



College Admissions: Understanding Today's System



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Colleges and Universities in the United States



Understanding the Options





Public vs. Private

§Funded from taxes paid to local and state governments by residents of the state.

§Designed to educate residents of the state. (Often Called “Flag-Ship” or State Universities).

§Usually offer a wide variety of majors

§Funded by tuition.

§Students often come from all parts of the world.

§May be a bit more specialized; limited majors
Campus size is smaller;
emphasis on community



College Applications

How is an Application Reviewed?



What are Colleges Looking for

- “To build a class” – To admit a student body that represents a broad range of experiences and backgrounds
- To admit students that are a good fit for the college.

How Selective Colleges Review Applications

Holistic & Contextual

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

Transcript

Test Scores

Personal Statement & Other Personal Writing

Activity List

Letters of Recommendation

School Report

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Who is this student?

What is important to the student?

How will the student contribute to our college community

What will the student take away from our college community?

What is the environment that produced this student?



Institutional Priorities

Factors Influencing Application
Evaluation



Institutional Priorities

- Academic excellence
- Diversity (geographic—states, countries, rural/suburban.urban), socioeconomic, gender, public/private high school, backgrounds, experiences, perspective)
- Program needs
- Special talents
- Demonstrated “fit”

Out of a Student's Control

- Institutional needs and priorities
- Number of applicants
- Caliber/background of applicants
- Percentage of class filled through early application period
- Size of incoming class
- Impacted/popular majors



Supporting your Students through Grades 9 and 10



What to Consider Now



How Parents Can Support Students Now

- Let your student's interests lead
- Emphasize balance
- Consider consistency over inclination to take on everything now



FAQ





Current Admission Landscape



How have recent court cases and the
administration's policies affected college
admissions?





College Research



When and how should my student
begin?





Self-Studying AP exams



How are they viewed in admissions?





Independent College Counseling



Should we hire an independent college
counselor for 9th and 10th grades?





Future Extracurricular Choices



What should my student be thinking about when
selecting extracurriculars for next year and
beyond?



Recommended Resources

Harker Parent Portal Resources: Academic Planning Resources Tile

- Academic Planning & College Counseling Guidance
- College Visit Guide
- A Healthier Approach to College Admissions video

Common Ground Speaker Series Videos (link on Harker Parent Portal Counseling Tile)

- Dream School, Finding the College That's Right for You, Fall 2025
- College Transitions: Essential Skills to Thrive on Campus and Beyond, Fall 2023

Websites

- Colleges' Websites: Online tours, information sessions, student panels, application workshops and more
- Finaid.org

Books

- Dream School: Finding the College That's Right for You by Jeffrey Selingo
- Who Gets In and Why: A Year Inside College Admissions by Jeffrey Selingo
- The Price You Pay for College: An Entirely New Road Map for the Biggest Financial Decision Your Family Will Ever Make by Ron Leiber
- Admission Matters: What Students and Parents Need to Know About Getting Into College by Springer, Morgan, Griesemer, Reider
- The Truth About College Admission: A Family Guide to Getting In and Staying Together by Brennan Barnard and Rick Clark.

Podcasts

- The Truth About College Admission hosted by Brennan Barnard and Rick Clark
- Admissions Beat hosted by Lee Coffin, Dean of Admissions at Dartmouth College
- Inside the Yale Admissions Office hosted by Yale admission officers