

## Criteria for Getting Into College

Admission to college/university is very competitive. Consider University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I offer this scenario as an example of what happens at college/university. What I'm going to say here about University of Michigan could be said about every college/university in the country.

Michigan is an excellent school, one of the best in the nation. Each year, Michigan has an entering class of about 6000 college students. For those 6000 seats in its first-year college class, Michigan receives close to 30,000 applications.

### About Michigan

#### 2009 Freshman Class Profile

- 29,912 Applications
- 14,873 Admissions
- 5,920 Enrolled
- Recalculated High School GPA:
  - 27% of students with a 4.0 GPA
  - 51% of students with a 3.9 GPA or higher
  - 66% of students with a 3.8 GPA or higher
  - 85% of students with a 3.6 GPA or higher
- High School Class Ranking
  - 27% in top 1%
  - 77% in top 5%
  - 94% in top 10%
  - 99% in top 20%
- Middle 50th Percentile of the Admitted Class:
  - ACT Composite of 28–32
  - ACT English of 28–34
  - ACT Math of 27–33
  - ACT Combined English/Writing of 26–31
  - SAT Total of 1940–2190
  - SAT Critical Reading 620–730
  - SAT Math 660–770
  - SAT Writing 630–730
  - HS GPA 3.7-4.0

- AP and/or IB Credit was granted to over 3000 new freshmen

Now, imagine that I'm a member of the Admissions Committee at University of Michigan. My responsibility on the Admissions Team is to accept only those applicants about whom I can make a reasonable prediction of satisfactory performance in college. But how can I make such a prediction? What information/data about an applicant will most reliably tell me he or she will have success in college?

If I just look at **personal essays**, for example, most of those will try to convince me that a given applicant will be the best college/university student anyone could ever want. That is, it's highly unlikely a personal statement will reveal anything about an applicant except the most flattering information. And the same can be said about letters of recommendation. There will be some special ones but still it is hard to make a choice simply on personal statements and recommendations.

**Note:** Not all colleges require Personal Essays – See Application Form

**Evaluations** usually require two to three letters of evaluation from an applicant. Normally your guidance counselor will complete a counselor evaluation, which helps a college weigh your performance in high school. Usually guidance counselors will include a short personal letter of evaluation. One or two of your high school teachers will complete the second/third letter of evaluation. It will assess your performance in class as well as your character and personality.

**Note:** Not all colleges require Evaluations – See Application Form

Being a **well-rounded student** can't be overlooked. Did he/she do extra-curricular activities other than sports? What about community service? Was there leadership situations?

How would I get to be selected?

Suppose I look at high school grade point averages (**GPA**). They may give me some reliable data. How a person has performed academically in the past might accurately predict how he or she will do in the future. So I might develop a strategy of first admitting all those people with 4.0 GPAs and then work backward from 4.0 until the entering college/university class is filled.

But there's a problem with this strategy. The 29,000 applicants have attended more than 800 (est.) different high schools in the United States and abroad. How do I know that a 4.0 GPA at one high school represents the same level of achievement as a 4.0 at another high school? One High school might have very high academic standards, while another might not. So an "A" at one school is not the same as an "A" somewhere else. Also, one student with a 4.0 GPA might have taken non-challenging classes, while another 4.0 student from the same high school may have taken a more challenging course load (**Strength of Schedule**). So, two 4.0 GPAs of students from the same school may not

represent comparable academic achievements. Thus, even using GPA, I can't be 100% sure about choosing the incoming freshman class, but it is considered.

What else should be considered? The College Admissions Test (**SAT/ACT**). This is an examination every college and university applicant must take, which is graded uniformly across all applicants. So the presumption is the SAT/ACT is a dependable measure for an admissions advisor to compare all 30,000 applicants with each other.

Let's take a look at how much University of Michigan relies on the SAT/ACT. The information below represents the SAT/ACT scores for those applicants recently who had a 3.6 GPA or better. In other words, these are the most promising applicants in terms of their academic performance in college.

### ACT/SAT Score Conversion Charts

#### New SAT & ACT Score Comparison

ACT	Math & Critical Reading only SAT combined <i>for NCAA purposes</i>	NEW SAT
36	1600	2400
35	1560-1590	2340
34	1510-1550	2260
33	1460-1500	2190
32	1410-1450	2130
31	1360-1400	2040
30	1320-1350	1980
29	1280-1310	1920
28	1240-1270	1860
27	1210-1230	1820
26	1170-1200	1760
25	1130-1160	1700
24	1090-1120	1650
23	1060-1080	1590
22	1020-1050	1530
21	980-1010	1500
20	940-970	1410
19	900-930	1350
18	860-890	1290
17	810-850	1210
16	760-800	1140
15	710-750	1060
14	660-700	1000
13	590-650	900
12	520-580	780
11	500-510	750

The above numbers show the importance the SAT/ACT is to “some” college school admissions.

