Acceptance or denial: what matters most in college admissions

Lori Ann Getler
Rowan University

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ABSTRACT

Lori Ann Getler
ACCEPTANCE OR DENIAL: WHAT MATTERS MOST IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS
2006/07
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Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior’s application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey. The researcher surveyed admissions officers at eight 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey. A total of 21 admissions officers participated in the survey. Participants were administered a Likert-scale survey that measured the weight given selected criteria contained in the application for admission to their institution. Surveys were statistically analyzed to determine the means, percentages and frequencies regarding the selected criteria.

The study provides insight into the relative weight and significance given selected criteria of the application for admission. The study revealed that public colleges and universities in New Jersey rely most heavily on standardized test scores, grade point average, class rank and honors/advanced placement courses. Less measurable criteria that may show more about the individual nature of the applicant such as community service, leadership roles, and recommendations are given far less significance.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this personal accomplishment to the family and friends who have supported me throughout the years. I have been blessed with an incredible family who encouraged me to set high goals and stood beside me through good times and bad so that I could attain those goals. I have had the good fortune to be surrounded by phenomenal friends and mentors who have guided me along this personal and academic journey. Without each of them in my life, I would not be the person I am quite proud to be.

I must express sincere gratitude to my dad and mom, Fred and Marlene Meddings, brothers, Mark and Randy Meddings, and best friends, Debbie Hegele and Christine McGraw. You’ve taught me to value education, set high goals and always be a leader. From you I have learned the true meaning of love, dedication, friendship, and respect. Without those ingredients, reaching this milestone would have been impossible.

A mentor is defined as a person who shares experience, knowledge and wisdom. I’d specifically like to thank Albert Betts, Lori Block, and Lizziel Sullivan Williams for their advice, guidance, encouragement, and support. You’ve spent many hours counseling me about academics and careers. You’ve exemplified leadership, ethics, and integrity. I am proud to be considered your colleague and friend.

I give special thanks to my pride and joy, my incredible children, John and Andrew Getler who sacrificed many days and nights without me. You wished me luck on each test, celebrated each success, and cheered me on when I seemed to struggle. Your hugs and smiles brightened my journey and strengthened my determination. I’ve learned more from you two than I could ever learn in a classroom or book. I love you and thank you.
I am most grateful to my husband, John Getler. Thank you for your patience and understanding during long nights of classes and papers. Your dedication to our family, especially in my absence, inspires me. Your endless love and constant encouragement and support were what kept me grounded and focused. I love you.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION
Statement of the Problem

Each year high school seniors across the United States engage in the ritual of applying for admission to colleges and universities. Students spend weeks, even months, anxiously awaiting the fateful letter informing them of a college’s decision on their application. In the meantime, they are left to wonder whether they will be given the opportunity to attend the institution they hope to call home for the next four years. What is happening in college admissions offices while applicants await the final decision? The elements of an application that actually lead to an applicant’s acceptance or denial are not always clear. College marketing and advertising professionals spend considerable time and money using methods such as focus groups to determine the factors that lead students to apply to a college or university. However, as Sireci, Zanetti, and Berger (2003) state, “The student decision-making side of the process has received much more attention in empirical studies than has the investigation of college admissions policy and practice” (p. 323). It is not certain what admissions officers are looking for when they interview students and read through piles of applications, transcripts, test scores, recommendations and essays. It would be advantageous for applicants to know if there are specific criteria of a potential student’s profile that the majority of colleges weigh more heavily than others when making admissions decisions. Although it may not be possible for students to change characteristics such as test scores and grades, a clearer
understanding of the process could lead to more realistic expectations about their chances for admission.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior’s application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey. Students, parents and guidance counselors make assumptions about what college admissions officers are looking for when they review applications. However, these assumptions may be outdated or simply inaccurate.

Significance of the Study

The study provides insight into the relative weight and significance given such varied criteria as standardized test scores, grades, class ranks, honors courses, extracurricular activities, artistic talent, athletic ability, recommendations, ethnicity and financial status by admissions officers. If the reality of the application decision process were more transparent, perhaps applying to college would be less stressful for many high school students.

Assumptions and Limitations

It was assumed that admissions officers surveyed were willing and able to honestly and accurately convey their institutions’ current admissions practices. The scope of this study was limited to admissions officers from 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey who agreed to complete the survey. Any conclusions drawn from this study should not be generalized to the admissions practices employed at private and 2-year colleges or those in other geographic locations. The
potential for researcher bias is always present in any research study and every effort was made to remain objective throughout the research process.

Operational Definitions

1. **Admissions Criteria**: Refers to characteristics of a student’s academic profile used in the admissions decision process at 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey.

2. **Admissions Officers**: Refers to director of admissions, dean of admissions, dean of enrollment management, assistant vice president for admissions, senior associate director of admissions, associate director of admissions, and assistant director of admissions from admissions offices at New Jersey state colleges and universities.

3. **College**: Refers to 4-year public state colleges and universities with a selective admissions process located in New Jersey. The institutions include: The College of New Jersey, Kean University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Rowan University, and William Patterson University of New Jersey.

4. **Student**: Refers to a high school senior seeking admission to a 4-year public undergraduate college in New Jersey.

Research Questions

1. How do selected college admissions officers weight the criteria of high school seniors’ applications for freshman admission into their institution?

