective public institution, but it could be utilized by a variety of types of institutions. The process begins with a computer screening that calculates an index based on GPA, class rank and number of courses in core subjects, and number of AP courses. The applicant pool is divided into three groups: those who exceed the academic standards and are presumably qualified for admission, those who meet standards but have a deficiency in some area, and those who do not meet standards. Each group goes to a separate committee: the Main Admissions Committee, a Marginal Review Committee, and a Reject Review Committee. There are at least three members on each committee. The Main Admissions Committee reviews the files of all students in the first group and confirms admission (or refers the applicant to the Reject Review Committee if they do not decide to admit) and identifies applicants who might be eligible for special scholarships or the honors program. The Marginal Review Committee deals with the second group and can admit, request additional information, or refer to the Reject Committee. The Reject Review Committee either rejects or refers back to one of the other two committees for possible admission.

F. Computer Plus Reader Rating(s) for Decision

This model is used primarily by very large competitive institutions and is useful in sorting the applicant pool so that students who are most likely to be "in the running" are given careful review. It begins with a computer generated academic index. In some cases, this index is used as a threshold, above which

applicants are then subjected to thorough reader reviews. In other cases, this index is combined with reader ratings for a final score, although students with the lowest academic index are frequently reviewed primarily to be sure there are no extenuating circumstances that might merit admission.

Except for the first step in the process, this model is very similar to Model D described above. All students deemed to be potential candidates by the academic index receive complete readings (generally by at least two readers) and are ranked on a variety of factors. The reader ratings are combined (either by addition or in a matrix fashion as illustrated under Model D) and the decision is usually automatic.

G. Computer to Decision or Further Review

This model is frequently used by large institutions of relatively low selectivity or those with multiple entryways. It is particularly appropriate for public institutions that have a mandate to guarantee admission to students who meet specified academic criteria. Processing is frequently aided by having electronic academic transcripts supplied directly by the school or as self-reported by students. Otherwise, information is entered into the database by clerks or admissions counselors.

The computer screening might entail a comprehensive review of the courses taken to assure that core requirements have been met. Usually, an academic index, based on grades and/rank and test scores, is calculated. If above a specified level, the candidate may be admitted. Although there are many different possible formulas (some of which have been established by statewide higher education boards or other authorities), the following examples illustrate some of the approaches that are used.

Example 1

Must meet **Freshman Competency Requirements** (list of number of courses by subject)
Must meet *one* of the following **General Aptitude Requirements**:
- *Class Rank–top quarter*
- *Minimum Composite Score–ACT 22 or SAT 1040 (slightly higher for nonresidents)*
- *GPA–3.0 (calculated only on competency courses)*

Example 2

Minimum ACT 22 (SAT 1030) **or**
Class Rank–top 50% **or**
Minimum high school GPA–2.5

Must also have completed college-prep course requirements for the state where student comes from.

Example 3

Must have taken required core courses

Top half of the class **or**
Admissions Index of 90 or higher

Admissions Index is a formula based on 2xACT + high school percentile rank.

Example 4

Successful completion of specified college-prep courses
Cumulative high school GPA of at least 2.8
Minimum SAT 510 verbal and 510 math
Rank: Top 40%
(Some programs have higher requirements.)

Students who are at the margin are often given an individual review or are sent to a committee for a final decision. Some institutions that utilize this approach might invite students, at the time of application or later in the process, to submit additional information for an individual review.

Although not among the models studied, there are several other approaches that are currently in use by at least some institutions or that have been proposed by commentators.

Link to state competency examinations or certificates

As states develop various ways to certify that students have attained established competencies for high school graduation, some have proposed that this information should become the basis (or at least a factor) in admitting students, particularly to state-supported institutions.

Instant or on-site admissions

Students are invited on campus for an in-depth interview with a senior member of the admissions staff (and in some cases members of the faculty). They bring official transcripts and a completed application and may be asked to discuss a required reading or participate in a group seminar as part of the process. A decision can be rendered at the end of the student's visit.

Lottery

This approach is occasionally suggested by those who question the fairness of the judgmental reviews (and some who believe that test scores are overly used in the current process). After some minimum eligibility threshold is met, places in the incoming class would be randomly assigned on a lottery basis. This approach was experimented with several decades ago at least one institution, but abandoned when highly qualified applicants were not "selected" over others who had considerably weaker records from the same school.

Wild cards

This approach might be used with other models to permit staff or faculty to admit a limited number of students on whatever basis they wish. This might be used for high-risk students who have impressed a staff member or a student with a particular talent but otherwise marginal credentials.

Automated selection

The college would define, in detail, the characteristics of the incoming class it desired. A computer algorithm, based on an optimization model, would be applied against the entire applicant pool. Reviewers could then review the candidates selected (and not selected) and make final decisions.

There are undoubtedly other approaches that might be used in selecting a class. At many institutions, there have been significant changes in recent years in how admissions decisions are made and it seems reasonable to assume that colleges will continue to modify their approaches to reflect changes in

their applicant pools, in institutional goals, and in the environment (legal and otherwise) in which they operate.

In exploring other possible ways to select students, it is useful to examine how admissions decisions are made in other contexts. Admission to graduate and professional schools have many of the same elements that are used for undergraduate admissions, although faculty involvement is considerably greater. Compared to institutions of higher education in other parts of the world, U.S. colleges and universities employ significantly more complex approaches. The standard in most international universities is extremely formulaic, generally based on a single set of examination results. Although many countries are beginning to explore ways to make higher education more accessible to all of their students, most remain focused on enrolling a rather unidimensional academic elite class of students. In contrast, U.S. institutions have a much broader conception of who is entitled to higher education.

VALIDATING OUTCOMES

Although not a focus of this investigation, it should be acknowledged that research and evaluation are an essential part of any admissions decision-making process. There can be many reasons why an institution has adopted a certain approach; however, it is ultimately valid only if it produces the desired results. The traditional way of evaluating whether or not admissions decisions are correct is through validity studies that examine how well students perform on campus. These studies can examine virtually all factors considered in admissions, not just the more traditional grades and test results. If, for example, an institution has decided to place more emphasis on essays or interviews or leadership qualities, these factors can be rated and included in validity studies.

