

6-6-2018

Making college admission count: the importance of admission criteria in the current undergraduate admission process

Amanda Rachel Tessler
Rowan University, amanda@tessler.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tessler, Amanda Rachel, "Making college admission count: the importance of admission criteria in the current undergraduate admission process" (2018). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2574.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2574>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.

**MAKING COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNT: THE IMPORTANCE OF
ADMISSION CRITERIA IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE
ADMISSION PROCESS**

by

Amanda Tessler

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
Rowan University
May 1, 2018

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

© 2018 Amanda Rachel Tessler

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my parents. Thank you both for always pushing me to do better and supporting me, not only in graduate school, but my personal life as well. Without you, I would have never found myself in graduate school with aspirations of continuing my education and becoming the doctor in the family. Because of you, I am always pushing myself harder, and wanting even more for myself. Thank you both.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my family for supporting me throughout grad school. Thank you for letting me miss holidays and being so understanding when you could not see me for months at a time.

I would also like to thank my friends and coworkers for encouraging me, understanding how busy I have been over the past two years, letting me vent, and listening to me complain and stress over the work I needed to do. Now that this is finished, I can finally have a social life with you all again!

Thank you to my boyfriend who has only known me as a graduate student and has stuck around this whole time. Thank you for supporting me, letting me cancel plans, and staying in at night and on weekends with me when I was too tired to do anything. I definitely could not have done it without you.

Lastly, thank you to Dr. Sisco for his guidance and knowledge throughout these past two years. With your support, I gained a deeper knowledge and stronger passion for research.

Abstract

Amanda Tessler

MAKING COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNT: THE IMPORTANCE OF ADMISSION CRITERIA IN THE CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSION PROCESS 2017-2018

Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Higher Education

During these changing times in higher education, admission criteria for being accepted into a four-year institution for higher education continues to evolve. This study discovered the attitudes that guidance counselors and admission officers, from public schools throughout New Jersey, had about these criteria, and what they believed is most important for current students applying to college. Two surveys were developed and distributed via email to guidance counselors of public high schools throughout New Jersey, as well as admission officers of public four-year institutions throughout New Jersey. Results suggest that quantitative admission criteria, SAT and ACT scores and HSGPA, are the most important, and also course load and transcript. Further research should look to discover the reasoning behind why each of these are so important, as well as looking to discover how important these admission criteria are to students currently applying to college.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	v
List of Tables	ix
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Significance of the Study.....	2
Assumptions and Limitations	2
Operational Definitions.....	3
Important Acronyms	4
Research Questions.....	4
Overview of the Study	5
Chapter II: Review of the Literature	6
Current Admissions Process and Requirements	6
Quantitative Admission Criteria	9
Standardized Testing.....	9
High School GPA	14
Class Rank	14
Qualitative Admission Criteria	15
Extracurricular Activities.....	16
Personal Essays.....	17
Letters of Recommendation.....	18
Interviews.....	19

Table of Contents (Continued)

District Factor Grouping (DFG)20

Course Load and Transcript.....20

The Role of High School Guidance Counselors21

 Job Description21

 Role in the Application Process.....21

 Importance of Understanding College Admissions22

Summary of the Literature Review23

Chapter III: Methodology25

 Context of Study25

 Population and Sampling33

 Data Collection Instruments34

 Data Collection Procedures.....36

 Data Analysis37

Chapter IV: Findings.....38

 Profile of the Sample: Guidance Counselors and Admission Counselors.....38

 Analysis of the Data.....41

 Research Question 141

 Research Question 245

 Research Question 346

Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations48

 Summary of the Study48

 Discussion of the Findings.....48

Table of Contents (Continued)

Research Question 148

Research Question 250

Research Question 351

Conclusions.....52

Recommendations for Practice53

Recommendations for Further Research.....53

References.....55

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval58

Appendix B: Initial Email to Potential Subjects.....59

Appendix C: Reminder Email to Potential Subjects.....60

Appendix D: Online Alternate Consent Form61

Appendix E: Survey for Admission Officers.....63

Appendix F: Survey for Guidance Counselors65

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 3.1. Institutions Used for Data Collection	25
Table 3.2. School Districts Used for Data Collection with A-C DFG Rating	26
Table 3.3. School Districts Used for Data Collection with D-F DFG Rating	29
Table 3.4. School Districts Used for Data Collection with G-I DFG Rating	31
Table 4.1. Demographics of Guidance Counselors (N=232).....	39
Table 4.2. Demographics of Admission Officers (N=47)	40
Table 4.3. Guidance Counselors' Attitudes Towards Admission Criteria (N=232)	42
Table 4.4. Admission Officers' Attitudes Towards Admission Criteria (N=47)	44
Table 4.5. Importance of Admission Criteria Means for Guidance Counselors and Admission Officers.....	46
Table 4.6. Read Any Past/Current SAT Research (N=279)	47
Table 4.7. Belief of Which Criterion Best Predicts Academic Success (N=279).....	47

Chapter I

Introduction

The college admission process continues to evolve, adapt, and grow as the world continues to change. Many requirements have held over the years, including standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, and high school grade point average. However, there is no consistent understanding of the importance of each of these requirements. Each institution is different, whether it is public or private, small or large. Admission offices and institutions look for different criteria in potential students. In order for high school seniors to successfully navigate the collegiate admission process, they look to their guidance counselors for advice.

Statement of the Problem

Since the types of institutions vary, each one operating and expecting different standards from potential students, there is a common question of, “What are the most important qualifications for a student to be accepted into a four-year institution?” Guidance counselors in high schools are supposed to guide their students through the college application process. However, since every institution weighs admission criteria differently, consistency and knowledge about what criteria are the most important when applying to college has declined.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover and compare the attitudes of selected high school guidance counselors and college admission officers regarding the admission criteria used in selecting college applicants. The study sought to focus on what is most important for being accepted into an undergraduate program at a four-year public college

in New Jersey, as well as discovering the similarities and differences between the attitudes of the subjects. The admission criteria selected were general requirements that have a research and knowledge base on their predictability of first-year academic success. Therefore, the goal of this study was to make the admission process easier to understand for high school students in New Jersey.

Significance of the Study

This study looks to provide insight into the college admission process from the perspectives of high school guidance counselors and admission officers. By discovering the importance of admission criteria between these two subject groups, gaps in the knowledge base can be closed. This can lead to more success for guidance counselors in helping their students be accepted into a college in New Jersey by understanding the admission process from the perspective of admission officers of these colleges.

Assumptions and Limitations

First, this study assumes that all subjects answered the survey fully and honestly, based off of what is used in practice. A number of correlations may be found, but they should not be used to generalize the population of high schools and higher education institutions' roles in college admissions. New Jersey high schools and colleges only represent a small percentage of postsecondary institutions in the United States with possible different standards of schools. The public-school system varies from state-to-state and cannot be generalized. There also may be researcher bias since I worked as a graduate intern in the Rowan University Admission's Department during the time of the study. This could have affected my understanding of the importance of varied admission

criteria and the admission process, as well as develop my own biases towards specific criteria.

Operational Definitions

1. Academic Success: Meeting the institution's expectations for students, including retention and GPA.
2. Admission Officer: An employee of an institution's Admissions Department whose job is to recruit and select students to attend the institution.
3. Admission Requirements: Required criteria used to determine acceptance into the institutions located in the state of New Jersey who were studied for this research. This study looked at standardized test scores (SAT and ACT), high school GPA, class rank, extracurricular activities, personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, District Factor Grouping, and course load and transcripts.
4. Guidance Counselor: An employee of a public New Jersey high school who works in the high school's guidance office and assists students in the college application process.
5. Institution: A four-year public college or university in New Jersey that utilizes an admissions department and a set of admission requirements to select their students.
6. Qualitative Criteria: Requirements to submit to four-year institutions that focus on personal qualities and characteristics. The qualitative criteria used in this study were extracurricular activities, personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, District Factor Grouping, and course load and transcripts.