2. What factor is identified by selected college admissions officers as most important in the college admissions decision-making process?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic variables of sex, age, years employed in current position, and total enrollment of institution, and the weighted admission criteria of selected college admissions officers?

Organization of the Study

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature regarding college admissions practices, standards, and requirements. The literature review provides a framework for the study and discusses what other researchers have found regarding admissions practices.

Chapter three describes the research design and its implementation, the process of selecting the subjects for the study, and the method for collecting the data. Additionally, a description of the data analysis methods used is presented.

Chapter four presents the results of the study.

Chapter five summarizes the study, discusses the findings, and presents conclusions based on an analysis of the results. This chapter also includes recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Decision Making in College Admissions

The application files of high school seniors applying for freshman admission to colleges and universities contain large quantities of information about the student that admissions officers use to make admissions decisions. These include such varied factors as standardized test scores, grades, class ranks, honors courses, extracurricular activities, recommendations, ethnicity, and financial status. Despite, or perhaps because of, the large amount of varied information provided, deciding who is admissible and who is not can be a difficult task. As Tam and Sukhatme (2004) report, “Admission officers must ascertain which attributes, singly and in combination, provide the best indicators of subsequent university success” (p. 13).

A comprehensive study of New England public, private, two and four-year colleges and universities (Sireci, Zanetti, & Berger, 2003) looked at the past, present, and anticipated importance of specific admissions criteria used to select students. This study found that although traditional criteria such as SAT scores and class rank continue to be significant, other criteria such as high school GPA, honors classes, and GPA in specific classes are gaining in importance. This study also found significant differences between public and private institutions in criteria given the most importance, with private schools placing more importance on personal qualities, letters of recommendations, and extracurricular activities than public institutions.
In another study conducted for a doctoral dissertation at the University of Southern Mississippi (Gatlin, 1997) the differences in the perceptions of secondary school counselors and college admissions officials in the state of Georgia of the importance of admissions criteria were examined. This study found “GPA as the most important factor, followed by SAT/ACT” (p. 56).

One can see from these studies that there is a considerable variance of opinion on just what criteria are considered most important in the college selection process.

Standardized Tests

Admissions personnel make extensive use of standardized college entrance examination tests, most commonly the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and/or the American College Test (ACT). In 1999, a standardized test score was required by 82% of all 4-year colleges (Noble & Camara, 2003). Rightly or wrongly, the scores students achieve on these exams can often be the single most decisive criterion of their application profile. Opinions vary on the usefulness, reliability and validity of these measurements. Many admissions professionals believe standardized tests provide normative comparison for students from various backgrounds and geographic locales. Noble and Camara state:

Unlike high school grades or rank, admissions tests are a common measure for comparing students who have attended different high schools, completed different courses, received different grades in courses taught by different teachers and had access to different opportunities and experiences both in and out of school.

(p. 283)

Moreover, Atkinson (2001-02) reports the SAT is valuable for its ability to correct the effects of grade inflation and “offers a way of identifying talented students
who otherwise might not meet traditional admissions criteria” (p. 31). However, Atkinson adds, “U.S. universities should employ admissions processes that look at individual applicants in their full complexity and take special pains to ensure that standardized tests are used properly” (p. 32).

Nobel and Camara (2003) assert the SAT and ACT “provide straightforward, easily interpreted information about students’ readiness to undertake college coursework” (p. 288). But is this assertion always accurate? Many critics say it is not today, if indeed it ever was. Standardized tests have been an accepted part of college admissions since 1926 when the SAT was first administered. However, the use of these entrance examinations has received growing criticism in recent years. According to Sedlacek (2003), “Test developers, educators, parents and students seemed to accept things fairly well until the 1960s” when “statistical, political, social, and educational criticism” began and has been increasing ever since (p. 263). Despite the criticism of standardized tests, colleges continue to emphasize their use perhaps simply because, as Gose (2005) believes, “complacency sets in throughout the admissions profession when measures provide outcomes that seem adequate” (p. 1).

Critics believe there is far too much significance placed on college entrance examinations, and feel these tests may not be adequate measurements of intellectual potential to succeed in college. Sedlacek (2003) believes standardized tests may measure “componenetal intelligence” which is the ability to interpret information, but not measure “experiential intelligence” which is the ability to be creative, an equally important requirement for college success (p. 264). Many feel a test on a given day is not nearly as profound an indicator of academic potential as previous performance over time.
Atkinson (2001-02) asserts, “Students should be judged on the basis of their actual achievements, not on ill-defined notions of aptitude” (p. 32). Micceri (2001) agrees, saying research shows high school grades are a far better predictor of college success, and standardized tests should only be used to enhance the predictive power of grades. A study by Noble and Camara (2003) also found “ACT and SAT scores and high school grades used jointly for making college decisions yield more accurate decisions than any used alone” (p. 10). Their study found that college entrance examinations alone or high school grade point average (GPA) alone accurately predicted success in college about 75% of the time. But by using ACT or SAT test scores together with high school grades, academic success was predicted accurately in more than 80% of the students studied.

Class Rank and Selection Index

High school class rank is another criterion traditionally given sizeable weight in college admissions decisions. High schools rank students in a hierarchical fashion from highest to lowest on the basis of a cumulative grade point average (GPA). The rank is usually written as two numbers (e.g., 20/200), but college admissions officers most often convert it to a percentile rank, e.g. 90th percentile, to facilitate the comparison of students from high school classes of varying sizes (O’Brien, 1996).

