Opening Activity

Work individually first (3 minutes), then compare and justify your rankings with the students sitting next to you (1 or 2; 4 minutes). Finally, participate in a whole-class discussion to examine similarities, differences, and the values underlying different prioritization choices.

There are no right or wrong answers; the goal is to find out how different priorities and assumptions influence decision-making.

Names	GPA	SAT	Other information		
Alice Arnold	3.7	1350	First-generation	Strong personal essay	Applied by Early Decision (ED)
Bob Berkowitz	3.9	1520	Parents are college graduates	Extensive extracurriculars	Applied regular decision
Cindy Cao	3.6	1400	Household income below median	Part-time employment during high school	Applied early
David Dutta	4	1580	Legacy applicant	Multiple leadership roles	Applied regular decision
Ella Evans	3.8	1450	First-generation	Strong personal essay	Applied by Early Decision (ED)
Frank Foster	3.5	1320	Household income below median	Captain of debate team	Applied regular decision
Grace Green	3.9	1500	Parents are college graduates	Works 20 hrs/week to support family	Applied early
Henry Hall	3.6	1380	Rural high school	Research internship	Applied regular decision
Ivy Irwin	4	1550	Legacy applicant	Limited AP course access	Applied by Early Decision (ED)
Jack Johnson	3.7	1410	First-generation	Student government president	Applied regular decision
Kelly Kim	3.8	1480	Immigrant family	Community volunteering	Applied early
Leo Lopez	3.4	1300	Household income below median	Bilingual, tutoring peers	Applied regular decision
Maya Martinez	3.9	1510	Parents are college graduates	Family caregiving responsibilities	Applied by Early Decision (ED)
Noah Nguyen	3.6	1390	First-generation	Varsity athlete	Applied regular decision
Olivia O'Brien	3.7	1420	Private high school	Robotics club member	Applied early
Paul Patel	4	1570	High-income household	Extensive extracurriculars	Applied regular decision
Quinn Quinn	3.5	1340	Underserved school district	National math competition finalist	Applied by Early Decision (ED)
Rina Rao	3.8	1460	First-generation	Strong recommendation letters	Applied regular decision
Sam Sanders	3.6	1370	Parents are college graduates	Founded cultural club	Applied early
Tina Thompson	3.9	1490	Legacy applicant	Internship through family network	Applied regular decision

There are 20 fictional profiles of university applicants above. Acting as members of an admissions committee with a limited number of available seats, your task is to rank the applicants in the order you would admit them, assuming that only five students can be accepted.

Use the criteria below, but not limited to these, to guide your decisions:

1. academic achievement
2. socioeconomic status
3. first-generation status
4. extracurricular involvement
5. special circumstances
6. application submission time

1. List the criteria you used to prioritize applicants. Which criteria did you personally give the most weight, and why?

2. Did you and your partner come up with the same order for the candidates? If not, what differences were noticed, and what were the underlying values?

3. Based on the correlation of family income and access to test prep resources, how will this impact whether the test score used as the dominant standard is "fair"?

4. Involvement in extracurricular activities can be considered a plus in the application process. Could this requirement ever harm certain applicants?

5. Think about "first-come, first-served" or the time of submission of applications. What are the underlying values here, and whom could this criterion disadvantage?

6. Do you believe it might be possible to create a neutral (fair) system for college admissions? Why or why not?

7. In what ways might goals related to efficiency, such as predicting academic success or college graduation rates, conflict with goals related to equity, such as accessibility and equality of opportunity?