7. Quantitative Criteria: Requirements to submit to four-year institutions that are measurable. The quantitative criteria used in this study were standardized test scores (SAT and ACT), high school GPA, and class rank.

8. Standards: Minimum and maximum requirements to be accepted into an institution.

9. Student: A high school senior applying to a four-year college or university with potential to attend the next year. The students referred to in this study were seniors during the 2017-2018 school year in the state of New Jersey.

Important Acronyms

1. DFG: District Factor Grouping
2. FYGPA: First Year (of college) Grade Point Average
3. HSGPA: High School Grade Point Average
4. SATC: SAT Combined Score
5. SATM: SAT Math Score
6. SATV: SAT Verbal Score
7. SATW: SAT Writing Score

Research Questions

This study sought to explore three questions:

1. What are the most important admission criteria according to selected admission officers and guidance counselors in New Jersey?
2. What similarities or differences are found between these two groups and their attitudes towards current college requirements?

3. Do the subjects' attitudes towards the chosen admission criteria correlate to the literature on the predictability of student academic success?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II reviews relevant literature on current admission processes and requirements in four-year institutions. The review looks at both quantitative and qualitative admission criteria, including standardized tests, high school GPA, class rank, extracurricular activities personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, District Factor Grouping, and course load and transcripts. This chapter discusses each of the criteria used in this study, including discussions on predictability of first-year college academic success and the general uses of each of the criteria in the admissions process.

Chapter III describes the procedures and methodologies used in this study. In this chapter are explanations of the target population and sample, explanations of the high schools and colleges selected, data collection methods, instruments, and data analysis measures.

Chapter IV presents the findings and results of the study. This chapter looks at the results found and compares the findings to the initial research questions. This chapter also looks at the demographics of the subjects.

Chapter V discusses the significant findings, offers conclusions, and discusses suggestions for practice and further research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Current Admissions Process and Requirements

The current college admission process varies from institution to institution. Procedures are general among them, but the specific requirements and standards vary due to competitiveness of each institution. Applications typically include an application form, high school transcript, standardized test scores, letters of recommendation, and personal essay. Admission departments look at these and other criteria submitted by an applicant to make their admission decision. The criteria can be broken down into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative criteria are measurable requirements, including grades and test scores. The qualitative criteria focus on personal qualities and characteristics. These criteria include letters of recommendation, personal essays, and interviews.

The varied admission criteria and standards stem from the differences in importance of each of the admission criteria used by admissions officers and the institution. Some admission officers believe that the quantitative criteria are most important due to the research on predictability of student success, while others believe that qualitative criteria show personal characteristics of a student that academic performance may hide.

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) distributes their *Admission Trends Survey (ATS)* each year. The 2015 survey received 687 responses from institutions across the country, and collected data on application volume, wait lists, Early Decision and Early Action, and most important factors in admission

decisions (National Association for College Admission Counseling [NACAC], 2016). The criteria used most in admission decisions in Fall 2015, according to the institutions surveyed, were high school grades and GPA, strength of curriculum, and standardized test scores (NACAC, 2016).

Admissions departments often lean towards using either a formulaic or holistic review process while making admissions decisions (Richmond, 2011; Tremblay, 2013). A formulaic approach focuses on the quantitative admissions criteria of potential students, which includes standardized test scores, high school GPA (HSGPA), and high school class rank (McGinty, 2004). Often when using this approach, admissions officers use a rubric or formula to make their admissions decision (Atkinson, 2001; McGinty, 2004). These rubrics and formulas have minimum and maximum scores that the applicant must have to be accepted. Institutions pride themselves on raising their average scores each year, by admitting more competitive students and raising their average test scores and GPAs of incoming freshmen. Administrators in favor of this quantitative admissions approach argue that research has shown that test scores, combined with grades, can predict first-year academic success better than just grades alone (Zwick, 2007b).

A holistic approach to admissions decisions involves looking at more than simply the candidate's academic achievements, but takes into consideration both quantitative and qualitative criteria of the applicant (Carlock, 2014; Gilroy, 2007; Hornberger, 2010; Richmond, 2011). The criteria reviewed include extracurricular activities, including role in the community and public service (Carlock, 2014). Institutions who use this approach for admissions decisions look at these aspects of a student's life as well as their academic achievement and standardized test scores (Carlock, 2014). Looking at a potential

student's application through a holistic perspective can "help all students, especially low-income and minority students, determine their educational destinies" (Atkinson, 2001, p. 139). The holistic approach can help administrators understand an applicant's character and personal qualities as well as their academic potential.

Guidance counselors serve as a liaison between students and college admission. A successful admission process relies on the assistance of high school guidance counselors. One of the main responsibilities of a high school guidance counselor is assistance with college applications (NACAC, 1990). Because of this, counselors need to know what institutions, more specifically admission officers, are looking for in potential students. Applicants need to be informed of what is most important to be accepted into an institution, which is where guidance counselors come into play (Ishop, 2008). Multiple studies have indicated that both admission officers and guidance counselors believe academic factors were the most important in college admission criteria. However, they did differ in their opinions on individual admission criteria (Gaitlin, 1997; Getler, 2007).

This study compares the importance of specific college admission criteria to admission officers and high school guidance counselors. Quantitative and qualitative admission criteria were included in this study. The quantitative criteria were standardized testing, SAT and ACT scores, HSGPA, and class rank. The qualitative criteria were extracurricular activities, personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, District Factor Grouping (DFG), and course load and transcripts. This chapter discusses each of the criteria used in the study, including discussions on predictability of first-year academic success and the uses of each criterion in the admissions process.

Quantitative Admission Criteria

Standardized testing. Standardized testing for college admissions was first established during the early twentieth century (Zwick, 2007b). During that time, there were an abundance of entrance examinations that differed between institutions (Zwick, 2007b). In 1900, to try and standardize college admission testing, 12 leaders from the top northeastern universities formed the College Entrance Examination Board (Zwick, 2007b). The SAT was first implemented in 1926 and, since then, has been praised for its reliability and validity in predicting academic success in college freshmen (NACAC, 2016; Zwick, 2007b).

The SAT and ACT are the two most commonly used standardized tests. According to the *ATS* survey, 78% of colleges who responded require either the SAT or the ACT for admission with 3% requiring the SAT specifically (NACAC, 2016).

As of March 2016, the SAT was redesigned “to develop an assessment that better reflects the work that students will do in college” (Shaw et al., 2016, p. 5). The redesigned test includes three sections: reading and writing, math, and an optional essay portion (Shaw et al., 2016). Both reading and writing and math sections are scored on a 200-800 scale with subscores on a 10-40 scale (Shaw et al., 2016). A validity study was completed for the redesigned SAT in the fall of 2014 (Shaw et al., 2016). Because this redesign is young, majority of research looked at in this review are prior to the 2016 redesign.

There were 1,681,134 students in the class of 2016 who took the SAT, either the old or redesigned version, at least once through June 2016 (“Class of 2016 SAT Results,”

2016). While the SAT is used in more institutions for admission and seems to be more common, 2,090,342 students of the class of 2016 took the ACT (ACT, Inc., 2016).

The ACT is broken up into four sections: English, Math, Reading, and Science (“Help and FAQ’s,” 2017). Students who take this test receive a composite score of 1-36, which is made up of their average from the four test scores (“Help and FAQ’s,” 2017). Along with a composite score, test takers receive four more scores designed to represent college readiness: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) score, English Language Arts (ELA) score, Progress Toward Career Readiness Indicator, and Text Complexity Progress Indicator (“Help and FAQ’s,” 2017). The ACT test was designed to measure academic achievement in the four sections, while the SAT focuses on reasoning and definitions (“Help and FAQ’s,” 2017).