Standardized test scores are used with high school percentile ranks by admissions officers to form a selection index. The selection index is frequently one of the primary criteria utilized by universities. Critics claim high school percentile ranks are skewed by the quality of an applicant’s high school. As Tam and Sukhatme (2004) explain, “A student has more difficulty achieving a high percentile rank in a more competitive high school. High school quality therefore should be taken into consideration in the
formulation of the selection index” (p. 13). These authors propose a modified student high school percentile rank that incorporates the high school’s average ACT or SAT scores as part of the calculation.

A study conducted by the University of South Florida analyzed the predictive value of high school class rank as compared to high school GPA and SAT scores (Micceri, 2001). The study found both class rank and GPA to be better predictors of college success than SAT scores. Interestingly, high school GPA was a better predictor of first-year college grades than class rank, while class rank was a better predictor of eventual graduation.

Non-quantitative Measures

Not all components of an applicant’s folder are quantitative measures. Letters of recommendations and essays are two non-quantitative supplements to applications regularly evaluated by college admissions officers. The significance given these components by institutions varies. Some colleges give them little credence. Others give them considerable weight. For example, the New England study of colleges and universities (Sireci, Zanetti, & Berger, 2003) found that letters of recommendation were more important than GPA in specific courses, class rank, and SAT scores. Still, many colleges no longer put much stock in recommendations. Sanoff (1999) believes this is largely a result of the “increasingly superficial recommendations from counselors that accompany students’ applications to college” (p. 2). He calls many recommendations “filler that does not boost a student’s chances a lot” (p. 2). Although less emphasis is being placed on recommendations by college admissions officials, high school guidance counselors who often write them may be unaware of this trend. Gatlin (1997) found that
secondary school counselors perceived recommendations to be much more important than college admissions personnel.

The use of applicant-written essays also varies from college to college. However, as Sagan (2002) states, an essay gives an applicant an opportunity to "bring a human dimension to the difficult decisions of college admission staff, who must often make selections principally on the basis of impersonal numbers" (p. 47). The recently revised SAT test with its essay section could provide colleges with a greater opportunity to utilize applicant essays, although many institutions appear hesitant to make use of it.

Controversies and Trends in Undergraduate Admissions

The beginning of the 21st century finds colleges under increasing pressure to make changes in the admissions practices. The legal issues surrounding affirmative action and diversity, new performance standards for high school graduation, the instituting of interdisciplinary learning, and the increase in home schooling has contributed to the pressure for change (Stern & Briggs, 2001).

Sedlacek (2003) describes the increasing diversity in college student bodies in terms of race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and disability. He believes college admissions officers must find different measures of potential college success for different student groups. Sedlacek asserts the standard college admissions response has been to attempt to alter existing measures to equally assess everyone. He disagrees with this direction saying it is doubtful any type of test or other measurement could be developed to be fair to all groups. Rather, he states, "It is important to do an equally good job of selection for each group, not that the same measures should necessarily be used for all to accomplish that goal" (p. 264).
Stern and Briggs (2001) discuss several reasons why college admissions practices are currently under pressure to change. First, economic conditions are now such that more and more students see earning a bachelor’s degree as a necessity to enter the job market. The percentage of high school graduates entering college rose from 31.7% in 1973 to 41.9% in 1996. To better prepare students at the high school level to enter the job market, schools have been creating new curriculums designed to incorporate academic subject learning with hands-on occupational learning experiences. Unfortunately, many college admissions practices remain firm and may actually penalize students whose experiential learning results in fewer college preparatory courses on their transcript. Second, high attrition rates at colleges have resulted in pressure from the institutions themselves to develop admissions practices that better identify students who will persist and eventually graduate. Finally, there are the growing trends of establishing charter schools and home schooling. In 1998 there were 1,050 charter schools in the U.S., and most had been only recently established. Also, the number of home-schooled students rose from 250,000 in 1990 to 750,000 in 1996. Both charter schools and home schooling present problems for college admissions officers because the transcripts these students possess, if they possess one at all, are not easily evaluated by traditional means.

Summary of the Literature Review

It is apparent that numerous changes have occurred in recent years that impact the manner in which high school students are educated and prepared for college. Critics of current admissions processes assert that the approaches used to evaluate potential students for admission must also be altered to keep pace with these changes. Stern and Briggs (2001) argue that new admissions procedures must be developed to recognize and
support the changes occurring in secondary school education. College admissions
officers must see "that the kinds of abilities needed to succeed in college are not always
confined to those learned in formal academic settings or captured in existing standardized
test results" (p. 41).

It can be concluded from the literature reviewed that colleges examine a variety of
characteristics of an applicant’s profile when determining whether to accept a candidate
for admission. However, despite calls from critics for the development of new admissions
procedures that more readily take into account both the individuality of applicants and the
changes in secondary school education in recent years, it appears that most of the
applicant characteristics emphasized by admissions officers today are the ones
traditionally utilized. The results of this study should provide a basis for determining to
what extent this is true.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Context of Study

This study was conducted during March and April of 2007. A membership list of admissions officers from eight New Jersey state colleges and universities was compiled using the targeted college and university websites. The participating colleges and universities included Kean University, Montclair State University, New Jersey City University, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Rowan University, The College of New Jersey, and William Paterson University. These eight institutions have common histories of beginning as teacher training schools and evolving into comprehensive colleges and universities in the last half of the 20th century. Their mission statements stress similar values and goals including: providing access and opportunity to diverse populations; an emphasis on student nurturing and development; and making a positive impact on the educational, cultural and socio-economic growth of their regions.