Perhaps more important is the need to consider on which outcomes the process should be evaluated. Predicting freshmen grades is only one possible criterion of whether or not the admissions process is working. If the mission of the institution is to enroll students who have the potential to benefit from a college experience, it would be equally important to consider how students are indeed benefiting from the experience. If contribution to the campus community is an important goal, the evaluation should examine whether or not students judged to have this attribute, at the time of admissions, have actually contributed in positive ways throughout their college careers. Earlier phases of this project identified a variety of ways in which colleges define success. The monograph, *Best Practices in Admissions Decisions*, provides examples of how different colleges define success—ranging from broad goals (preparing students for the adult world, helping form the whole person) to specific lists of underlying competencies they expect of their graduates (is able to generate original ideas and solutions, respects and values individual differences, and functions in an intercultural context). To the extent possible, admissions decisions should be validated on this broader set of criteria.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT HOW ADMISSIONS DECISIONS ARE MADE

Most of the information in this document came from conversations with admissions professionals and studying internal documents used by institutions in their evaluation processes. However, there are numerous other sources of information about how colleges select students.

A primary source of information is the collected viewbooks, Web sites, and other published information that colleges provide students. While relatively few institutions describe exactly how applications will be reviewed, a number do provide statements that outline the factors they evaluate. Appendix E summarizes what colleges tell students about what they look for in an application. This list was culled from more than 50 applications, viewbooks, and Web sites. It is reassuring to note that there is considerable overlap between this list and Appendix D that summarizes factors from internal evaluation documents.

Another valuable source of information is the recently released *Trends in College Admission 2000*; *A Report of a National Survey of Undergraduate Admission Policies, Practices, and Procedures* (2001). This survey was jointly sponsored by ACT, Inc., the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), The College Board, Educational Testing Service (ETS), and National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). It is the fourth in a series of nationwide studies that examined admissions policies and practices. Among the findings in the latest survey that are relevant to this report are a number of indicators that institutions are receiving more applications and becoming more selective, and that there has also been an increase in their academic standards. The implication of these findings is that selection is becoming a more important element in many admissions offices than ever before and that students, families, and schools will feel increased pressure. The survey also examined the importance of various factors in admissions decisions. Several tables that summarize this information are reproduced in Appendix F. These tables confirm much of the information provided throughout this document, such as the overall importance of traditional academic indicators and increasing importance of essays and in certain personal qualities, such as leadership and community activities.

Over the years, numerous books and articles have been published about the admissions process. Some have been written specifically for students and parents, such as Joyce Slayton Mitchell's *Winning the Heart of the College Admissions Dean*, which provides advice about applying to selective colleges in general. Others, such as Jacques Steinberg's recent book, *The Gatekeepers*, and a number of magazine articles, focus on a single highly selective college. While these publications accurately describe a specific admissions model (generally Model A—multiple readers to committee to decision), they can lead the public

to believe this is the way all admissions decisions are made. There is considerable misinformation in many articles, often rooted in oversimplification and outdated generalizations.

Readers who jump to this page to find out what is the best practice in selecting students will be disappointed. As this document has illustrated, there are a vast variety of ways to make admissions decisions. Each institution has a unique mission and institutional goals and must develop and implement admissions policies and procedures that are not only consistent with, but that serve to advance those goals. The evidence collected in this project reveals that colleges and universities have indeed developed methods to evaluate applicants in ways that make sense within their particular situations. There are, however, several general concepts that undergird all admissions practices and that might be reviewed periodically to assure that practice remains relevant and the best it can possibly be.

Consensus on admissions objectives

The broad objectives that each admissions office seeks to implement should be explicitly affirmed or revised periodically. This might be done in the context of institutional self-study in preparation for accreditation reviews or in the development of strategic plans, which often precede major capital campaigns, or other major campus-wide projects. Sometimes, admissions objectives are issued by the trustees or other governing boards. More commonly, faculty committees, deans, and/or the provost or president, are charged with responsibility for providing annual guidance about admissions objectives. The most useful objectives are those that describe the desired characteristics of the incoming class in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Consensus on the qualities the institution seeks in its student body

Although sometimes imbedded in the overall admissions objectives described above, it is important to have discussions among all key constituents (perhaps including enrolled students and alumni as well as faculty and administrators) about the specific qualities the institution seeks in its new students, both individually and as a group. Does the college wish to enroll more students from different parts of the state, region, or nation? Does the institution wish to offer admission to all students who meet specified academic criteria? Is it important to bring in students representing different socioeconomic backgrounds, different racial/ethnic backgrounds? Does a university with a strong science and engineering program want to attract more students in the humanities? Does the institution want to identify students who are likely to use their education to make contributions to their communities? Does a college want to enroll only students who are likely to succeed academically or is it willing to take risks on students who show promise and determination? Are there certain qualities faculty are particularly interested in? (One way to identify those qualities is to ask faculty to name some of the students they value highly and then review those students'

original applications to see if there are underlying qualities that should be sought.) The challenge is being realistic and delineating both individual and group qualities that can be discerned during the review process.

Admissions criteria

The next step in making sure an admissions practice is sound is to be sure the admissions criteria are appropriate within the context of institutional mission and goals, admissions objectives, and the desired individual and group qualities. Institutions that have state mandates to provide higher education to all students who have successfully completed certain secondary school requirements and have a reasonable chance of future academic success can quite appropriately employ relatively straightforward admissions models that are based on formulas that count courses and utilize grades, class rank, and/or test results. On the other hand, colleges and universities that have more specific objectives usually need additional criteria to be able to evaluate whether or not applicants are likely to have the desired qualities the institution seeks. If the institution values creativity, independence, and superb communication skills, it needs to be sure that students are given an opportunity to demonstrate that they have these qualities. If the institution is interested in rewarding students who have persevered in the face of unusual hardships, there needs to be a way to learn about relevant extenuating circumstances. If an institution cares about artistic accomplishments, it should be sure to have procedures in place for inviting and reviewing portfolios, audition tapes, and other such evidence.

As used in this context, the term "admissions criteria" refers to both application components and the underlying factors that are often considered in evaluating an application.

