

# April Assignment Sophomore

## Due April 30, 2008

### COLLEGE ADMISSION

Read the following article and answer the questions at the end. (The article came from the College Board Website.)

No two colleges are looking for the same student—yet there are some elements important to all. Below, eight college admissions officers tell what's hot, and what's not.

#### CHALLENGE YOURSELF IN HIGH SCHOOL

The core curriculum you see published includes the minimum courses required for admission, such as four units of English. Often students take that core curriculum not at a minimum, but as a maximum expectation. That's the wrong thing to do.

*Fernando Yarrito, SW Texas State*

[The first thing we look at is] academic achievement, how well students do in their high school curriculum. We're interested in students who have taken the most rigorous courses. Are they stretching their minds, looking for academic challenge?

*Charlene Aguilar, Castilleja School*

I'm interested in the strength of a student's curriculum and in students who challenge themselves by taking honors courses and Advanced Placement classes. If a high school offers these classes and a student decided not to take them, it says that the student did not rise to the challenge.

*Carol Lunkenheimer, Northwestern University*

I like to see students who have challenged themselves by taking the extra math or writing courses that are beyond what is required.

*James Washington, University of New Hampshire*

#### PUT TEST SCORES IN PERSPECTIVE

If colleges don't have experience with a particular high school, test scores enter the picture. They're a consistent piece of information to add to the overall evaluation.

*George Dixon, North Carolina State University*

We're interested in students who have taken the most rigorous courses [but] standardized scores are also important. We take the best verbal and math scores, so we encourage students to take the tests more than once.

*Charlene Aguilar, Castilleja School*

#### ON ESSAYS & THE VALUE OF BEING YOU

Essays measure a student's ability to write a good composition. [Also] a student can choose a topic to write about [that reveals] creativity, personality, and value systems that can't be revealed by grades alone.

*Bill Conley, Case Western*

I'm interested in the energy of a student's application. We ask students to write one large essay. Enthusiasm and a good writing style are important. If a student's essay is flat and boring, that implies that a student does not have the energy we're looking for at Northwestern.

*Carol Lunkenheimer, Northwestern University*

## **ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a rule, the more selective the institution, the more extracurriculars, leadership, recommendations, and things of that nature come into play to help discern among good candidates when we have limited spaces to offer.

*George Dixon, North Carolina State University*

We ask for recommendations from the guidance counselor or the head of the student's school and a teacher. These are important because they tell us how a student is perceived by her classmates, how she fits into her community, what leadership roles she has taken. If I see for some reason that a student's grade dipped, a guidance counselor or teacher can explain what happened

*Nanci Tessier, Smith College*

We look at recommendations, but so many kids are not on a level playing field. In some schools there are 800 kids to two counselors, who don't know anything about these kids. On the other hand, a class of 25 students in a private school may know their teacher very well. This person would be able to write wonderful recommendations. So recommendations can't always be a deciding factor.

*Bill Conley, Case Western*

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

We value leadership, but not everyone is a leader. We also value contributors, the followers. Contributors demonstrate that they have the ability to follow through, which is a very valuable quality. Also, time management is important. Being able to balance out a busy school schedule and extracurricular activities implies that a student is disciplined and can handle responsibility.

*Bill Conley, Case Western*

I look for depth behind students' extracurricular activities. I want to know what students say they got out of them and why they have stayed with them [over time].

*James Washington, University of New Hampshire*

We're looking for a commitment to and a passion for an activity outside of the academic setting – we're looking for depth rather than breadth. A student studying ballet may have been involved in it for many years. The activity is more narrowly focused, but that's okay: ballet takes time, commitment, and energy.

*Nanci Tessier, Smith College*

## ROLLING ADMISSION & CUTOFFS

We're a public university with rolling admission [i.e., they accept students throughout the year.] Our cutoffs [minimum achievement levels for admission] ... look at three things: completion of a core curriculum, a certain minimum class rank, and a certain minimum test score for that rank.

*Bill Conley, Case Western*

## MISSING THE CUTOFFS

Many students who are not accepted enroll in a community college. We encourage them to complete their associate's degree and after that they can transfer to a four-year college.

*John Fraiarc, Western Michigan University*

For a student who has the core courses in place and a solid GPA but falls just short of the requirements, we would ask for more information, particularly about how hard you're working in your senior year. We want to see that you're serious about gearing up for the challenge of college.

*Fernando Yarrito, Southwest Texas State University*

## WHAT ABOUT SELECTIVE SCHOOLS?

Leadership is particularly important, because we're looking for students who have the ability to make a difference at Smith. I'm very interested in students who have shown leadership qualities in high school ... a student who was president or senator of a class. We want candidates who aren't afraid to speak up and express their opinions in class, but we need a variety of students to keep us balanced.

*Nanci Tessier, Smith College*

Involvement in extracurricular activities—being committed an activity outside of academics—is also something we look at.

[Extracurricular involvement] says that a student has a lot of energy. We don't give merit to one activity over another.

*Carol Lunkenheimer, Northwestern University*

## AND PLEASE REMEMBER

Admissions standards aren't designed as barriers, but rather as guidelines to give you a sense of how you compare to others [in our institution] and how competitive you may be [here]. If you don't have the kind of record required, maybe you should look at other institutions that may be a better match for you. This puts you in a better situation to be competitive, to strengthen yourself, and to succeed in college.

*Fernando Yarrito, Southwest Texas State University*

*Answer the following questions regarding college admission based on the article you just read.*

- 1) What is generally the first thing colleges look at when deciding whether or not to accept a student?
  
- 2) What did Carol Lunkenheimer, Northwestern University, say about honors and Advanced Placement courses?
  
- 3) Do colleges recommend that you take standardized tests more than once? Why or why not?
  
- 4) Why do many colleges require an essay with the application?
  
- 5) What is the value of getting recommendations from counselors and teachers?
  
- 6) How important are extracurricular activities in determining college admission?
  
- 7) What did Nanci Tessier, Smith College, mean when she said “we’re looking for depth rather than breadth” in extracurricular activities?
  
- 8) What might a student do if he/she is not accepted to the college of his/her choice?
  
- 9) What in this article most surprised you?
  
- 10) What should you do next year to help yourself become a good candidate for college?