All admissions officers were sent an email message explaining the purpose of the study and an invitation to participate by completing the online survey.

Population and Sample Selection

A total population consisting of 48 admissions officers from 4-year state undergraduate colleges and universities located in New Jersey was targeted for this study. In an effort to substantiate the knowledge and experience level of the sample, only admissions officers with the titles of director of admissions, dean of admissions, dean of...
enrollment management, assistant vice president for admissions, senior associate director of admissions, associate director of admissions and assistant director of admissions were targeted.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed an online survey instrument (Appendix C) which was accessed through a link to a URL included in an “invitation to participate” email (Appendix B). The survey was created and stored in SurveyMonkey.com. SurveyMonkey.com is a Web site that allows the user to create professional online surveys. The survey was modeled after the instrument administered by Gatlin (1997) and modified by the researcher to measure the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the weight applied to criteria of a high school senior’s application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey. The instrument also collected demographic information from each respondent (see Appendix C). The demographic information section of the instrument contained items that inform the researcher of the respondent’s sex, age, years of experience in position, size of institution where employed, number of freshman applications received by the institution in the fall of 2006 and number of freshmen admitted to the institution in the fall of 2006.

The admissions criteria section of the instrument used a Likert scale for measuring responses to questions on selected admissions criteria governing admission for high school seniors applying to their institution. A total of 19 factors were listed on the survey. Subjects were asked to indicate the weight given to each factor of a high school applicant’s application according to not important (1), less important (2), important (3),
very important (4), and most important (5). Subjects were then asked to identify which one of the 19 factors was most important in the college admissions decision.

**Pilot Testing**

To increase the validity and reliability of the survey, the researcher pilot tested the survey in January using former admissions officers. Face and content validity was established by review of four selected former college admissions officers at Rowan University. The instrument was critiqued as to readability, clarity, intent, and accuracy. Based on the suggestions of those reviewing the instrument, three admissions factors were added to the instrument. Although statistical treatment was not practical for this sample size, the stability of responses from the four individuals was similar.

**Data Collection Procedures**

An Institutional Review Board application was completed and approved prior to administration of the online survey instrument (Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was clearly explained to the subjects in the contact email. All subjects were asked to complete the survey within seven days. A follow-up email request was sent two weeks later to subjects who had not responded. To further improve the response rate, the researcher attended three college fairs at New Jersey high schools to solicit responses from admissions officers of the selected colleges and universities using a printed version of the online survey. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured subject confidentiality, and left the survey instrument to be completed. The researcher requested that the subject not include any personal or identifiable information. The researcher also requested that the subject return the survey in person when completed.
Data Analysis

The results of the survey were organized for each question and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). All responses from all subjects were considered equally important. SPSS descriptive statistics provided frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for subjects’ responses regarding demographic information, institutional background information, and weighted admissions factors including the factor identified as most important. A Pearson product moment correlation was calculated using SPSS to determine any significant relationships between selected demographics of sex, age, years employed in current position, and total enrollment at institution and weighted admissions factors of selected college admissions officers.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS
Profile of the Sample

The subjects of this study were 21 admissions officers from 4-year state undergraduate colleges and universities located in New Jersey. Forty-eight admissions officers from 8 colleges and universities were asked to participate by completing an online survey. Of the 48 admissions officers, 21 completed the survey yielding a response rate of 44%.

Table 4.1 represents the gender distribution of the subjects within the survey. Thirteen (67%) were male and eight (33%) were female.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 depicts the age range of subjects within the survey. Twelve (57.1%) were between the ages of 31 and 40.
Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows the number of years subjects have been employed in their current position. Nine (43%) have been employed for less than five years, while eight (38%) have been employed between six and ten years.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 depicts the total freshman enrollment of the colleges or universities where the subjects are employed. Sixteen (76%) reported enrollment between 5001 and 10,000 students.
Table 4.4

**Total Freshman Enrollment of Institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5001-10000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean number of freshman applications and the mean number of freshmen admitted was reported as 6909.05 and 5272.90 respectively.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do selected college admissions officers weight the criteria of high school seniors’ applications for freshman admission into their institution?

Table 4.5 displays the subjects’ responses regarding the weight given the criteria of a high school student’s application for freshman admission into their institution. The possible response choices ranged from not important to most important.