- The list of application components (Appendix B) illustrates the many different ways institutions can solicit information from applicants that goes far beyond basic biographical data. Many colleges ask students to elaborate on their activities outside the classroom and to identify what has been most important to them. Colleges also routinely invite students to inform them if there are any special circumstances the admissions office should be aware of. Short answer questions and essays and personal statements (Appendix C) are designed to glean information about how the student thinks, what issues are of concern, what the students' values are, and how well the student might fit into campus life.
- The list of factors that may be used in making admissions decisions (Appendix D) provides a comprehensive list of qualities an institution might consider. Some are direct measures, but most need to be discerned from a careful reading of the entire file, including counselor and teacher recommendations and information provided by the student on the application, essays, and supplemental information. While most of these factors are laudable and to be desired, some institutions might find it appropriate to establish priorities to make the process more manageable.

Evaluations and processing models

The evaluation process should be a logical extension of the steps identified above. The key here is assuring that those involved in evaluation clearly understand the institutional missions and goals, the admissions objectives and what qualities the institution seeks. Knowing where to look for information and how to identify important factors is essential. The sections of this report that describe the evaluation process and the models used to select a class illustrate the many different approaches that institutions can follow.

No one approach is inherently better than another. Some have advantages that might be appropriate in one situation but not in another. For example, in recent years, several states or institutions have implemented class rank policies—that is, students who have completed specified courses and who rank in the top 2, 10, or 20 percent of their high schools are guaranteed admission. This has the advantage of treating all students in a school in the same manner and assures broad geographic representation and is an appropriate policy if these are important institutional goals. Other institutions may be more interested in individually evaluating how well the student has achieved in relation to the entire applicant pool. And, as noted elsewhere, some institutions allow students to be considered through multiple pathways.

Fairness

Most people would agree that an element of best practice should be fairness. A fair admissions process should provide all applicants an opportunity to present relevant information about themselves, should not permit personal prejudice or favoritism to influence decisions, should insure that admissions criteria and evaluation guidelines are applied uniformly and that all applicants to a particular program are considered on an equal footing. But, given the many different institutional objectives that an admissions policy needs to satisfy, some students may indeed be given preferential treatment by virtue of some background characteristic or special talent. And in highly competitive situations, the fact that so many highly qualified students will not be admitted can only appear unfair to those students and their families. One of the challenges that the admissions community faces is how to better inform the public about the legitimate need to have flexibility to create a class that supports broad institutional goals.

Validity

A solid admissions process needs to be validated periodically. As noted earlier, this might entail traditional correlation studies to determine whether the admissions factors used are positively related to students' academic performance. But given that most institutions often seek other desired outcomes, other methods of validating admissions criteria should be sought.

Future considerations

Admissions has evolved in significant ways over the past few decades. Institutions have broadened the criteria they consider beyond traditional academic measures. Essays are required by more institutions than just a few years ago. Academic standards have increased (and students have risen to the challenge and are taking more rigorous programs.) Competition has increased, and the entire admissions process has shifted earlier in the calendar than it was a decade ago.

But more change is inevitable. The impending Supreme Court decision about affirmative action could have a profound effect on how admissions is done. The increase in high school graduates projected for the next two decades, changing demographics, funding shortages in both secondary schools and higher education, and technological changes that make it so much easier for students to apply to many more institutions than ever before are just some of the other factors that will pressure admissions to reinvent itself once again.

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APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL STATEMENTS REGARDING ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL ENROLLMENT GOALS

The following examples have been excerpted from institutional Web sites, catalogues, viewbooks, applications, and other communications. Unless otherwise noted, this information was current during the fall of 2002.

The University seeks to enroll a diverse student body, full of talented and interesting individuals.

University of Pittsburgh

Rice seeks to create on its campus a rich learning environment in which all students will meet individuals whose life experiences and world views differ significantly from their own.

Rice University (1998)

In selecting a freshman class each year, the Yale Admissions Committee attempts to answer two questions: "Who is likely to make the most of Yale's resources?" and "Who will contribute significantly to the Yale community?"

Yale University

We seek students whose commitment and promise can contribute to the continuous creation and recreation of the academic community that defines a great university. We seek students who know that a university enhances everyone in proportion to their contribution to its intellectual and campus life. We seek students who come to not only learn and grow but also to participate in defining and contributing to the university's quality.

University of Massachusetts (letter from the Chancellor)

As a residential college, Colby is shaped to a great degree by the diversity of its students. Therefore, we seek students who will contribute to our community in a variety of ways: those who are eager to learn, who are willing to explore new fields, and who are enthusiastic about life in general. In making admission decisions, we seek excellence—in academics, art, music, theater, work experience, publications, leadership, public service, and athletics. We value racial, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity throughout the College and seek candidates from all parts of the country and world.

Colby College

We seek students whose interests and accomplishments indicate that they would greatly contribute to and benefit from the educational programs and activities we offer. Our mission and our legacy have a profound effect on our students, challenging and inspiring them to become leaders for America and the global community.

Howard University

The College offers a truly exceptional experience for the men and women who call it home, and it eagerly seeks new students who will make this an even richer and more dynamic place to live and to learn.

The first criterion for admission is, of course, the potential for academic achievement. However, we look for much more than grades. We are looking for leaders, for people with unique talents and the passion to pursue them, for people willing to stand up and be heard, for people who are creative, funny, interesting, and above all, interested in the world around them.

College of William and Mary

…the Board of Trustees believes that the college's student body should be drawn from a pool composed of the intellectually capable and academically committed college-bound students in the nation. From that pool, the College should select students for its entering classes who represent a rich cross-section of backgrounds, talents, experiences and perspectives. This is essential to the creation of a lively and stimulating educational environment that will prepare graduates for life in a changing world.

Pomona College

In building our community of scholars, we recognize the intellectual and cultural contributions that come from enrolling students from all walks of life. As a result, we seek students who not only have demonstrated high levels of academic achievement, but who have sought out challenges and excelled, and who bring a diversity of talents, skills, viewpoints and experiences to the University.

University of California
(Message from the President in application packet)

The University's policy is to offer admission to those applicants who are most able to benefit from and contribute to the University's educational resources. In selecting the freshman class, the University does not make its admission decisions solely on the basis of predicted academic performance. Important academic objectives are furthered by classes composed of students having talents and skills derived from diverse backgrounds.