Standardized test scores predictability of first-year success. A significant amount of research has suggested that SAT scores are valid and reliable predictors of first-year GPA (FYGPA) in college (NACAC, 2016; Zwick, 2007b). An average correlation of 0.38 has been found between combined verbal and math SAT scores and FYGPA through multiple research studies (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; Zwick, 2007a). Zwick (2013) suggests that 12-13% of the variance of first year GPA is attributed to SAT scores, and 21-22% of the variance is attributed to HSGPA and SAT scores combined.

The College Board conducted a validity test of the SAT in 2012 revealing a stronger relationship between SAT scores and FYGPA with a correlation of .54 (Beard & Marini, 2015). However, a stronger correlation of .61 was found when HSGPA was added in (Beard & Marini, 2015). It is important to note that there may be bias in this study, since The College Board, the organization responsible for the development and

distribution of the SAT, sponsored the research. Variance may be due to the demographics of the sample; regions of the country sampled as well as undergraduate enrollment were not equal (Beard & Marini, 2015). Variance may also be due to average HSGPA of the sample as well as SAT scores (Beard & Marini, 2015). The mean HSGPA was 3.62 with a standard deviation of 0.496 (Beard & Marini, 2015). The means of SAT critical reading, SAT math, and SAT writing were 550, 571, and 544, respectively, with standard deviations of 97.4, 99.7, and 99.5 (Beard & Marini, 2015).

Qualitative research has also suggested that there is predictability between standardized test scores and academic success, but not all the time. However, the research suggests the opposite of the quantitative criteria. Both admission officers and advisors from Rowan University, based on their experience, believe that SAT scores do predict academic success, however, they are only valid sometimes (Betts, 2011). These administrators have often seen students with high SAT scores struggle in college and vice versa (Betts, 2011). They recommended that SAT scores be given minimal weight when making acceptance decisions (Betts, 2011).

Criticisms of the SAT. One criticism of standardized testing is how they are not reliable for some students, i.e. students that come from a low-income family or a family of low social economic status (SES) (Gilroy, 2007). Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between family income and SAT scores: as family income increases, so do SAT scores (Gilroy, 2007). Therefore, it is possible that socioeconomic status could influence SAT and other standardized test scores (Gilroy, 2007).

It has also been noted that students with learning disabilities struggle with standardized test taking; they are unable to successfully compete with other applicants

when comparing test scores (Betts, 2011).

Another criticism involves scholarship eligibility issues (Cohn, Cohn, Balch, & Bradley, 2004; Gilroy, 2007). Research has suggested that nonwhite students are less likely than their white counterparts to be eligible for scholarships if SAT scores are required (Cohn et al., 2004). As for maintaining scholarships, “nonwhites are less likely than whites, and males are less likely than females, to achieve the 3.0 GPA in college required to maintain their scholarships” (Cohn et al., 2004, p. 585). Low socioeconomic status may limit access to higher education due to standardized test bias (Gilroy, 2007). SAT scores are more commonly becoming optional to submit during application because of the likely bias against socioeconomic status (Betts, 2011; Cohn et al., 2004; Gilroy, 2007).

Even though research has suggested that the SAT is biased towards low SES families and race/ethnicity, the College Board denies the bias (Letukas, 2015). Letukas (2015) states how it is a fact that the positive correlation between higher SES status and higher test scores is due to the rigorous course load in high school and not wealth. Another fact discussed is that the SAT is not biased against some minority groups with the reasoning being the rigorous pretest phase which determines which questions will be used on the SAT (Letukas, 2015). If a question is biased during this phase to minority groups, it will likely not be used in the final SAT (Letukas, 2015).

Another rumor discussed in the article addresses the problem of low predictability of student achievement from SAT scores (Letukas, 2015). The fact discussed about this is that the SAT is a “good predictor of first-year performance in college, student retention, as well as cumulative college GPA” (Letukas, 2015, p. 3). It is then discussed that

HSGPA combined with SAT scores have an average correlation of .46 with first-year college GPA, so both HSGPA and SAT scores should be used when assessing a student's application (Letukas, 2015). Much of the research disagrees with Letukas' (2015) facts (Cohn et al., 2004; Gilroy, 2007).

Uses of standardized testing in college admission. Past studies have looked at admissions officers' perspectives on the importance of SAT and ACT scores as admission criteria. Gaitlin's (1997) research indicated that both SAT and ACT scores were second most important to admission officers and guidance counselors with HSGPA being the most important. Admission officers averaged 4.67 on a five-point Likert-scale for SAT scores, and 4.65 for ACT scores (Gaitlin, 1997). Guidance counselors averaged 4.48 on a five-point Likert-scale for SAT scores, and 4.05 for ACT scores (Gaitlin, 1997). Both subject groups agreed that standardized test scores were very important for college admission. Getler (2007) surveyed admissions officers from four public undergraduate institutions across New Jersey. It was discovered that 100% of subjects responded that their institution believed standardized test scores were "most important" or "very important" for admission (Getler, 2007).

Contrary to the research of the importance on SAT scores for college admission, a study conducted by Betts (2011) suggested, through qualitative analysis, that assistant directors of admissions at Rowan University believed SAT scores should hold minimum weight when reviewing a potential student's application. While some employees and administrators believe that standardized test scores should hold minimum weight in an applicant's admission decision, research has shown that both admissions officers and guidance counselors believe that they are the most important admission criteria (Gaitlin,

1997; Getler, 2007). The vast differences in the research calls for further research into the usage of SAT scores in college admission.

High school GPA.

Predictability of high school GPA and first-year success. Quantitative research has discovered an average correlation of 0.52 between HSGPA and FYGPA (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014). This research suggests a stronger correlation between HSGPA and FYGPA, yet institutions lean on SAT scores of potential students to make acceptance decisions and identify their predicted success.

Use of high school GPA in college admission. Generally, HSGPA reflects the strongest positive correlation with academic success and FYGPA in college (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; NACAC, 2016). Admission officers also look at grades throughout the four years of high school, which includes growth and progress as well as course load (Betts, 2011; McGinty, 2004).

Gaitlin's (1997) study indicated that HSGPA was the most important admission criteria to both admission officers and guidance counselors. Admission officers and guidance counselors averaged 4.72 and 4.58 on a five-point Likert-scale, respectively (Gaitlin, 1997). It was also discovered that guidance counselors believed HSGPA and course selection better predicted college success, with SAT and ACT scores near the bottom of the list (Betts, 2011).

Class rank. High school class rank has been defined as a "percentile rating of academic placement in the high school graduating class," (Nack & Townsend, 2007, p. 69). The student with the highest HSGPA is listed first, and the student with the lowest HSGPA listed last (Nack & Townsend, 2007).

Class rank can be used to compare students from different schools and different grading curves (NACAC, 2016). Using class rank as an admission criterion has become increasingly less important over the past few years (NACAC, 2016). However, it is still commonly used as a requirement for admission (NACAC, 2016).

There are many problems when using class rank to make an admission decision. First, each year, fewer high schools are publicly sharing class rank (NACAC, 2016). Because of this, many students' class ranks can only be estimated, making the criterion difficult to compare between applicants (NACAC, 2016).

Second, it has been found that high school class rank adds nothing to the predictability of college success (Nack & Townsend, 2007). This is possibly due to how class rank is established in each school district; it is almost impossible to compare a student who has ranked first in their graduating class with a HSGPA of 3.23 and a student who has ranked first with a 4.0 HSGPA (Nack & Townsend, 2007). Rank does not represent an individual student's HSGPA, but a student's HSGPA compared to students they graduated with (Nack & Townsend, 2007).