All respondents considered SAT/ACT scores most important or very important. Overall, 83.3% reported high school class rank was most important or very important. GPA in specific courses was called most important or very important by 77.8% of the respondents, while 74.5% of the respondents deemed overall high school GPA most important or very important. Honors and AP courses were also given considerable weight (88.9% most important or very important), however the majority of respondents rated every other characteristic of an applicant’s profile listed on the survey as less important or not important.
## Table 4.5

**Admissions Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT I/ACT Scores</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Tests</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. GPA</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. GPA in Specific Courses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. Class Rank</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection Index</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors, AP Courses</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Essay</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular Activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Roles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic Talent</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Status</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Residence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Interview</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=21, SD=4.8, M=4.7

n=21, SD=1.2, M=2.2

n=21, SD=.88, M=4.5

n=21, SD=.67, M=4.4

n=21, SD=.88, M=4.1

n=21, SD=1.03, M=2.5

n=21, SD=.72, M=3.8

n=21, SD=.6, M=2.6

n=21, SD=1.07, M=2.7

n=21, SD=.98, M=2.5

n=21, SD=1.08, M=2.8

n=21, SD=1.1, M=2.7

n=21, SD=.7, M=3.1

n=21, SD=.7, M=3.1

n=21, SD=1.1, M=2.9

n=21, SD=.72, M=1.7

n=21, SD=1.04, M=2.2

n=21, SD=.77, M=1.8

n=21, SD=1, M=1.9
Research Question 2: What factor is identified by selected college admissions officers as most important in the college admissions decision-making process?

Table 4.6 shows the factor subject identified as most important in the college admissions decision making process.

Table 4.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Important Factor in Decision Making Process</th>
<th>n=21, SD=1.3, M=1.95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT I/ACT Scores</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. GPA</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. GPA in specific courses</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S. Class Rank</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the demographic variables of sex, age, years employed in current position, and total enrollment of institution, and the weighted admission criteria of selected college admissions officers?

Research question 3 was analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship \((p<.05)\) between the selected demographics and the 19 selected college admissions criteria. There were no significances at the \(p<.05\) level between the admissions criteria and the selected demographics.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

Every year thousands of high school seniors across the United States apply for admission to colleges and universities. The criteria emphasized by admissions officers to determine an applicant's acceptance or denial are not always clear to students, parents and guidance counselors. This study was designed to determine the relative weight and significance given the various criteria commonly used by admissions officers when making decisions to accept or deny applicants to their institutions. Admissions officers from 4-year state undergraduate colleges and universities located in New Jersey were surveyed to determine the level of weight they attach to selected criteria of a high school senior's application for admission when making admissions decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior's application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey. Students, parents and guidance counselors make assumptions about what college admissions officers are looking for when they review applications. However, these assumptions may be outdated or simply inaccurate.
Methodology

The participants in this study consisted of 21 admissions officers from 4-year state undergraduate colleges and universities located in New Jersey. In order to protect the rights and privacy of the participants, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (Appendix A) was completed on February 6, 2007 and submitted to the Rowan University IRB for approval. The application included a cover letter (Appendix B) and subject survey (Appendix C). Notice of approval was given by the IRB on February 21, 2007. Upon receiving final approval from the IRB, the admissions officers were contacted via email to request participation in the study.

The survey (Appendix C) asked the subjects to rate the relative importance given the criteria of a high school student's freshman admission application to their institution. Nineteen commonly used admissions criteria were listed. The format of the survey (Appendix C) included responses on a 5-point Likert-scale. The scale was arranged according to 1-Not important, 2-Less important, 3-Important, 4-Very important, and 5-Most important. Subjects were also asked to name the one criterion given the most weight in their admission decisions. In addition, the survey (Appendix C) asked for demographic information including sex, age, and number of years employed in current position. Background information on the participant's institution was also requested including total enrollment, number of freshman applications received for the fall 2006 semester and number of students selected for freshman admission for the fall 2006 semester.

The survey (Appendix C) was emailed on March 21, 2007 to admissions officers from 4-year state undergraduate colleges and universities located in New Jersey. In an
effort to substantiate the knowledge and experience level of the sample, only admissions officers with the titles of director of admissions, dean of admissions, dean of enrollment management, assistant vice president for admissions, senior associate director of admissions, associate director of admissions, and assistant director of admissions were targeted. A follow-up email request was sent on April 5, 2007. Subjects who had not previously responded were contacted in person by the researcher during college fair recruitment events on April 12, 17 and 19, 2007 and asked to complete a paper version of the survey (Appendix C). In total the researcher obtained a survey response rate of 44%.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were organized for each question and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Responses from all subjects were considered equally important. SPSS descriptive statistics provided frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for subjects’ responses regarding demographic information, institutional background information, and weighted admissions factors including the factor identified as most important. A Pearson product moment correlation was calculated using SPSS to determine any significant relationships between selected demographics of sex, age, years employed in current position, and total enrollment at institution and weighted admissions criteria of selected college admissions officers.

Discussion of the Findings

Research Question 1: How do selected college admissions officers weight the criteria of high school seniors’ applications for freshman admission into their institution?
Based on the admissions officers’ responses to the survey, it is reasonable to conclude that public colleges and universities rely most heavily on the few criteria of a high school senior’s profile traditionally most emphasized when making admissions decisions. Standardized test scores, GPA, class rank and honors/AP courses are clearly given the most weight by admissions officers, while less measurable criteria that may show more about the individual nature of the applicant such as community service, leadership roles, and recommendations are given far less significance.

Despite recommendations for a more individualistic and personalized college admissions process by critics such as Stern and Briggs (2001), the respondents indicated that much less relative importance is placed on components of an applicant’s profile as leadership roles, community service, extracurricular activities, recommendations and personal essays than on the more quantitatively measurable factors. The human dimension that Sagan (2002) describes appears to be largely discounted. Even the opportunity for using the new essay portion of the revised SAT is being looked at with skepticism and hesitation. A survey of colleges and universities in the Northeast (Betts, 2006) found that 73% of respondents reported giving no weight to the writing section of the new SAT in the admission process.