University of Washington (1998)

Name and Biographical Data

Name (sometimes Legal Name)
Prefer to be called (nickname)
Prefix (Mr. Ms.)
Suffix (Jr., II, other)
Former last name(s) (if any)
Sex
SS Number
Marital status
Do you have children?

Birth Date
Birth Place
Years in U.S.
If not born in U.S., when did you arrive?

Race/Ethnicity
Includes a separate category for "Ethnicity"
Asks all groups to specify country of origin, including the category
White, Anglo, or Caucasian (including Arab)

Religion
Do you have any physical or learning requirements which
require special accommodation? (If yes, please describe.)

Will you be the first person in your immediate family to attend college?
Are you a veteran?
Are you the child of a deceased veteran?
Are you a state (or university) employee?
Are you a twin or triplet? If yes, is a sibling also applying to college?
Photograph

Citizenship

Citizenship (U.S., PR, Non-U.S. Resident)
Country of Residence
Country of Citizenship
Indicate your Visa Type
How long in U.S. if not U.S. citizen

Language Background

Native Language
Language Spoken at Home
Language Background
Other languages you speak fluently
Which languages (other than English) do you speak with difficulty?
Comfortably? Fluently?

Geography and Contact Information

State of Legal Residency
City or County

e-mail address
Phone
Fax
Daytime message #
Permanent Address
Current Address (if different)
Are you a resident of this state? (give dates)

If you have lived outside the U.S., what city and country, and when

Parents and Family Background

Father's name
Is father living?
Father's occupation
Father's employer
Position with firm
Highest level of father's education (check boxes)
Father's education (colleges and degrees)
Father's daytime telephone and e-mail
Father's place of birth

Mother's name
Is mother living?
Mother's occupation
Mother's employer
Position with firm
Highest level of mother's education (check boxes)
Mother's education (colleges and degrees)
Mother's daytime telephone and e-mail
Mother's place of birth

Previous occupation of parents
If not with both parents, with whom do you live?
Legal guardian's full name (if different from parents)
Marital status of parents (including date of divorce)

Parents and Family Background

Names and ages of siblings and, if in college, where and when
List relatives who attended this college
Is either parent a member of faculty or staff at this college?
Is either parent employed by a college that participates in a tuition exchange program?

Income and household size

High School Information

High School
High School address
High school (or college) code (ETS, CEEB)
Type of HS (catholic/parochial/private/public/home school))
Date of Graduation
Counselor's name
Counselor's phone and fax

Does your school use a Block or Intensive Scheduling System?

Any other High Schools attended (list)
College's attended and courses in progress

Have you ever attended school outside the U.S.?
If yes, what grades and what was the language of instruction?

Courses and Grades

List all senior year courses on grid, by subject

List all courses taken by subject since 9th grade and provide
grades for each term

High school GPA (reported by student)
Class rank (reported by student)
Student ranks ___ in class of ___ (signed by high school official)

Check off all courses taken in grades 9–12 (by subject)

If you lack any of the units required for admission, please use the space below
to explain why your record lacks those units and describe how you might fulfill
the requirements prior to enrolling.

Testing

SAT–when taken and scores
ACT–when taken and scores
SAT II–when taken and scores
TOEFL (or similar test)–when taken and scores
AP or IB Higher Level Subjects and scores

Test Optional colleges ask students if they want tests considered.
Other test results (state, international, competitions)

Activities, Honors, and Work Experience

Describe any scholastic distinctions or honors you have won
beginning with ninth grade
List, *in order of importance*, the major extracurricular activities,
hobbies or community service activities that have occupied your time
in and out of school.
Indicate special awards, honors, or prizes received

Extracurricular, Personal, and Volunteer Activities (list on grid)
Grades of involvement, time spent, positions held/honors, plan to
participate in colleg

List any major honors or distinctions you have received during the
past four years. Also list any academic competitions or regional talent
searches in which you have participated and describe any honors or
awards with which we are unfamiliar.

Extracurricular Activities (circle grade(s) of involvement)
Debate or Forensics Team
National Honor Society
National Merit Finalist or Semi-Finalist
Orchestra/Band (specify instrument)
Other Honor Societies (specify)
Scouting
Varsity Athletics in (sport)

Work Experience–List jobs
Specific nature of work, employer, dates, hours/week
To what use have you put your earnings?

Work or Internship experience
Summer Activities
In the space available, discuss the significance to you of the school
or summer activity in which you have been most involved.

Describe the intercultural experience that has had the most impact on you. Indicate any special talents or skills that you possess.

Tell us something about yourself that is not readily apparent from your application.

If you found yourself with a free afternoon, how would you choose to spend it?
If there were periods other than summers when you were not a full-time student, describe what you did during that time.

College Plans

Major
College or Division
Possible career or professional plans
Plan to reside (on campus, commute)
Plan to apply for financial aid
Plan to apply for ROTC scholarship?
Do you have the interest and ability to participate in NCAA intercollegiate athletics?
Are you interested in participating in intercollegiate debate?

Interest in and knowledge of college and likely contribution to campus environment

Have you recently visited the city near which this college is located?
Briefly describe your reasons for applying to our college.
How did you first become interested in this college?
Have you consulted with any alumni, faculty, coaches or staff concerning admissions? If yes, with whom and when?
Have you visited the campus (When?)
Have you had an interview? (When and where?)
Which contacts have you had with this institution? (list provided)
Which contact has been most helpful?
Among the following, who has the greatest desire for you to enroll at this college? (parents, friends, yourself, teacher, counselor, other?)
What appeals to you most about this college?
Which of the opportunities presented by this college's location in a major city might be most important to you?
As a student at this university, what contributions do you expect to make to the campus community?
Please rank order of the factors most likely to influence your college enrollment decision? (from list)
If you are related to or well-acquainted with any student or graduate of this college, please give name, relationship, and year of graduation.

Names of other colleges to which you are applying
Please rank order your interest in enrolling at all the institutions to which you are applying, including this college.

Other

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? (If yes, explain)
Have you ever been sanctioned by a school resulting in probation or suspension? (If yes, explain)
Do you authorize release of information in your admissions file to mother/father?

