

Criteria Considered by Most College Admissions Officers

Coursework

Every school considers a student's coursework to be very important. The college is concerned with the type, amount and level of coursework. Most schools want to see a student who has challenged him/herself. If honors and AP classes are offered, most schools want a student to have attempted this level if they are interested in attending a competitive school.

GPA

The grade point average that most schools consider in evaluating students is that earned in academic classes with the extra points for honors and AP classes. UC and CSU campuses consider only classes after ninth grade. Most other schools consider 9th through 12th grade classes.

Entrance Test Scores

Most schools require the SAT I or ACT test. UC campuses and other selective schools also require the SAT II tests. The UC requires three SAT II tests: Writing, math, and one additional test of the student's choice. Many colleges use the SAT II test results for college class placement.

Essay

Each school evaluates the college essay differently. It is important criteria that the essay is well written and contains an insight into the student that may not be represented elsewhere in the college application. It is best not to re-list the various activities and/or honors that the student has received. If special circumstances or experiences have affected the student's grades or family life, it is important to mention these circumstances and the value they have had on the student's life.

Activities/Community Service

The schools are looking for activities that show an interest or contribution. They also like to see leadership and a longer length of involvement not just a list of many clubs.

Honors and Awards

These can be academic, community or athletic. It is good to receive awards/recognition for volunteer work, athletic competition or academic achievement. It is the student's responsibility to keep his/her own record of recognitions.

Letters of Recommendation

Many selective schools require teacher and counselor recommendations. Please note that a letter of recommendation is written on the teacher's and counselor's own time. Students should ask for the letters in the early fall. Helpful information is available in the College Career Center.

Interviews

Some selective private schools require or recommend interviews.