Gaitlin's (1997) study indicated a significant difference between admission officers and guidance counselors' attitudes towards class rank. Admission officers averaged 1.8 on a five-point Likert-scale, while guidance counselors averaged 4.11 (Gaitlin, 1997). This discrepancy calls for further research on the topic to make sure all counselors are on the same page.

Qualitative Admission Criteria

Even though there is a general emphasis on academics and quantitative criteria for college admission, many other criteria are used for admission decisions and required in

an admission application, In the literature, qualitative admission criteria are described as personal qualities used to assess personal qualities and the character of an applicant (Ishop, 2008). These criteria are used to get to know an applicant by more than just numbers. Some of these criteria include extracurricular activities, personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, District Factor Grouping (DFG), and course load and transcripts.

Extracurricular activities. Extracurriculars are activities where participation from students is outside of the classroom. These activities can be personal, community, or school related. Extracurricular activities have been shown to have many benefits for students, including development of social, academic, and intellectual skills (Lawhorn, 2008). Research suggests that involvement in extracurricular activities boosts students' academic performances (Lawhorn, 2008). This leads to self-motivation, leadership, and time management skills, as well as responsibility; all of these leading to higher grades and HSGPAs (Lawhorn, 2008). Admission officers look for these qualities when reviewing applications to predict retention, commitment, and leadership. Having extracurricular activities on an application can help students stand out from other applicants.

Predictability. Some research has suggested that participation in extracurricular activities while in high school leads to a greater likelihood in high education enrollment compared to joining the workforce or enlisting in the military (Martin, 2015). Data have also suggested that the students with the highest test scores actively engage in extracurricular activities (Kronholz, 2012). Benefits from participating in extracurricular

activities, such as higher grades, time management skills, and self-motivation, increases the odds for students being admitted to college (Lawhorn, 2008; Martin, 2015).

However, results from the *ATS* survey suggested that few colleges found either no correlation or small positive correlations between the relationship of extracurricular activities to college academic achievement (NACAC, 2016). Findings are often inconclusive or inconsistent when researching extracurriculars; some researchers believe that there is only a low correlation between extracurriculars and academic success, while others insist that there is a strong relationship (Kronholz, 2012).

Use in admissions. Extracurricular activities were seen as an indicator of time management skills according to assistant directors of admissions at Rowan University (Betts, 2011). As stated earlier, students who engage in extracurricular activities are more likely to develop social, intellectual, and academic skills, all important characteristics that admission officers look for in an applicant (Lawhorn, 2008; Martin, 2015).

Extracurricular activities may also show admission officers perseverance and commitment, which, as some admission officers noted, may bump them from being on a wait-list to being accepted (Richmond, 2011).

Personal essays. Personal essays, also referred to as college essays or admission essays, are essays written by students from a prompt or question given by the institution. Many schools require these as part of the application, while others list them as optional. The undergraduate admissions process uses essays to evaluate writing ability and characteristics (Ishop, 2008); these essays are comparable to personal statements used for graduate admissions. The undergraduate admissions essays are writing samples that often lead with a prompt and are generally about the applicant's interests, personal goals, and

academic goals (Ishop, 2008). Admission officers use these essays as evidence of creativity, intellect, and to assess writing skills (Ishop, 2008).

Ishop (2008) considered what students wrote in their college admission essays. The analysis found that these students wrote essays with a focus on academic opportunities, careers and jobs, travel, religion, moving, activities, family, coping with adversity, and coping with illness and death (Ishop, 2008). Applicants wrote about these topics and how they related to characteristics about themselves (Ishop, 2008). The essays displayed personal qualities potential students wanted to show admission officers that they felt would help them be accepted into the institution (Ishop, 2008).

However, there is a very small correlation between personal essays and school performance, especially if prior grades are available (Murphy, Klieger, Borneman, & Kuncel, 2009). Essays are not useful in predicting academic success, but can be used for other purposes, including matching a student to an advisor or determining if the student needs remedial programs (Murphy, Klieger, Borneman, & Kuncel, 2009).

Letters of recommendation. Letters of recommendation, in admission applications, are written letters from an individual who can speak about the student from personal experience. These letters are used to assess a student's performance in school, at work, or other outside activities through the perspective of someone else rather than grades.

Research has indicated that there is a significant difference between the attitudes towards recommendations between admission officers and guidance counselors (Gaitlin, 1997). Guidance counselors believed recommendations are given a higher weight than

admission officers, who give little weight to recommendations in practice (Gaitlin, 1997; Getler, 2007).

Interviews. Interviews are occasionally conducted for applicants to get to know them and how they hold themselves. There are two types of admission interviews that may be conducted: informational or evaluative (“Admission Interview Tips,” n.d.). Informational interviews are used to inform the potential student about the institution, while evaluative interviews are used to assess the student, which then becomes a part of the student’s application file (“Admission Interview Tips,” n.d.). While interviews seem important and necessary to the admission process, only a handful of colleges require them for undergraduate admissions. Interviews are seen more in graduate and doctoral settings, especially medical schools, as well as for special admissions programs (Betts, 2011).

In a study on undergraduate admission interviews, admission officers focused on motivation and oral communication to assess a student in an interview (Shahani, Dipboye, & Gehrlein, 1991). Persistence in extra-curricular activities, academic challenge, reading interests, interest in external affairs, overcoming handicaps and hardships, overall confidence and energy, and an overall motivation were all used to assess motivation (Shahani, Dipboye, & Gehrlein, 1991). Use of proper grammatical structure, range of vocabulary, organization and coherence of discourse, intensity and enthusiasm of discourse, and an overall oral communication rating were used to assess oral communication (Shahani, Dipboye, & Gehrlein, 1991). In this study, low correlations were found between a student’s paper credentials and interview evaluations, suggesting that the interview found different information that was already given on paper credentials (Shahani, Dipboye, & Gehrlein, 1991).

It is important to note that interviews are subjective and not always valid; an interviewer may bring bias to the interview and give the interviewee lower scores based on outside factors.

District Factor Grouping (DFG). When admission officers look at the quantitative criteria of a student they take into consideration the high school and district he or she attended (McGinty, 2004). New Jersey gives each district a District Factor Grouping (DFG) score. These scores are used to measure a community's approximate socioeconomic status (SES) ("District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts," 2000). Six variables are used to develop each town's score: percent of adults with no high school diploma, percent of adults with some college education, occupational status, unemployment rate, percent of individuals in poverty, and the median family income ("District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts," 2000). Communities can be ranked from A-J, lowest to highest, respectively ("District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts," 2000).

Course load and transcript. Transcripts show the grades of students and their course load over four years of high school. It also shows four years of growth, progress, and perseverance (Betts, 2011; McGinty, 2004). Honors and Advanced Placement class grades can provide insight on these characteristics and college readiness, as well.

Admission officers will look at course load as a factor of academic success both in high school and possibly in college (McGinty, 2004). McGinty (2004) gives examples of this, explaining how a "grade of B in Advanced Placement English is more important than an A in chorus," and "an A in chemistry carries more weight than an A in civics," (p. 6).

When interviewed, Rowan University admission officers said that they believed high school transcript, including grades, course, and four-year performance, are a better predictor of college success compared to SAT scores (Betts, 2011).

The Role of High School Guidance Counselors

Job description. NACAC's *Statement on Precollege Guidance and Counseling and the Role of the School Counselor* (1990) defines precollege guidance counseling as activities that help students pursue challenging curriculum that results in more higher education options, identify requirements for college access for students, and assist in financial aid, college decisions, and other processes of the college application and admission process.