Signature

Statements re confidentiality, student dismissal, and truth of application
Statements re institution's honor code
Statement that applicant wrote the essay

Application Components— additional information requested on separate sheet

If not currently attending school, describe in detail, on a separate sheet, your activities since last enrolled.

Please describe which of these activities (extracurricular and personal activities or work experience) has had the most meaning for you, and why.

On a separate sheet, please provide a brief list of your primary extracurricular, church, community and work activities and interests.

Compose two lists. One list should include all of your awards and achievements; school activities; employment; school, community, and church leadership; and school and community service. For each activity, indicate the time commitment of your involvement. The second list should highlight your most significant activities, Include no more than five activities on this list. Describe why the activity was important to you.

If your senior year schedule was influenced by factors beyond your control, explain the circumstances on a separate sheet of paper and attach to this form.

Please list the extracurricular activities that have been most important to you in high school. We ask for your most important activities because we want to know what you care about and what you might bring to the university community. Because a full resume tends to tell us less about your passions and talents that the shorter list that we request, be sure to include this list even if you also enclose a résumé. Begin with the activity that has been the most significant for you...and limit your response to roughly half a page. If there is an activity you would like to highlight, please tell us about it in a few sentences at the bottom of your list.

Have you received any significant awards or honors for either academic or extracurricular achievement? If so, list them. Please explain any award that we are not likely to understand..

If any of your hobbies, activities, or special interests has had particular meaning for you or requires additional explanation for us to understand it fully, use the space below to describe it. You may attach a separate sheet if you prefer, but limit your answer to one or two paragraphs.

Are you graduating from secondary school early or without a diploma? If so, please attach a complete explanation

Have you ever discontinued study for any reason other than a brief illness? If so, please attach a complete explanation.

Have you ever transferred schools during the academic year? If so, please attach a complete explanation.

If there has been any particularly important event or occurrence in your life, or if there is any unevenness in your record that might need clarification or explanation, it is important to share this information with the Admission Committee. Please attach an additional sheet to explain.

Have we missed anything? Should we be aware of some issue, value, or circumstance pertinent to your application? Let us know. Your comments should not exceed 100 words.

We invite you to submit additional materials, such as recordings of musical performance, slides of artwork, photography, creative writing samples, and poetry, as a means of understanding your personal strengths and better evaluating your candidacy.

Is there a broader context in which we should consider your performance and involvements? Any special factors we should consider (e.g. family situation, work, sibling childcare responsibilities or other personal circumstances)? If yes, please provide relevant information on a separate sheet of paper.

Are there any factors or circumstances that may affect your adjustment to college life (academic or extra-curricular)? If yes, please provide relevant information on a separate sheet of paper.

If you have done any research or independent study outside of school, please include an abstract or summary of your work.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE ESSAY (OR
PERSONAL STATEMENT) TOPICS

250 – 500 words on topic of your choice.

1. *Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.*
2. *Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.*
3. *Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.*
4. *Describe a character in fiction, an historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you and explain that influence.*
5. *Topic of your choice.*

Common Application

Please answer all questions using 500 words or less per question. All responses must be submitted with this application.

1. *What motivates you to seek a college education?*
2. *Why is Berea College a good choice for you?*
3. *What would you like the Admissions Decision Team to know about you prior to making their decision (that they are unlikely to learn otherwise)?*

Berea College

Please write an essay on one of the following topics:

1. *If you could add or remove one item/aspect of contemporary society, what would it be and why?*
2. *Describe how a work of art, music, dance, theater or literature has inspired you.*
3. *In his essay,* Self Reliance, *Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: "Who so would be a man must be a nonconformist." React to this quotation and relate your own experience.*

Catholic University

Write an essay of no less than 250 words on one of the following:

• *Describe a character in fiction, an historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.*

• *We are fortunate to live in a society that is increasingly multicultural and diverse. Describe a time in your life when you unexpectedly became more aware of either a difference or an area of common ground that existed between you and another person or persons. How did this experience impact your understanding of yourself, other people, or of the world?*

The College of New Jersey

We recognize that all good writers seek feedback, advice, or editing before sending off an essay. When you have completed your essay, please tell us whose advice you sought for help, the advice he/she provided, and whether you incorporated his/her suggestions.

Please answer on a separate sheet of paper. Remember, this is your opportunity to speak to us in your own voice, so be yourself. Choose one of the following questions and indicate which question you've chosen. We ask that you limit your essay to no more than 2–3 pages and use double spacing if the essay is typed or computer printed. Be sure to include your name and address on all the attached sheets.

a. *Have you witnessed a person who is close to you doing something you considered seriously wrong? Describe the circumstances, your thoughts, and how you chose to respond. If you discussed it with the person, was his/her justification valid? In retrospect, what if anything would you have done differently and why?*

b. *What has been your most profound or surprising intellectual experience?*

c. *Write on any topic of importance to you. If you have written a personal essay for another purpose — even an essay for another college — that you believe represents you, your writing, and your thinking particularly well, feel free to submit it.*

<div align="right">

Duke University

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If you had only $10 (or 11EUR, or R$25, or Rs 490, etc.) to plan a day's adventure, where would you go, what would you do, and whom would you take with you?

Additional question (only for applicants considering engineering programs).

Please write an essay in which you respond to the following questions.

On what kind of projects do you enjoy working? What kind of problems do you enjoy solving? What area of engineering interests you most?

<div align="right">

Johns Hopkins University

</div>

Please respond to the following, using whatever space and medium you like.

Personal Statements

Please respond to one of the four topics below. Note which topic you are addressing at the beginning of your essay. Your essay must be typed (from 400 to 500 words) and submitted on separate sheets of paper. Type your name and social security number on each sheet, and staple all sheets to this page.

Essay Topics

• *Who is the voice of your generation, and what message does he or she express? Do you agree with this message, and why?*

• *One theory holds that great leaders are produced by the particulars of their time. In your opinion, are great leaders the product of circumstance or the result of individual qualities? Pick a leader and support your position.*

• *There is a significant difference between a stupid mistake and a clever one. Give an example of a "clever" mistake you have made and explain how it benefited you or others.*

• *When asked by Pope Boniface VIII to prove his skill as an artist, Giotto (1267-1337) drew a perfect circle freehand. What seemingly simple action would demonstrate your ability or skill, and how would it represent you?*

Short Statements

Please respond to the following questions in the space provided.

