

What U.S. college admissions look for in an applicant

Go College Advising works one on one with students to prepare them for their college research journey. Many students and families are misled into thinking one aspect of the student's high school's success automatically sets them up for college acceptances. Actually, most U.S. colleges look at an application holistically. Below is a general guideline to better understand what admissions looks for:

Rigor: College admissions look at a student's high school transcript in context of their high school. They will look at the student's rigor in comparison to courses offered. Students should aim to take the most rigorous courses offered yet doing so within their means (don't aim so high that you will be miserable!)

GPA: Very important, but remember it's in context to what your high school offers.

Extracurriculars: Has the student been involved in activities within and outside their school? Do they show community involvement, leadership, work, volunteer, major specific experiences? Colleges want students who will be involved both on their campus and in their community.

Testing: Many colleges (both in the U.S. and international) are still test optional with SAT and/or ACT; some no longer look at tests. Some colleges will require test scores. With test optional, it's important to look at previous years applicants and see the average test scores and percentage of those who submitted. Will submitting scores strengthen your application?

Application: Invest time in preparing a thoughtful application. Your activities count! Be thoughtful how you present these on the application. And be honest with your essay. Admissions want to learn if you would be a good fit on their campus.

Demonstrated interest: Some colleges will track demonstrated interest. Have you researched their website, done a virtual tour, spoken to current students/professors, perhaps visited the campus (when possible).