The *Counseling Trends Survey* (CTS), administered by the NACAC in 2014, collected information from high school guidance counselors about their work priorities and responsibilities relating to the college admission and transition process (Clinedinst, Koranteng, & Nicola, 2015). A total of 1,360 responses were collected (Clinedinst et al., 2015). Two statements that the counselors responded to relating to the college admission process were, "Advice and education for students and families on standardized testing," and "Actively represent students to college admission officers" (Clinedinst et al., 2015, p. 28). For the first statement, 30% answered frequently, 43% occasionally, 26% infrequently, and 2% never (Clinedinst et al., 2015). For the second statement, 41% responded frequently, 33% occasionally, 21% infrequently, and 5% never (Clinedinst et al., 2015).

Role in the application process. Guidance counselors serve as the liaison between high school and college. It is necessary for these counselors to not only

understand the admission process, but also the criteria that are most important for being accepted into a higher education institution (Gaitlin, 1997; Ishop, 2008). Guidance counselors are required to understand current admission requirements as part of their job to help students with college applications and college selection and the application process (NACAC, 2000). They are to help their students through the selection process by identifying where he or she has the best chance of being successful (Trembly, 2013). Guidance counselors' main role is to "guide" their students through the college application process.

Importance of understanding college admissions. Because guidance counselors play such a large role in the college application process, it is key that they understand the current practices of admissions (Gaitlin, 1997). Research consistently shows that high school counseling is an area of concern, and addresses the need for improvement for students to successfully be admitted into college (Richmond, 2011). Research also suggests that communication between admission officers and guidance counselors needs improvement so guidance counselors give the most accurate and up-to-date information about college admissions to their students (Gaitlin, 1997; Ishop, 2008). Studies have suggested that the two groups do not agree on what is most important in college admissions. Many admission professionals report having negative experiences with guidance counselors (Gaitlin, 1997; Richmond, 2011). It is likely that guidance counselors are putting an emphasis on criteria that admission officers do not put much consideration into when reviewing applications (Gaitlin, 1997). Ultimately, admission officers are experts on what institutions are looking for in a student and this information needs to properly be funneled to applicants (Ishop, 2008).

Demographic data have suggested that college admission officers are younger, with less experience and less education than guidance counselors (Gaitlin, 1997). It is fair to question whether this influences the admission process. Do guidance counselors differ from admission officers in their attitudes towards the importance of admission criteria because they have been in their field for a longer amount of time? Are they set in their ways or is there a communication issue? It would be interesting to see if any of these factors are related.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature reveals that quantitative criteria seem to be favored over qualitative requirements when it comes to predicting college academic success. These quantitative criteria have extensive research that shows the connections between the numbers and prediction of college success, which seems to be why they are favored in the admission process.

Much more research was found on quantitative criteria than qualitative measures. Only a handful of studies were found on qualitative criteria enrollment and predictability of academic success.

Research continues to be contradictory on what are the best predictors of college success, as well as what admission criteria are the most important (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; Getler, 2007; Zwick, 2007a). There are only a handful of studies that look into both admission officers and guidance counselors. The ones that do look into both groups find that quantitative criteria are favored among importance for admission criteria, but are not favored as far as predictability on academic success in college.

In order for students to be successful in their college application process and college career, high school guidance counselors need to understand the current admission process and what admission officers are looking for in a potential student.

There is a paucity of research in New Jersey that looks at admission criteria from the perspective of admission officers and guidance counselors. My research also looks at demographics and region a student is from as a criterion for admission. My research can be used to help guidance counselors in New Jersey understand the essential criteria needed to be accepted into the state's institutions based on the attitudes of employees from these institutions. Ultimately, this will help future students in New Jersey apply for college by knowing exactly what admission officers are looking at in their application.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of Study

This study was conducted at various public high schools and public four-year institutions in New Jersey. All of the high schools and institutions chosen for this study were located in New Jersey. Four-year colleges were chosen based on similarity; each of the institutions were four-year public schools located in New Jersey with similar missions and backgrounds.

The institutions included in this study were New Jersey City University, Kean University, Montclair University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Rowan University, Stockton University, The College of New Jersey, and William Patterson University. Table 3.1 describes each institution contacted for this study including number of admission counselors for each institution.

Table 3.1

Institutions Used for Data Collection

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Number of Admission Counselors*</i>
New Jersey City University	22
Kean University	8
Montclair University	13
New Jersey Institute of Technology	8
Ramapo College of New Jersey	8
Rowan University	11
Stockton University	9
The College of New Jersey	9
William Patterson University	10

Note. *Counselors include those with the title of counselor and higher

High schools were chosen randomly by District Factor Grouping (DFG). As described in Chapter II, DFG is a score used to measure approximate socioeconomic status (SES) of a community (“District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts,” 2000). The scores range from A to J, lowest to highest, respectively (“District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts,” 2000). Communities who are scored A rank as a low SES community, while communities who are scored J rank as a high SES community. Districts were sorted into three groups: A-C, D-F, and G-I. After being sorted, 25% of each group was selected using a random number generator. Forty-five districts were chosen for both the A-C and D-F group, and 52 districts were chosen for the G-I group. A contact list of guidance counselors and admission officers was compiled through high school and institutional websites. Emails addresses for data collection were found through these websites.

Table 3.2 describes the districts with DFG scores from A-C. The table describes each district including the DFG scores, the high school that students attend, and how many guidance counselors the school has.

Table 3.2

School Districts Used for Data Collection with A-C DFG Rating

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
City of Orange Twp	Orange High School	A	3
Elsinboro Twp	Salem High School	A	4
Fairview Boro	Cliffside High School	A	5
Millville City	Memorial High School & Millville High School	A	6
Mine Hill Twp	Dover High School	A	5

Table 3.2 (continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Penns Grove Carneys Point	Penn Grove High School	A	4
Quinton Twp	Salem High School	A	4
Trenton	Trenton High School Main Campus & Trenton High School West Campus	A	10
Vineland City	Vineland High School	A	8
Washington Township (Burlington County)	Cedar Creek High School	A	5
West New York	Memorial High School	A	6
Wildwood City	Wildwood High School	A	2
Woodbine Boro	Middle Township High School	A	3
Bellmawr Boro	Trinton High School	B	8
Berkeley Twp	Central Regional High School	B	6
Beverly City	Palmyra High School	B	2
Carteret Boro	Carteret High School	B	4
Cumberland Regional	Cumberland Regional High School	B	5
Deerfield Twp	Cumberland Regional High School	B	5
Glassboro	Glassboro High School	B	3
Gloucester City	Gloucester City Junior-Senior High School	B	4
Greenwich (Warren)	Phillipsburg High School	B	5
Island Heights	Central Regional High School	B	6
Passaic County Manchester	Manchester Regional High School	B	4
Riverton	Palmyra High School	B	2
Waterford Twp	Hammonton High School	B	5
Weymouth Twp	Buena Regional High School	B	3
Barnegat Twp	Barnegat High School	CD	5
Bayonne City	Bayonne High School	CD	11
Carlstadt-East Rutherford	Henry P. Becton Regional High School	CD	2
Clayton Boro	Clayton High School	CD	3

Table 3.2 (continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Clifton City	Clifton High School	CD	12
Elmwood Park	Elmwood Park Memorial High School	CD	2
Gateway Regional	Gateway Regional High School	CD	5
Greater Egg Harbor	Absegami High School, Cedar Creek High School, & Oakcrest High School	CD	15
Hackensack City	Hackensack High School	CD	7
Keyport Boro	Keyport High School	CD	3
Manville Boro	Manville High School	CD	2
Merchantville	Pennsauken High School	CD	5
Monroe Twp (Gloucester)	Williamstown High School	CD	8
Pemberton Borough	Pemberton Township High School	CD	6
Pennsville	Pennsville High School	CD	3
South Hackensack Twp	Hackensack High School	CD	7
Union Beach	Keyport High School	CD	3
Weehawken Twp	Weehawken High School	CD	3
Wenonah Boro	Gateway Regional High School	CD	5
Woodbury Heights	Gateway Regional High School	CD	5

Note. *DFG rating is based off of 2000 Decennial Census

Table 3.3 describes the school districts with DFG scores from D-F. The table describes each school district including the DFG scores, the high school that students attend, and how many guidance counselors the school has.