• *Create an acronym that represents your life. What is it, and what does it stand for?*

• *Imagine you are the offspring of any two famous people. Who are your parents, and what qualities have they passed on to you?*

• *Driving into downtown Chicago, there is a building visible from the Kennedy Expressway adorned with a mural of well known Chicago personalities. If you could paint anything (other than your own likeness) on the building, what would it be, and why?*

• *In the spirit of Northwestern's tradition of collaborative learning, please provide us with an original essay topic or short statement you'd like to see on next year's application. (Most of this year's essays and short statements were suggested by students.)*

<div align="right">

Northwestern University

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Because the Admissions Committee evaluates each applicant as an individual, the essays you submit are an integral part of your application. The Committee is interested both in your ideas and in how you express them. We read essays with regard to content and style. Clearly type or print your responses on separate sheets of paper and place them inside this form. Include your name and social security number on all sheets. If you print, please use ink.

Please concisely answer one of the following prompts, limiting your response to no more than a page.

a. *Imagine you have been given the means and the opportunity, beyond what is available to you now, to develop a talent or new area of interest. What do you choose and why?*

b. *Although it may appear to the contrary, we do know that people have a*

life beyond what they do to get into college. Tell us about a fun experience you've had outside of your formal classroom and extracurricular activities. You might choose to write about time spent with friends, family, or even by yourself.

Choose one of the following options. Lease limit your response to one or two pages.

a. *At Pomona, we see the ability to question and to think critically as essential to the learning experience. Tell us about something you once thought you knew with certainty but have since reevaluated.*

b. *Pomona College's approach to education includes, among other things, a strong emphasis on collaboration. How has collaboration played a role in your learning experience thus far, and how do you see it affecting your college experience.*

c. *Pick a topic of your own choosing that will give you the opportunity to express to us a sense of how you think, what issues and ideas are most important to you, and a sense of your personal philosophy, traits, goals, etc.*

Pomona College

Freshman applicants may choose from two main topics. No matter which topic you choose your personal statement should reflect your own ideas and be written by you alone. Write your essay in a natural style, so that it conveys who you are. Present your information and ideas in a focused, thoughtful, and meaningful manner. Support your ideas with specific examples. A personal statement that is simply a list of qualities or accomplishments is not usually persuasive.

Reflecting on your family's experiences and personal circumstances, what would you like to tell us that is not already revealed or explained sufficiently in your application?

What you do in the classroom defines only a part of who you are. How do you spend your time when you are not in class or studying? Focus on one activity, two at the most, and discuss what you have gained from your involvement.

University of California

Choose one of the four topics below and write a concise essay (300–500 words) on a separate attachment labeled "UGA Essay." Please be sure to include your full name (as listed on your application) and social security number on each page of the attachment.

1. *Think about a recent experience in which you displayed initiative or demonstrated leadership ability. What did you learn about yourself—your strengths, weaknesses and aspirations—and how do you expect to use what you learned in the future?*

2. *Think back to what you were like as a student and as a person in your first year of high school. Consider yourself now. Tell us how you have changed, and why.*

3. In your opinion, what elements of a person's character define integrity? Provide a personal experience in which you believe you have demonstrated integrity.

4. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed that it was critical for one person to have discovered something in life for which it was worth dying. If you could choose one political, environmental, spiritual, or social issue to fight for, what would it be and why?

University of Georgia

On separate sheets of paper, write a response to ONE of the following topics. This statement should help us get to know you by going beyond the numbers and facts included in other sections of your application. Some past applicants have presented their special talents, unique interests, socioeconomic or cultural backgrounds (including languages other than English spoken at home, and dozens of other personal qualities. All we ask of you is an honest reflection and careful writing.

• Please limit your personal statement to approximately 500 words.

• Type statement (double spaced) or print it neatly.

• At the top of each page, please include:

• "Section 7, Personal Statement," your name, and your social security number.

• Please note the topic you have selected.

1. In his autobiography Long Walk to Freedom, *Nelson Mandela reflects upon his life and commitment to the antiapartheid movement. He writes: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." Give a personal example of how courage has played a role in your life.*

2. English poet W.H. Auden wrote, "Those who will not perish in the act; those who will not act perish for that reason." At Notre Dame, we value equally intellectual inquiry and social responsibility. Describe a personal experience in which your ideas motivated your actions, or an experience in which your actions changed your ideas.

3. Compose a Personal Statement with content of your own choosing. In doing so, feel free to introduce yourself to us in any way you feel appropriate. Whether your essay is autobiographical or imaginative, it should reflect who you are in both form and content.

University of Notre Dame

Describe the courses of study and the unique characteristics of the University of Pennsylvania that most interest you. Why do these interests make you a good match for Penn?

Your intellectual abilities, your sense of imagination and your creativity are important to us. With this in mind, please respond to one of the following three requests. Your essay should not exceed one page.

1. You have just completed your 300-page autobiography. Please submit page 217.

2. First experiences can be defining. Cite a first experience that you have had and explain its impact on you.

3. Recall an occasion when you took a risk that you now know was the right thing to do.

<div align="right">The University of Pennsylvania</div>

Answer one of the following questions. Limit your response to half a page, or approximately 250 words.

- What is your favorite word, and why?
- Look out any window in your home. What would you change about what you see?
- You've likely heard that college will be the best four years of your life. If only you could get there! Describe how the process of "getting there" has affected you. What have you learned about yourself or others—peers, parents, admissions professionals—during the college search process?
- What form of discrimination most concerns you?
- Technophobe or technophile?

Please write on a topic of your choice. If an essay question for another college piqued your interest, feel free to submit your response to that question. Please limit your submission to one page, or approximately 500 words.

<div align="right">University of Virginia</div>

Imagine that you have the opportunity to meet with a great secular figure from the past (for example, a scholar, inventor, statesman, artist, writer, explorer, or military genius). Describe your meeting and the issues you would discuss with that person.

