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How do college admissions officers decide who gets accepted?

How do colleges decide who gets in? Take a closer look at the college acceptance process.

Many high school students want to know the secret to a successful college application. Will you get a competitive edge from a well-written essay? A stellar interview with a college admissions counselor? A glowing recommendation letter? Or are those all secondary to a top-of-the-class GPA, impressive test scores, and a wide variety of extracurricular activities?

The answer is all of the above...and a few unknowns (to students, that is). Don't get us wrong: A student's GPA and test scores, extracurriculars, and college application essay are incredibly important in getting accepted. But beyond those parts of the college application

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consuming, and stressful, the more you know in advance, the better you'll be able to target colleges and universities that will be a good fit, from both an educational and financial perspective.

At Edmit, we want to shed light on the college admissions process so students can make more informed decisions when choosing where to go to college. How does the college admissions process work? Read on for an inside look.

How Do College Admissions Officers Decide Who Gets Accepted?

State schools with huge athletic programs, small liberal arts colleges, internationally renowned conservatories--no two colleges will have identical admissions processes. In addition to a student's academics, extracurriculars, application essay, recommendation letters, and thank-you letter, admissions counselors look at their own college itself, considering enrollment projections, student body diversity, faculty and course curriculum volume, and recruitment goals. Each factor will be unique to a given college or university--and each unique student application weighed in this context.

According to [Peterson's](#), when a student's college application is submitted, it typically goes through a pre-screening process, an initial check to eliminate applicants who have not met minimum institutional standards. Standards are usually based on test scores, GPA, enrollment quotas, and other predetermined criteria. Student applications that move forward then go to committee, where [college admissions counselors read applications and determine who gets accepted or rejected](#). High-performing or "good fit" students may go straight to a director of admission for acceptance, whereas some applicants (if there are split verdicts) may go through several rounds of evaluation among the admissions team, according to [CollegeData](#).

So, how do college admissions officers decide which high school students to accept? In sum, with each student application, college counselors evaluate: Is this a well-rounded student who will be a good fit for our college community? And will this student help the college reach its own admissions, retention, graduation, and alumni goals?

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