Research Question 2: What factor is identified by selected college admissions officers as the most important in the college admissions decision-making process?

Although critics such as Sedlacek (2003) and Atkinson (2001-02) have expressed concerns about the heavy reliance upon standardized test scores in the college admissions decision process, 100% of the admissions officers surveyed responded that their institution considered SAT/ACT most important or very important. Admissions officers
of the state colleges and universities in New Jersey view a student’s test score as the single most important aspect of their profile. This result contradicts the finding of Gatlin (1997) that GPA is the most important criterion used by college admissions officials in Georgia. Although Sireci, Zanetti, and Berger (2003) found that other criteria such as high school GPA, honors classes, and GPA in specific classes are gaining in importance at New England colleges and universities, standardized test scores still remain the most important at the New Jersey state institutions. The complacency that Gose (2005) claims exists in college admissions offices concerning the use of these measures may be harder to change and overcome than critics would like to believe. Applications for admission to public institutions in New Jersey continue to increase dramatically. The sheer volume of applications admissions officers must review may make selecting students primarily based on their test scores the most expedient manner in which to accomplish the task.

Micceri (2001) found both GPA and class rank to be better predictors of college success than standardized test scores. Although SAT/ACT scores appear to be given the most emphasis by the admissions officers surveyed, it may be reassuring to some to see that the results of this research show GPA and class rank are also given significant importance. Noble and Camara (2003) found that SAT/ACT scores used together with high school grades produced more accurate predictions of college success than either measure used alone. Although the interaction of test scores and GPA in the decision-making process is not clear from the results, the importance given both measures suggests the two are positively correlated.
Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the demographic variables of sex, age, years employed in current position, and total enrollment of institution, and the weighted admission factors of selected college admissions officers?

No significant relationship was found between the individual demographic variables of sex, age and years employed in current position and the weight given admission criteria. One could conclude from this finding that the admissions officials are simply instituting the admission policies of their institution without inserting any personal bias. There was also no significant relationship between total enrollment of the institution and the weight given admission criteria. The fact that the New Jersey state institutions included in this study are similar in philosophies and goals based on their mission statements may negate any effect that differences in enrollment size might yield.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that admissions officers of New Jersey state colleges and universities rely most heavily on the more measurable criteria of high school students’ profiles including SAT/ACT scores, GPA, and class rank. Less measurable criteria such as community service, leadership roles, and recommendations are given less weight.

In addition, the findings suggest that despite calls from critics to reduce the reliance on standardized tests scores in admissions decisions, state colleges and universities in New Jersey place the highest weight on SAT/ACT scores.

Also, the findings reveal slightly different results than those found in similar studies conducted in New England and Georgia. Although each study found different criteria to be the single most heavily weighted, all three studies found SAT/ACT scores,
high school GPA, high school GPA in specific courses, and high school class rank to be the four most heavily weighted criteria.

Finally, the findings showed no correlation between the demographic variables of sex, age, years employed in current positions, and total enrollment of institution. It could be concluded from these findings that admissions officials are simply instituting the admission policies of their institution without inserting any personal bias. In addition, it could be concluded that the similar missions of these institutions are not affected by differences in enrollment size.

Recommendations for Practice and Further Research

1. The subjects surveyed in this study were representatives of state institutions in New Jersey. These institutions are primarily medium-size colleges and universities that annually receive a large volume of mostly in-state student applications. If a similar study were performed including smaller, private, more selective colleges who draw their students from a much broader geographic base, entirely different results could well be attained. A study comparing the admissions practices at various types of colleges and universities is certainly a recommendation for further research.

2. Although this study found some characteristics of an applicant’s profile that are clearly rated more significant by the admissions officers surveyed, it could be assumed that the application factors deemed less important are at least considered to some extent and may have some interplay with other factors. Thus, it is also recommended that further research be done to explore the dynamics of the interaction of the various characteristics of an applicant’s profile in the admissions decision process.
REFERENCES

A. Betts (personal communication, April 9, 2007)


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Application and Notice of Approval
INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures. Submit an original and two copies of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost.

NOTE: Applications must be typed. Be sure to make a copy for your files.

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?

All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, STOP. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.

Project Title: Acceptance or Denial: What Matters Most in College Admissions

Researcher: Lori Ann Getler
Department: Educational Leadership
Mailing Address: 201 Mullica Hill Road, Education Hall
Glassboro, NJ 08028
E-Mail: getler@rowan.edu
Telephone: 856.256.4363

Co-Investigator(s):

Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Dr. Burton Sisco
Department: Educational Leadership
Location: Education Hall
E-Mail: sisco@sowan.edu
Telephone: 856-256-4500 x3717

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04
Getler, Lori Ann

From: Dihoff, Roberta
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2007 2:00 PM
To: Getler, Lori Ann
Cc: Dihoff, Roberta; Yurak, Tricia J.; Heiser, Karen L.; Sisco, Burton R.
Subject: APPROVED: IRB Application 2007-120-GETLER

Your IRB application is now approved. A hard-copy of this notification will be mailed to the Principal Investigator shortly.

IRB approvals are good for one year. Within one year you will be asked to certify whether the project has been completed, is still in progress, or has been significantly revised.

Thank you, and good luck with your project.

Dr. Dihoff
Dihoff@rowan.edu

4/26/2007
INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures.

