

UNIVERSITY ADMISSION MYTHS DEBUNKED

It is impossible to really know what a university is looking for in an applicant

While the information may be hard to navigate, it's there. Universities seek a very specific set of candidates who meet their standards of academic, personal, and professional stature. You need to identify which schools align best with your profile and formulate the strongest possible pitch for admission by accentuating all facets of academic, extra-curricular, and individual achievement.

A long list of extracurricular activities is always impressive

You know that extracurricular involvement is important. However, many students misunderstand this advice. The long list of extracurricular activities is impressive only as long as it's meaningful involvement. Serious commitment in one area definitely outweighs superficial participation in several.

Only students with high GPAs receive merit awards

Depends where you are applying. Students with "average" GPAs and test scores may receive merit awards at a number of colleges and universities.

If I've heard of the university, it must be good. If everybody says 'ooh' and 'aah' every time the name is mentioned that's the place to go

Unless people are going through the university admissions process or are attending a specific university, most likely, they don't truly have the facts. The place to start is by defining what you really want from a university. Then focus on schools that meet those criteria. If a university also happens to be a "name brand", that's a nice bonus, but certainly not a priority.

Phenomenal standardized test scores guarantee admission

Extraordinary SAT scores can certainly boost your chances of admission—but they do not guarantee anything. Each year, Harvard University literally rejects hundreds of students who earned a perfect score on the SAT. But here is a secret, once you score higher than a 750 on each of the three sections on the test, even the nation's pickiest colleges *do not care* about how much closer you can get to the "perfect" score. Standardized test scores act less as a critical discerning factor than as a cut-off in the application process. So don't worry about getting a "perfect" score and instead just try to do the best you can.

Admission officers never check your social media accounts

You might think they don't have time to investigate each and every applicant's Twitter, Facebook, Instagram accounts, but believe it or not, some colleges have admission teams solely devoted to checking your social media pages. They do not stalk your accounts, but they do check to make sure that they are absolutely clean of anything inappropriate. Good rule: if you wouldn't want your mom to see it, you probably wouldn't want an admissions officer to see it either.

Because the coach says s/he wants me, I'm guaranteed an acceptance

Each year many student athletes are strung along being told that they have been "vetted" through the admission office by the athletic department and "all is fine." And then, for a variety of reasons, the student doesn't get accepted. As a student athlete, your application process is **more** involved than a non-athlete, not less. You need to liaise with the coach as well as manage all the traditional application requirements.



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Only one university is the right school for me

While you're looking at universities, you may have it in your mind that there is one perfect school for you, a "soulmate" school. However, most students find that's simply not the case. What you should be aiming for is finding the "best fit", not the perfect school. Finding the "best fit" for your education is an exciting discovery process, but it may not be perfect.

My classmate got in and s/he had worse grades/profile than I did, so I'll definitely get in!

No matter how much you think you know about your friend, you don't have all the information. The fact is, you have no idea why that friend got into a given school. Even if you saw every detail of his/her application, read the essay, saw the transcript and sat in on their interview with the admissions representative, there is no way to know what that school was looking for in a given year and who else was applying/competing for spots. Every year is different, and every candidate is different.

You won't be accepted if you apply for financial aid

In many schools, the financial aid decision is made separately for admissions, ensuring one's ability to pay does not influence the admission decision. However, if your family can pay full price, the admission threshold is lower for many schools.

Once I've picked a major I have to stick with it

Nope. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, almost 80% of students change their majors at least once. Use the university experience as one for exploration, exposure and intellectual growth prior to committing to a major.

The more recommendations I have, the better I will look

Contrary to what you might think, extra letters do *not* give students an extra advantage. Not only does including extra letters make admissions committees' lives harder, the appearance of "trying too hard" can leave a sour taste in some admissions officers' mouths. Including one or multiple extra letters can give the impression that you're trying to compensate for a weakness elsewhere in your application or just doing whatever you can to get an edge over other applicants. Neither perspective is especially flattering and doesn't position you in the best light.

Applying "undecided" will hurt my admission chances

Untrue. Many admissions reps will tell you—and Princeton even affirms it on its website, that applying as "undecided" won't affect your chances. And there's reason to believe them. Bucknell University reports that about a quarter of its accepted students enter as "undecided," while the same is true for students at the U of Oregon. And what's UCLA's most popular major for incoming freshmen? Yup. Undecided

I need to be the president of many clubs as possible to be even considered

While universities put a high premium on students' leadership potential, it often works against one's application to simply make a laundry list of extracurricular involvements. It's important to highlight existing leadership and involvement in a way that communicates dedication, understanding, and engagement.