Table 3.3

School Districts Used for Data Collection with D-F DFG Rating

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Allamuchy	Hackettstown High School	DE	3
Belvidere Town	Belvidere High School	DE	2
Butler Boro	Butler High School	DE	3
Eastampton Twp	Rancocas Valley Regional High School	DE	8
Frankford Twp	High Point Regional High School	DE	5
Franklin Twp	Franklin High School	DE	8
Gloucester Twp	Black Horse Pike Regional High School	DE	11
Hardyston Twp	Wallkill Valley HS	DE	3
Harmony Twp	Belvidere High School	DE	2
Lakehurst Boro	Jackson Liberty High School	DE	8
Longport	Ocean City High School	DE	5
Montague Twp	High Point Regional High School	DE	5
Mount Ephraim Boro	Audubon High School	DE	3
North Arlington Boro	North Arlington High School	DE	2
North Plainfield Boro	North Plainfield High School	DE	4
Ocean City (Cape May)	Ocean City High School	DE	5
Ridgefield Park Twp	Ridgefield Park Jr./Sr. High School	DE	4
Sayreville Boro	Sayreville War Memorial High School	DE	7
Sea Isle City	Ocean City High School	DE	5
Sterling	Sterling High School	DE	5
Toms River Regional	High School East, High School North, & High School South	DE	17
West Deptford Twp	West Deptford High School	DE	5
Westampton	Rancocas Valley Regional High School	DE	8
Bergenfield	Bergenfield High School	FG	5

Table 3.3 (continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Bordentown Regional	Bordentown Regional High School	FG	3
Cinnaminson Twp	Cinnaminson High School	FG	4
Hoboken City	Hoboken High School	FG	3
Hopatcong	Hopatcong High School	FG	4
Little Falls Twp	Passaic Valley Regional High School	FG	6
Mantoloking	Point Pleasant Beach High School	FG	2
Middlesex Boro	Middlesex High School	FG	3
Ocean Twp (Monmouth)	Ocean Township High School	FG	5
Ocean Twp (Ocean)	Southern Regional High School	FG	9
Old Bridge Twp	Old Bridge High School	FG	12
Pompton Lakes Boro	Pompton Lakes High School	FG	4
Sea Bright Boro	Shore Regional High School	FG	3
South Plainfield Boro	South Plainfield High School	FG	4
Totowa Boro	Passaic Valley Regional High School	FG	6
Warren Hills	Warren Hills Regional High School	FG	5
Washington Twp (Gloucester)	Washington Township High School	FG	11
West Amwell Twp	South Hunterdon Regional High School	FG	2
Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional	Woodstown High School	FG	4

Note. *DFG rating is based off of 2000 Decennial Census

Table 3.4 describes the districts with DFG scores from G-I. The table describes each district including the DFG scores, the high school that students attend, and how many guidance counselors the school has.

Table 3.4

School Districts Used for Data Collection with G-I DFG Rating

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Barrington Boro	Haddon Heights High School	GH	4
Delaware Valley Regional	Delaware Valley Regional High School	GH	5
Emerson Boro	Emerson Junior-Senior High School	GH	2
Freehold Twp	Freehold Township High School	GH	9
Frenchtown Boro	Delaware Valley Regional High School	GH	5
Hanover Park	Hanover Park High School	GH	4
Hanover Twp	Whippany Park High School	GH	4
Harrison Twp	Clearview Regional High School District	GH	6
Kingwood Twp	Delaware Valley Regional High School	GH	5
Lawrence Twp	Lawrence High School	GH	4
Leonia Boro	Leonia High School	GH	3
Manasquan Boro	Manasquan High School	GH	5
Medford Twp	Shawnee High School	GH	7
Milford Boro	Delaware Valley Regional High School	GH	5
Millstone	Allentown High School	GH	5
Monmouth Regional	Monmouth Regional High School District	GH	5
Netcong	Lenape Valley Regional High School	GH	4
Piscataway Twp	Piscataway High School	GH	11
Roosevelt Boro	East Windsor Regional High School	GH	2
Rutherford Boro	Rutherford High School	GH	4
South Belmar	Manasquan High School	GH	5
Spring Lake Heights Boro	Manasquan High School	GH	5

Table 3.4 (continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
Voorhees Twp	Eastern Regional High School	GH	9
Alpine Boro	Tenaflly High School	I	7
Bedminster Twp	Bernards High School	I	4
East Amwell Twp	Hunterdon Central High School	I	16
Essex Fells Boro	West Essex Regional High School	I	6
Franklin Lakes Boro	Ramapo High School & Indian Hills High School	I	12
Glen Ridge Boro	Glen Ridge High School	I	3
Hampton Boro	Voorhees High School	I	6
Harding Township	Madison High School	I	4
Hillsborough Twp	Hillsborough High School	I	11
Hillsdale Boro	Pascack Valley High School	I	6
Lebanon Twp	North Hunterdon High School	I	8
Long Hill Twp	Watchung Hills Regional High School	I	10
North Caldwell Boro	West Essex Regional High School	I	6
Northern Valley Regional	Northern Valley Demarest & Northern Valley Old Tappan	I	13
Oakland Boro	Ramapo High School & Indian Hills High School	I	12
Pascack Valley Regional	Pascack Hills High School & Pascack Valley High School	I	10
Readington Twp	Hunterdon Central High School	I	16
Roseland Boro	West Essex Regional High School	I	6
South Brunswick Twp	South Brunswick High School	I	10
Summit City	Summit High School	I	8
Union Twp	North Hunterdon High School	I	8
Verona Boro	Verona High School	I	4
Washington Twp (Morris)	West Morris Central High School	I	6

Table 3.4 (continued)

<i>District</i>	<i>Attending High School</i>	<i>DFG*</i>	<i>Number of Guidance Counselors</i>
West Essex Regional	West Essex Regional High School	I	6
Bernards Twp	Ridge High School	J	9
Boonton Town	Mountain Lakes High School	J	6
Haddonfield Boro	Haddonfield Memorial High School	J	5
Rumson Boro	Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School	J	5
Upper Saddle River Boro	Northern Highlands Regional High School	J	6

Note. *DFG rating is based off of 2000 Decennial Census

Since the study focused on undergraduate admissions, community colleges were not included for this study because they generally have an open enrollment admissions practice. Medical schools were also not included since they award professional degrees. Lastly, only public high schools and institutions were studied since they are funded by the New Jersey government, and are similar in nature.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study was all high school guidance counselors and admission officers located in New Jersey. The sample for the study was a combination of a convenience sample, purposive sample, and random sampling of the high school guidance counselors from selected high schools in New Jersey, as well as admissions officers working for selected four-year institutions.

There are approximately 1,200 members of the NJACAC, the New Jersey Association for College Admission Counseling, which includes both guidance counselors

and admission professionals all from schools in New Jersey (“About NJACAC,” 2017). A sample size calculator was used to get the sample size, with a confidence level of 95% and 3% error rate. After reviewing public school websites and their guidance department webpages, approximately 600 guidance counselors were employed in 142 school districts, which only represents about 25% of public school districts in New Jersey. Thus, the sample size was 698, including 600 guidance counselors and 98 admissions counselors from the selected public four-year institutions. The desired sample size was 489 subjects, and would be made up of 420 guidance counselors, and 69 admission counselors, 70% of the sample, respectively. The more realistic sample size would be made up of 300 guidance counselors and 49 admissions counselors, 50% of the sample, respectively. More guidance counselors were included in data collection and since more public-school districts were included in the study compared to public four-year institutions: this represents the New Jersey education system with more public-school districts than public four-year institutions.