### **How can students prepare for SAT/ACT?**

Years ago, a survey was sent to many college deans across the country. One of the questions on the survey was what classes the deans recommended students have in high school in order to prepare effectively for college. The four classes most frequently recommended by the deans were English, History, Math, and Government. So it proves those students wanting to go to college are they take as many classes in the subjects listed above as they can while in high school. I advise students to take the most demanding courses because they are the ones who will help develop the analytical thinking skills so necessary for success on the SAT/ACT.

It is difficult to prepare for taking of the SAT/ACT. But one can prepare for it by developing knowledge with its design through taking practice tests based on actual questions asked in past SAT/ACT (See On-line Practice tests at my website). One should not to be surprised when taking the SAT/ACT by the kinds of questions asked. The general type of question asked can be familiar to you by taking an SAT/ACT preparation test or purchase one of the many practice books available at bookstores.

SAT/ACT prep courses may improve exam performance, However, I have no data that supports the taking of a prep class and test results. Students should also understand how and why they make mistakes on the test so they can be prepared if they take the test a second or third time.

I recommend that a student take both tests and multiple times if necessary to get a good benchmark. Some student’s score higher on one test than the other (Use the highest score for your application). See my website (<http://dreammentorprogram.com/Links.aspx>) for the differences between the SAT and ACT Test. It is equally important to understand that a combination of a good GPA and SAT/ACT score can mean thousands of dollars in scholarship money.

Mr. Campbell

**Updated 10/2/09**

**I received the following question from Mr. Freeman after reading the above write-up. My response to Mr. Freeman follows the question.**

Mr. Campbell – the article is very interesting. As an engineer, I just wonder if the admissions people have ever done any sort of correlation study. In other words, which indicator (GPA, test score, extra-curr activity,...) fits best with collegiate GPA?

Mike Freeman

Mr. Freeman,

After exploring and researching over 100 different colleges for students and determining the admission requirements for each I put together the write-up (Criteria for College) based on my findings. However, I have also read many articles on the subject and the majority of articles and colleges all agree to the standard criteria stated in my write-up gets considered in a student's application.

Many colleges put different "emphasis" on the criteria. Like you, coming from a business background (Quality & Process Director - AT&T) some college's use the word 'weight' in their determination factors but they add no meaningful values to their statements.

Others use "averages" Most colleges report on the *average* scores of entering freshman (Often called a Freshman Profile). Use this as a guideline, but not as an absolute since these are averages, not the highest or lowest scores.

Some schools are less particular and evaluate scores in combination with other criteria on your application. I find when people or institutions use only averages to make a determination it is because they are looking for a quick indicator that most often does not represent the best possible solution. Why do so many use it? They use it because it is a simple indicator that most people can understand. I would at least like colleges to use Central Tendency (Mean, Mode, and Medium) measures in some of their decisions.

In regards to High School GPA and other criteria most admissions people will tell you they don't use GPA as a projector of Collegiate GPA but rather as one indicator that determines if a student will be successful in college (going past two years). The final acceptance decision in most cases is "**subjective**" based on human interaction by an Admissions person or team for the final decision.

How does one overcome subjective decision making? In my humble opinion I believe the best indicator is how a student sells themselves during one on one meetings with college admission officers and representatives from the department of study (if known) that a student plans on studying.

I emphatically stress to each student (Vocally & in their CDMP Plan) and parents that I meet to make sure (if possible) that a one on one meeting is done with the colleges of choice. It is like a job interview for getting hired it is your time to sell yourself. The resume and college application are your entrance to an interview when you are trying to get a special job position or trying to get in a prestige school or need to explain why a high/low GPA or high/low ACT Score is what the student is all about.

One of the main ingredients of the CDMP program is for each student to create a "Portfolio Folder" that contains information (College Criteria) from their high school career that is based upon my findings of the different admissions criteria that can be found in a college application.

For each of the criteria a college admission team or individual will evaluate those to determine what kind of student you are and what kind of student you will potentially become. Some colleges may prefer a bigger slice of certain criteria than others, but they all usually require the same ingredients. Most often it's just a matter of how much of each they wish to add. For each school it's a matter of individual taste and they are looking for just the right mix for them.

What I do with each student once a college is selected is to print out the application and determine the best method we can to display and provide the criteria they are requesting to be the most critical.

I do not like to leave anything to chance and waiting until your junior & senior year can reduce the chances drastically to gain acceptance to college.