

Opening Activity

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

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

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.

1. List the criteria you used (or were shown) 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. What if test scores are highly correlated with family income and access to test prep resources? How will this impact whether test score use 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?