<div align="right">University of Washington</div>

Honors Essay

The University would like you to discuss those aspects of your life that may not be apparent from information provided on your application or high school transcript. Although no topic is prescribed, you may choose to discuss:

- your academic interests and educational goals
- aspects of your background or experience that would enrich the racial, ethnic, cultural, or educational diversity of the University community;
- significant life experiences that may have deleteriously affected your educational development, such as growing up in an economically or educationally disadvantaged environment or coping with personal or family hardships;
- significant leadership or extracurricular activities;
- significant experiences in community service or employment;
- special talents in the arts.

<div align="right">University of Washington</div>

APPENDIX D
FACTORS THAT MAY BE USED
IN MAKING ADMISSIONS DECISIONS
BASED ON INTERNAL EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Academic Achievement, Quality, and Potential

Direct measures

AP, IB and honors courses
Class Rank
College courses while in high school
Core (required) curriculum
Courses beyond core curriculum
Grades (GPA)
Internships in area of academic interest
Participation in enrichment or outreach programs
Pattern of grade improvement during high school
Quality of curriculum
Solid college-prep curriculum (4 years in each subject)
Strength of Senior Year
Test Scores (SAT I and II, ACT, AP, etc.)

Caliber of High School

Average SAT (ACT) scores
Competitive grading system in high school
Competitiveness of class
Percentage attending 4-year colleges
Strength of curriculum (including availability of AP, honors)

Evaluative measures

Academic recognition and awards
Artistic talent
Depth in one or more academic areas related to student interests
Evidence of academic passion
Grasp of world events
Independent academic research
Intellectual curiosity
Sophisticated vocabulary and command of the English language
Writing quality

Nonacademic Characteristics and Attributes

Geographic

Academically disadvantaged school (such as inner city or rural)
Economically disadvantaged region
From far away
From local community
From school with few or no previous applicants
State resident

Personal Background

Alumni connection
Cultural diversity
Faculty/staff connection
First generation to go to college from family
Low-economic family background
Military veteran
Peace Corps, America Corps, etc.
Personal disadvantage
Returning Student
Sex
Underrepresented minority

Extracurricular activities, service, and leadership

Awards and honors (athletic, artistic, musical, civic)
Community service
Impact student's involvement had on school and community
Leadership
Quality and depth of involvement
Work experience

Personal attributes

Artistic talent
Character
Civic and cultural awareness
Commitment
Commitment to high ideals
Concern for others
Concern for the community
Consistent follow-through
Creativity
Determination/Grit

Diverse perspective
Effort
Enthusiasm for learning
Evidence of persistence
Gets along well with others
Highly motivated
Initiative
Insight
Intellectual independence
Leadership potential
Maturity
Motivation
Originality
Personal presence
Personal promise
Productive use of time
Reliable
Responsibility
Team player
Tenacity
Tolerance

Extenuating circumstances

Family problems
Frequent moves/many different schools
Health challenges
Is English first language?
Language spoken at home
Overcoming personal adversity
Responsibility for raising a family
Success in face of unusual hardships or demands on time

Other

Demonstrated interest in college
Effective oral communication
Interview impression
Is student good match for institution?
Is student good match for intended major?
Strong personal statement

APPENDIX E
WHAT COLLEGES TELL STUDENTS
ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR

Academic Factors

Achievements, honors, and awards
Academic achievement
Academic awards
Academic promise
Academic work ethic
AP, IB, or honors courses (or college courses)
Class Rank
Completion of a substantial number of academic courses beyond the
   required minimum
Completion of core subject requirements
Curricular patterns and grade trends
Difficulty of courses taken
Effective class discussion
Eligibility Index (grades and scores0
Evaluations from teachers and counselors
Evidence of unusually competitive grading system in high school
Grades
Graduation from high school
Intellectual ability
Letters of reference
Pattern of GPA improvement during high school
Strength of high school curriculum (including senior year)
Test scores
Types and levels of courses taken
Written expression of ideas
Academic commitment
Rigorous senior year curriculum
Quality of curriculum
Academic competition within high school
Consistent academic growth and achievement
Participation in activities which develop academic and intellectual abilities

Nonacademic Factors

Accomplishments
Adaptability
Alumni connections
Appreciation for individual differences

Artistic talent
Aspirations
Athletic talent
Capacity for involvement
Character
Commitment
Commitment to service
Communication skills
Community involvement
Concern for others
Courage to take intellectual risks
Creative, original thought
Creativity
Cultural/ethnic awareness
Curiosity
Depth of extracurricular experiences
Disciplined work habits
Educational, economic, and cultural diversity
Emotional stability
Energy
Enthusiasm
Enthusiasm for learning
Essays
Extenuating circumstances
Fearlessness
Geographic diversity
Good character
Good match between applicant and college
Imagination
Independence
Independent thinking
Initiative
Integrity
Intellectual curiosity
Intellectual pursuits
Intelligence
Interest in people and ideas
Interested in the college
Interests and qualities that will contribute to the vitality of the campus com-
    munity
Knowledge of self
Leadership
Leadership potential

Likely to take advantage of what college offers
Maturity
Motivation
Originality
Overcoming life challenges
Passion about interest and extracurricular involvements
Personal challenges
Personal character
Personal merit
Personal statements
Personal strengths
Potential for growth
Potential for success
Promise
Promise for personal growth and development
Qualities that distinguish you from other applicants
Quality of thought
Reliability
Respect different views, opinions, and backgrounds
Respectful of others' beliefs
School and community activities
Self-confidence
Self-expression
Sense of fairness and justice
Sense of humor
Serious education ambitions
Seriousness of purpose
Service to the community
Special accomplishments
Special circumstances
Special talents
State residents
Statement of purpose
Successfully completes activities
Well-rounded both in and out of the classroom
Willingness of explore, question, and take intellectual risks
Willingness to contribute to school and community
Willingness to take on academic challenges
Work experience

APPENDIX F
TABLES FROM *TRENDS IN COLLEGE ADMISSION 2000*

TABLE 4.8 Average Importance of Various Factors in Admissions Decisions at Four-Year Institutions, 1979, 1985, 1992, and 2000