Both guidance counselors and admission officers were recruited through email. Email addresses were compiled through high school and institutional websites available publicly. The professionals were emailed an initial email on January 2nd, 2018 (Appendix B), followed by reminder emails (Appendix C) every week to those who have not responded to the survey; this is a feature on Qualtrics and the principal investigator and co-investigator did not know who had and had not answered.

Data Collection Instruments

Two separate surveys were developed; one to distribute to admission officers of the selected institutions (Appendix E) and one to distribute to guidance counselors of the

selected institutions (Appendix F). The surveys were developed through knowledge of the database, mainly looking at Getler's (2007) instruments for guidance recommendation. Drafts of the survey were distributed to guidance counselors and admission officers to test validity and reliability, as well as higher education professionals. The professionals looked at the drafts and gave feedback on content, grammar, and comprehension to establish face validity. A Cronbach Alpha was calculated through SPSS after data collection was complete to determine the reliability of the Likert-scale portion of the survey. After running the Cronbach Alpha test for the Likert-scale section, the Alpha coefficient was .0588. This is a low internal reliability, making the survey only slightly reliable; however, this is likely due to a small sample size and a low number of items on the survey.

Two different surveys were distributed, one with wording suited towards admission officers (Appendix E), and the other with wording relevant towards guidance counselors (Appendix F). The survey used consisted of three sections: demographics, Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions. The first section asked about the subjects' background, including educational and employment background. The second section used a Likert-scale format designed to probe subjects to choose 1-5, not important to most important, on their opinion of how important each of the selected admission criteria are for a high school senior to be accepted into a four-year institution.

The last section was two open-ended questions, the first question asking subjects to list their opinion on the two most important criteria. The second open-ended question asked to see if there were any differences between the opinion on the most important admission criteria and which one best predicts academic success based on contradictions

of previous research. Both open-ended questions had drop down menus on Qualtrics to make data analysis easier. Guidance counselors and admission officers answered the open-ended questions by choosing their answer from a given list.

Alternate consent was used for subjects. Since it was not possible to receive signatures from each subject, the individuals who voluntarily complete the survey consented to an alternative consent (Appendix D), located before the survey began.

Data Collection Procedures

Before any data were collected, the Institutional Review Board application was completed and approved. Following approval on November 27th, 2017 from Rowan University's Institutional Review board (Appendix A), data collection began.

A convenience sample was used to select public high schools used in the study. Since District Factor Grouping (DFG) was a variable in the study, all public-school districts in New Jersey were sorted into three groups: A-C, D-F, and G-I. After being sorted, 25% of each group was selected using a random number generator. Forty-five districts were chosen for both the A-C and D-F group, and 52 districts were chosen for the G-I group. Four-year colleges were chosen based on similarity; each of the institutions are four-year public schools located in New Jersey with similar missions. A contact list of guidance counselors and admission officers was compiled through high school and institutional websites. Emails addresses for data collection was found through these websites.

The survey items were formatted and designed using Qualtrics, an online survey development program, which collects and organizes data and results. The surveys were distributed via email to the selected admission officers and guidance counselors from the

participating schools. The emails included an explanation of the study, as well as a link to complete the survey (Appendix B; Appendix C). The email addresses of the subjects were found on both institutional websites and school district websites.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and Microsoft Excel. Data from incomplete surveys were not used; only finished surveys were included in data analysis. Incomplete surveys were defined as surveys that were less than 50% complete, meaning the subjects had to complete at least nine questions. Seventeen surveys were removed from data analysis due to incompleteness. After data collection was complete, all data were exported from Qualtrics into SPSS for analysis, and all identifying information were removed once exported. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Independent samples *t*-tests were also used to look for significant similarities and differences between the means of the two subject groups. Since the open-ended section of the survey had drop downs of specific choices for subjects to select, data were analyzed by numbering each of the possible responses, and looking at frequencies and percentages of each chosen response.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Samples: Guidance Counselors and Admission Officers

This quantitative study looked at two different groups: high school guidance counselors and admission counselors. The guidance counselors were employed at public high schools across the state of New Jersey. The admission officers were employed in public four-year institutions with titles ranging from Admission Officer to Director of Admissions.

Table 4.1 contains demographic information on the guidance counselors surveyed, including gender, education level, and questions about their length of employment. These demographics may suggest the varying knowledge level of college admission based on their employment and education. Surveys were emailed to 648 guidance counselors who worked in approximately 142 public school districts throughout New Jersey. After distributing the survey to the guidance counselors, 35 emails failed, 10 bounced back, and five emails were duplicate. Throughout the data collection process, some subjects emailed to let me know they did not fit in to the sample profile; 12 guidance counselors were removed from the sample size. Incomplete surveys were defined as surveys which had less than 50% of questions answered. There were 15 surveys also removed from the sample size and analysis due to being incomplete. A total of 232 responses were collected for a response rate of 41%.

Table 4.1

Demographics of Guidance Counselors (N=232)

Subjects	<i>f</i>	%
Sex*		
Male	60	25.9
Female	171	73.7
Other	0	0
Age		
Under 30	20	8.6
30-39	72	31
40-49	73	31.5
50+	67	28.9
Education		
High School/GED	0	0
Some college	0	0
Bachelor's Degree	0	0
Master's Degree	225	97
Doctoral Degree	7	3
Years Worked at Current School/District		
Less than 5	56	24.1
5-10	54	23.3
11-15	52	22.4
Over 15	70	30.2
Years in Current Position		
Less than one	12	5.2
1-3	38	16.4
4-5	19	8.2
Over 5	163	70.3

Note. *Missing=1

Table 4.2 contains demographic information on the admission officers surveyed, including the same demographic information from the guidance counselor survey. These demographics may suggest the varying knowledge levels of college admission subjects based on their length of employment and years in their current position. A total of 98 admission officers email addresses were collected from nine institutions. All emails to

admission officers went through. All employees who received the email had the title of Admission Officer or higher. Throughout the data collection process, some subjects emailed to let me know they did not fit in to the sample profile; three admission officers were removed from the sample size. Incomplete surveys were defined as surveys which had less than 50% of questions answered. There were two surveys also removed from the sample size and analysis due to being incomplete. A total of 47 responses were recorded for a response rate of 51%.

Table 4.2

Demographics of Admission Officers (N=47)

Subjects	<i>f</i>	%
Sex		
Male	20	42.6
Female	26	55.3
Other	1	2.1
Age		
Under 30	18	38.3
30-39	14	29.8
40-49	8	17
50+	7	14.9
Education		
High School/GED	0	0
Some college	1	2.1
Bachelor's Degree	16	34
Master's Degree	27	57.4
Doctoral Degree	3	6.4
Years Worked at Current School/District		
Less than 5	26	55.3
5-10	3	6.4
11-15	9	19.1
Over 15	9	19.1

Table 4.2 (continued)

Subjects	<i>f</i>	%
Years in Current Position		
Less than one	10	21.3
1-3	18	38.3
4-5	6	12.8
Over 5	13	27.7

Analysis of the Data

Research question 1. What are the most important admission criteria according to selected admission officers and guidance counselors in New Jersey?

Table 4.3 depicts the guidance counselors' attitudes towards the importance of the admission criteria selected for this study. Items are arranged from most to least important using mean scores. Results indicate that guidance counselors rated the most important criteria (62.9%) was course load and transcript, while the least important criteria (35%) was District Factor Grouping.