Submit an original and two copies of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost.

NOTE: Applications must be typed. Be sure to make a copy for your files.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:
Protocol Number: IRB:
Received: Reviewed:
Exemption: Yes No
Category(ies):
Approved (date)

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?
All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, STOP. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

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Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Dr. Burton Sisco
Department Educational Leadership
E-Mail: sisco@rowan.edu Telephone: 856-256-4500 x3717

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04
Step 3: Determine whether the proposed research eligible for an exemption from a full IRB review.

Federal regulations (45 CFR 46) permit the exemption of some types of research from a full IRB review. If your research can be described by one or more of the categories listed below, check the appropriate category(ies), complete questions 1-5, and complete the Assurances on the last page of the application.

If your research cannot be described by any of these categories, your research is not exempt, and you must complete the entire "Human Research Review Application."

Category 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (b) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Category 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (b) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

(Note: Exemption for survey and interview procedures does not apply to research involving children. Exemption for observation of public behavior does not apply to research involving children except when the investigator does not participate in the activities being observed.)

Category 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 above if: (a) the human participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (b) federal statute requires without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

Category 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants.

Category 5 - Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (a) public benefit or service programs; (b) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (c) possible changes in or alternatives to these programs or procedures; or (d) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

Category 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies: (a) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed; or (b) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

(Note: Exemption categories cannot be applied to research involving fetuses, pregnant women, human in vitro fertilization, or prisoners.)
Please answer Questions 1-5 below

1. WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH?
The objective of this study is to investigate the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior's application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey.

2. DESCRIBE THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INCLUDING WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF SUBJECTS (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY):
A written survey was designed to provide the researcher with an understanding of the practices of college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior's application for admission into their institutions. The subjects will be asked to answer questions using a Likert scale for measuring responses to questions on selected admissions criteria governing admission for high school seniors applying to their institution.

3. DESCRIBE THE SUBJECTS WHO WILL BE PARTICIPATING (NUMBER, AGE, GENDER, ETC):
Admissions Officers defined as Director of admissions, dean of admissions, dean of enrollment management, assistant vice president for admissions, senior associate director, associate director, and assistant director from admissions offices at New Jersey state colleges and universities.

4. DESCRIBE HOW SUBJECTS WILL BE RECRUITED (e.g. ADVERTISEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS IN CLASS, E-MAIL, INTERNET)
The admissions officers will be sent an email message explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. Those willing to participate are asked to complete the survey and return it via email.

5. WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED:
Date collection will take place at participant's place of employment.

NOTE: IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED IN ANOTHER INSTITUTION (e.g. A SCHOOL, HOSPITAL, AGENCY, etc.) A PERMISSION LETTER FROM AN ADMINISTRATOR ON THE LETTERHEAD OF THAT INSTITUTION MUST BE ATTACHED.

ATTACH THE CONSENT FORM TO THIS APPLICATION. The Consent Form must address all of the elements required for informed consent (SEE INSTRUCTIONS).

NOTE: IF THE ONLY RECORD LINKING THE SUBJECT AND THE RESEARCH WOULD BE THE CONSENT DOCUMENT, AND THE RESEARCH PRESENTS NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK OF HARM TO SUBJECTS, YOU MAY USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE FOR CONSENT. IF YOU WISH TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE IRB TO USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE, ATTACH A COPY OF THE FIRST PAGE OF YOUR RESEARCH INSTRUMENT OR A LETTER WITH THE REQUIRED INFORMATION (see Instructions).

If you are requesting an exemption from a full IRB review, STOP. Complete the last page of this application ("Certifications"), and forward the completed (typed) application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research, The Graduate School, Memorial Hall.
IF YOU CANNOT CLAIM ONE OF THE EXEMPTIONS LISTED ABOVE, COMPLETE ALL OF THE ABOVE AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR A FULL IRB REVIEW.

Does your research involve a special population?
- Socioeconomically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged racial/ethnic group
- Pregnancy/fetus
- Cognitively impaired
- Elderly
- Terminally ill
- Incarcerated
- No special population

At what level of risk will the participants in the proposed research be placed? (Note: "Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to the participant’s dignity and self-respect as well as psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk.)

- Minimal Risk
- More than Minimal Risk
- Uncertain

1. HOW WILL SUBJECTS BE RECRUITED? IF STUDENTS, WILL THEY BE SOLICITED FROM CLASS?

2. WHAT RISKS TO SUBJECTS (PHYSIOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL) ARE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?
None

3. IS DECEPTION INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH? IF SO, WHAT IS IT AND WHY WILL IT BE USED?
No

4. WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SUBJECTS AFTER THEIR PARTICIPATION? IF DECEPTION IS USED, IT MUST BE DISCLOSED AFTER PARTICIPATION.
None

6. HOW WILL THE DATA BE RECORDED AND STORED? WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATA? ALL DATA MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR A MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS.

CERTIFICATIONS:
Rowan University maintains a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. This Assurance includes a requirement for all research staff working with human participants to receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors.

Please attach a copy of your "Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams" from the National Institutes of Health.

If you need to complete that training, go to the Web Tutorial at http://cme.nci.nih.gov/.