	Average Importance of Factor[a]							
	Four-year Public				Four-year Private			
Factor	1979	1985	1992	2000[d]	1979	1985	1992	2000[d]
High school GPA or rank	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9
Admissions test scores	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6
Pattern of HS Coursework	2.5	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2
College-level work in HS[b]			2.7	2.8			2.9	3.0
AP Course Enrollment[c]				2.2 (3.0)				2.5 (3.1)
AP Course Grades[c]				2.2 (3.0)				2.5 (3.1)
Letters of recommendation	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0
Essays	1.6	1.6	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.6	2.9
AP Exams Grades[c]				1.8 (2.7)				2.1 (2.8)
Achievement test scores	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.7 (2.7)	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.1 (2.8)
Portfolios, auditions, etc.	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.7	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.1
SAT II[c]				1.6 (2.9)				1.8 (2.8)
Interviews	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.6	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.7
Declaration of major	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.7
State of residence	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.5	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2
Minority group membership[b]			2.2	1.4			1.8	1.5
Health statement	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.3
Country of residence[a]			1.6	1.3			1.4	1.4
Disability group membership[b]			1.4	1.2			1.2	1.2
Age[c]				1.2				1.1
Proportion of students from each HS[c]				1.1				1.1
Gender[b]			1.2	1.1			1.4	1.3
Full/part-time status[b]			1.2	1.1			1.4	1.3
Financial need	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.1	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3
Number of Institutions	333	412	366	305	648	823	784	657

Notes: 2000 summary data for this table were obtained from responses to questions 6 and 7 of the four-year questionnaire.

[a] Average importance was computed as a mean where:

1 = Not considered

2 = A minor factor

3 = A moderately important factor (in 1979, "one of several factors")

4 = A very important factor

5 = The single most important factor

[b] Not surveyed in 1979 and 1985.

[c] Surveyed only in 2000.

[d] Figures in parentheses exclude "not considered" in the average importance computation.

Source: Trends in College Admission 2000: A Report of a National Survey of Undergraduate Admission Policies, Practices, and Procedures (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming & Trapani, 2001) www.airweb.org.

TABLE 4.9 Importance of Various Factors in Admissions Decisions at Four-Year Public Institutions, by Institutional Selectivity, 1985, 1992, and 2000

| | Average Importance of Factor[a] | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 50% or less | | | 80%–95% | | | 50%–80% | | | More then 95% | | |
Factor	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000
High School GPA or rank	4.1	4.2	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.1	2.9	3.2	3.1
Admissions test scores	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.7	2.9	3.2	3.1
Pattern of HS course work	3.5	3.6	3.3	2.7	3.1	2.9	3.3	3.4	3.2	1.9	2.2	2.1
Letters of recommendation	2.5	2.3	2.2	1.7	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.4	1.4	1.4
Essays	2.4	2.5	2.4	1.4	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.8	2.1	1.2	1.2	1.3
Achievement test scores	1.9	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.6
Portfolios, auditions, etc.	2.9	2.4	2.2	1.7	1.5	1.5	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.1	1.3
Interviews	2.1	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.3
Declaration of major	2.1	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.5	1.3
State of residence	2.1	2.3	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.9	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.1
Health statement	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.4	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.6
Financial need	1.3	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1
Number of Institutions	31	30	22	124	91	95	165	170	137	67	34	27

Note: 2000 summary data for the importance of admissions factors were obtained from responses to question 6 of the four-year questionnaire.

[a]Average ratings were computed as means where:

1 = Not considered
2 = A minor factor
3 = A moderately important factor
4 = A very important factor
5 = The single most important factor

Source: Trends in College Admission 2000: A Report of a National Survey of Undergraduate Admission Policies, Practices, and Procedures (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming & Trapani, 2001) www.airweb.org.

TABLE 4.10 Importance of Various Factors in Admissions Decisions at Four-Year Private Institutions, by Institutional Selectivity, 1985, 1992, and 2000

| | Average Importance of Factor[a] | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Factor | 50% or less | | | 80%–95% | | | 50%–80% | | | More then 95% | | |
	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000	1985	1992	2000
High School GPA or rank	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.2	3.9	4.2	4.2	4.1	3.1	2.9	3.5
Admissions test scores	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6	2.8	2.6	3.0
Pattern of HS course work	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.4	2.4	2.2	2.2
Letters of recommendation	3.2	3.2	3.5	3.0	3.1	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.1	2.7	2.5	2.6
Essays	3.1	2.8	3.3	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.5
Achievement test scores	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.0	1.8	1.7	2.1
Portfolios, auditions, etc.	2.7	2.3	2.4	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.1	1.6	1.5	1.8
Interviews	2.6	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.5
Declaration of major	1.9	1.8	2.1	1.6	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.6
State of residence	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.1
Health statement	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.6	1.4	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.8	1.7	1.6
Financial need	1.3	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.8	1.6	1.4

1 = Not considered
2 = A minor factor
3 = A moderately important factor
4 = A very important factor
5 = The single most important factor

Note: 2000 summary data for the importance of admissions factors were obtained from responses to question 6 of the four-year questionnaire.

[a]Average ratings were computed as means where:

Source: Trends in College Admission 2000: A Report of a National Survey of Undergraduate Admission Policies, Practices, and Procedures (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming & Trapani, 2001) www.airweb.org.

TABLE 4.12 Importance of Personal Qualities in Admissions Decisions by Percentage 1979, 1985, 1992, and 2000

Personal Quality	Four-year Public				Four-year Private			
	1979	1985	1992	2000	1979	1985	1992	2000
Leadership ability	43	49	45	52	77	79	76	78
Extracurricular activities[a]	—	49	45	50	—	76	73	75
Community activities[b]	28	36	34	43	72	75	74	77
Motivation or initiative	57	51	48	57	90	88	86	84
Work experience	46	43	34	41	64	59	51	56
Compatibility	39	38	42	40	76	83	84	79
Number of Institutions	333	413	366	305	648	827	783	657

Notes: 2000 summary data for this table were obtained from responses to question 12 of the four-yearn questionnaire. Percentages given are the sum of responses to "Sometimes Important" and "Often Important."

[a]Not surveyed in 1979.

[b]In 1992, Community or church involvement.

Source: Trends in College Admission 2000: A Report of a National Survey of Undergraduate Admission Policies, Practices, and Procedures (Breland, Maxey, Gernand, Cumming, & Trapani, 2001) www.airweb.org