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THE APPLICATION FOLDER

When you apply to college, the college admission office collects a folder of information to consider as it makes a decision about you. There are five main areas of an applicant's folder:

1. The Application – includes simple biographical information such as your birthday, family members and addresses. Frequently you will need to write essays, which are intended to acquaint the admission committee with your experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and writing ability. Be sure to take time on the essays. Write your essays on a separate document and present clearly. Be sure to have them proof-read before you send them out by your English teacher or someone who can properly edit your work. Check your spelling and punctuation.

2. Academic Record – regardless of a college's admission policy, the most important factor in an applicant's folder is the academic record in secondary school. Your curriculum, your specific courses, and the grades you received are aspects of the record admission officers consider in appraising a transcript (another term for the academic record). When your record is compared with your classmates' records, you are assigned a class ranking relative to the others in the class. Class rank is important as a means of showing the admission officer the level of competition you have encountered and how well you have achieved relative to the competition. Colleges require class rank and/or GPA to assist the admission office in making decisions.

3. Test Scores – standardized testing has come under a great deal of scrutiny and criticism in recent years. Many colleges have stated that an applicant's test results are only a small part of the entire application package; a few have even made submission of test scores optional. However, any college that requires the tests will use the scores in its admission process. How much emphasis is placed on test results depends on the college's policy; as a general rule, the larger the college, the greater the emphasis on pure statistics (test scores and class rank) in determining admission. It is important to remember that test scores are a part of the total applicant profile, and, at most institutions, test scores alone do not exclude a student from admission, nor do scores alone guarantee admission.

A Word about Standardized Test Prepping: Your high school record is the single most important part of your admission folder; however don't forget that good grades in demanding courses are more important than standardized test scores. Don't spend so much time trying to improve these scores that your grades and involvement in school suffer!

4. School Recommendation – the official recommendation or statement prepared by your guidance counselor for you is also a very important part of the folder, but it is not as critical as your record itself.

5. Teacher Recommendation – These tell the readers of your application about your classroom performance in terms that are not represented by grades. Teachers may comment on the type of contributions you make in class, the written and oral work you have presented, and your potential for studying at a particular college. Be sure that you get to know a few teachers at your school; this will help you when it becomes time to seek out recommendations. Getting a recommendation from a core class



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can be beneficial especially if it can connect with your college major or academic concentration in the college/university you apply to. Some teachers may not feel comfortable supporting your application so respect their decision to decline the opportunity. You certainly want supportive recommendations in your folder.

A Word about Activities: Although an individual's academic credentials are the primary factors in determining admission, the individual's record of involvement in activities can be a significant supporting credential. Mere membership is not the important factor; it is, rather, the level of involvement and accomplishment that is important. It is better to be involved in one activity and to be a significant contributor to that activity than to be involved superficially in several organizations.