Responsible Researcher: I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks and will adhere to the policies and procedures of the Rowan University Institutional Review Board. I will ensure that all research staff working on the proposed project who will have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting this research (including students fulfilling these roles) will complete IRB approved training. I will not initiate this research project until I receive written approval from the IRB. I agree to obtain informed consent of participants in this project if required by the IRB; to report to the IRB any unanticipated effects on participants which become apparent during the course of experimentation and the actions taken as a result; to cooperate with the IRB in the continuing review of this project; to obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or implementing changes in the approved consent form; and to maintain documentation of consent forms and progress reports for a minimum of three years after completion of the final report or longer if required by the sponsor or the institution. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature.

Signature of Responsible Researcher: [Signature] Date: 2/5/07

Faculty Advisor (if Responsible Researcher is a student): I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature (attach copy of your "Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams" from the National Institutes of Health).

Signature of Faculty Advisor: [Signature] Date: 2/4/07
This is to certify that

Lori Ann Getler

has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 10/16/2006.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

http://cme.cancer.gov/cni-bin/cms/cts-cert5.pl

11/17/2006
This is to certify that

Burton Sisco

has completed the Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/29/2004.

This course included the following:

- Key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- Ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- The use of key ethical principles and Federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- A description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- A definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- A description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- The roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
http://www.nih.gov
APPENDIX B

Letters of Introduction and Instruction
Dear Admissions Officer,

I am a graduate student at Rowan University. In fulfillment of a research requirement, I am conducting a very brief survey on college admissions criteria used by state colleges and universities in New Jersey. My intent is to study the perceptions held on selected admissions criteria by college admissions officers. A survey instrument to collect relevant data is being sent to admissions officers at state colleges and universities throughout New Jersey.

With the increased competition for available spaces, it is more important than ever before that high school seniors applying for admission to New Jersey state institutions have a clear picture of factors important to the admissions process.

Since you are one of the individuals with primary responsibility at your institution for admissions decisions, you are in a position to provide valuable information. The greater the number of responses to the survey, the broader will be the picture of current practices and procedures.

I ask that you please take a few minutes of your time to complete the survey. By contributing your valuable time, you are helping to clear up misconceptions high school seniors may have about the importance of selected criteria in applying for admission to New Jersey state colleges and universities. It is extremely important that your response be included in the study if the results are to be representative. Your participation is much appreciated.

The information you provide will be kept confidential and protected at all stages of this project and will be reported only as part of summary data. Copies of the results will be made available to each participant.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact either me at getler@aol.com or Dr. Burton Sisco at sisco@rowan.edu.

Here is a link to the survey:
[SurveyLink]

Sincerely,

Lori Ann Getler

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails regarding this survey, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from the mailing list.
[RemoveLink]
Dear Admissions Officer,

Recently, I emailed you a survey seeking information on college admission criteria for a graduate research project I am conducting. I realize this is a very busy time for admissions offices but it is extremely important that your response be included in this study. If by chance you did not receive the survey or overlooked it, I am including the link again for your convenience. Please take a few moments now to complete this very brief survey.

The information you provide will be kept confidential and protected at all stages of this project and will be reported only as part of summary data. Copies of the results will be made available to each participant.

Thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact either me at getler@aol.com or Dr. Burton Sisco at Sisco@rowan.edu.

Here is a link to the survey:
[SurveyLink]

Sincerely,

Lori Ann Getler

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from me, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from the mailing list.
[RemoveLink]
APPENDIX C

Statement of Informed Consent and Survey
College Admissions Criteria Survey

1. Informed Consent

By clicking Next, I agree to participate in a study entitled "Acceptance or Denial: What Matters Most in College Admissions" which is being conducted by Lori Ann Getler, a graduate student at Rowan University, as part of a research requirement. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of selected college admissions officers regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior's application for admission into 4-year public undergraduate colleges and universities in New Jersey.

I understand that I am being asked to answer questions on a survey administered by the researcher. I understand that the survey instrument is designed to measure my perception regarding the most important criteria of a high school senior's application when applying for admission into my institution.

I understand that my responses will remain anonymous and that all data collected in the study will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from the study may be used for the purposes of this research project and for no other purpose. I understand that I will not be identified and my name will not be used at any time.

If I have questions regarding this research project, I may contact Dr. Burton Sisco at 856.256.4500 ext. 3717 or via email at sisco@rowan.edu or Lori Ann Getler at getler@aol.com.

Next >>
2. Demographic Information (Please check appropriate response)

1. Sex
   - Male
   - Female

2. Age
   - Under 30
   - 31 - 40
   - 41-50
   - 51-60
   - Over 60

3. Years employed in current position
   - Less than 5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-20 years
   - Over 20 years

4. Total enrollment at your institution
   - 0-1000
   - 1001-5000
   - 5001-10000
   - Over 10000

5. What was the total number of Freshman applications at your institution for Fall 2006?

6. What was the total number of students admitted as Freshmen to your institution in Fall 2006?

<< Prev    Next >>

### 3. Admissions Criteria

7. For items 1-19, please check a number from 1-5 (least important to most important) to indicate the weight given the components of a high school student's application for freshman admission into your institution.

1 = Not important  
2 = Less important  
3 = Important  
4 = Very important  
5 = Most important

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<td>3. H.S. GPA</td>
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8. For items 1-19, which ONE of these factors is the most important in the college admissions decision? (Please list the number)
College Admissions Criteria Survey

4. The End

Thank you for your courtesy, help and time!

<< Prev    Done >>