The three most important criteria to guidance counselors were course load and transcript, HSGPA, and SAT and ACT scores with means of 4.57, 4.45, and 3.87, respectively. For both course load and transcript and HSGPA, guidance counselors mainly responded with "Very Important" and "Most Important" with more choosing "Most Important." Guidance counselors predominately answered with "Less Important" or "Important" when responding to SAT and ACT scores with more indicating "Important."

The three least important criteria to guidance counselors were interviews, letters of recommendation, and DFG. The means of these three criteria were 3.2, 3.09, and 2.57, respectively. For both interviews and letters of recommendation, guidance counselors

mainly responded with “Important” or “Very Important” with more responding “Important.” Guidance counselors predominately answered with “Less Important” and “Important” when responding to DFG with more indicating “Important.” It is important to note that 10 guidance counselors did not respond to the question asking about DFG. This may be due to lack of knowledge behind what the DFG is. This also may have influenced their attitude towards importance.

Table 4.3

Guidance Counselors' Attitudes Towards Admission Criteria (N=232)
(1=Not Important, 2=Less Important, 3= Important, 4=Very Important, 5=Most Important)

Criteria	Not Important		Less Important		Important		Very Important		Most Important	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Course Load and Transcript <i>M=4.57 SD=.634</i> Missing=1	1	0.4	1	0.4	9	3.9	74	31.9	146	62.9
High School GPA <i>M=4.45 SD=.636</i>			2	0.9	12	5.2	97	41.8	121	52.2
SAT/ACT Scores <i>M=3.87 SD=.773</i> Missing=1			10	4.3	55	23.7	120	51.7	46	19.8
Personal Essay <i>M=3.59 SD=.838</i>	3	1.3	15	6.5	85	36.6	100	43.1	29	12.5
Extra-curricular activities <i>M=3.54 SD=.744</i> Missing=1			18	7.8	87	37.5	109	47	17	7.3
High School Class Rank <i>M=3.35 SD=1.12</i> Missing=1	15	6.5	44	19	47	20.3	96	41.4	29	12.5

Table 4.3 (continued)

Criteria	Not Important		Less Important		Important		Very Important		Most Important	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Interview <i>M</i> =3.2 <i>SD</i> =1.041 Missing=2	10	4.3	51	22	78	33.6	66	28.4	25	10.8
Letters of Recommendation <i>M</i> =3.09 <i>SD</i> =.924	9	3.9	49	21.1	99	42.7	62	26.7	13	5.6
District Factor Grouping <i>M</i> =2.57 <i>SD</i> =.962 Missing=10	35	15.1	62	26.7	93	40.1	28	12.1	4	1.7

Table 4.4 depicts the admission officers' attitudes towards the importance of the admission criteria selected for this study. Items are arranged from most to least important using mean scores. The results indicate HSGPA is the most important (68.1%) to admission officers, while the least important (34%) was District Factor Grouping.

The three most important criteria to admission officers are HSGPA, Course load and transcript, and SAT and ACT scores. HSGPA and course load and transcript had means of 4.6 and 4.23, respectively, indicating that the admission professionals mainly responded with "Very Important" or "Most Important," with more answering "Most Important." SAT and ACT scores had a mean of 3.36, indicating that admission officers mainly responded with "Important" or "Very Important" with more answering with "Important."

The three least important criteria to admission officers are letters of recommendation, interviews, and DFG. The means of these three criteria were 2.89, 2.55, and 2.02, respectively. For both letters of recommendation and interviews, admission

officers responded mainly with “Less Important” or “Important” with more responding with “Important.” Admission officers predominately answered with “Not Important” or “Less Important” when responding to DFG with an even number, sixteen, indicating each of these responses.

Table 4.4

Admission Officers' Attitudes Towards Admission Criteria (N=47)
(1=Not Important, 2=Less Important, 3= Important, 4=Very Important, 5=Most Important)

Criteria	Not Important		Less Important		Important		Very Important		Most Important	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
High School GPA <i>M=4.6 SD=.742</i>	1	2.1			1	2.1	13	27.7	32	68.1
Course Load and Transcript <i>M=4.23 SD=.937</i>	1	2.1	1	2.1	7	14.9	15	31.9	23	48.9
SAT/ACT Scores <i>M=3.36 SD=1.031</i>	4	8.5	2	4.3	19	40.4	17	36.2	5	10.6
Extra-curricular activities <i>M=3.21 SD=.954</i>	2	4.3	7	14.9	21	44.7	13	27.7	4	8.5
Personal Essay <i>M=2.96 SD=.955</i>	2	4.3	13	27.7	20	42.6	9	19.1	3	6.4
High School Class Rank <i>M=2.93 SD=1.237</i> Missing=1	6	12.8	12	25.5	13	27.7	9	19.1	6	12.8
Letters of Recommendation <i>M=2.89 SD=.961</i>	1	2.1	17	36.2	19	40.4	6	12.8	4	8.5
Interview <i>M=2.55 SD=1.23</i>	12	25.5	11	23.4	13	27.7	8	17	3	6.4

Table 4.4 (continued)

Criteria	Not Important		Less Important		Important		Very Important		Most Important	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
District Factor Grouping <i>M</i> =2.02 <i>SD</i> =.954 Missing=1	16	34	16	34	12	25.5	1	2.1	1	2.1

Research question 2. What similarities or differences are found between these two groups and their attitudes towards current college requirements?

Table 4.5 depicts the means and standard deviations of the importance of admission criteria between guidance counselors and admission officers. An independent-samples *t*-test was used to compare the mean scores of importance of each of the admission criteria between guidance counselors and admission officers. Significant differences of means were found between the subject groups and their response towards SAT and ACT scores, high school class rank, extra-curricular activities, personal essays, interviews, DFG, and course load and transcript; no significance was found in the means of HSGPA and letters of recommendation. The means of guidance counselors were significantly higher than admission officers for all significant comparisons.

Table 4.5

Importance of Admission Criteria Means for Guidance Counselors and Admission Officers

	Position		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Guidance Counselors	Admission Officers		
SAT/ACT Scores	3.87 (.773)	3.36 (1.03)	3.9**	276
High School Class Rank	3.35 (1.12)	2.93 (1.24)	2.24*	275
Extra-curricular Activities	3.54 (.744)	3.21 (.954)	2.62**	276
Personal Essays	3.59 (.838)	2.96 (.955)	4.61**	277
Interviews	3.2 (1.04)	2.55 (1.23)	3.73**	275
DFG	2.57 (.962)	2.02 (.954)	3.51**	266
Course Load and Transcript	4.57 (.634)	4.23 (.937)	3.04**	276

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Research question 3. Do the subjects' attitudes towards the chosen admission criteria correlate to the literature on the predictability of student academic success?

Table 4.6 shows the frequencies and percentages to the answer of the question "Have you read any past or current research relating to SAT scores and predictability of academic success?" Majority of the guidance counselors and admission officers have read some literature relating to SAT scores and the predictability of student academic success.

Table 4.6

Read Any Past/Current SAT Research (N=279)

Response	Position	
	Guidance Counselors	Admission Officers
Yes	193 (83.2%)	31 (66%)
No	29 (12.5%)	14 (29.8%)
Unsure	10 (4.3%)	2 (4.3%)

Table 4.7 shows the frequencies and percentages of both subject groups answer to the question “Out of the criteria listed, which one criterion best predicts academic success?” Guidance counselors indicated that course load and transcript best predict academic success (54.3%), while admission officers indicated that HSGPA best predicts academic success (44.7%).

Table 4.7

Belief of Which Criterion Predicts Academic Success (N=279)

Admission Criteria	Position	
	Guidance Counselors*	Admission Officers**
SAT/ACT Scores	10 (4.3%)	4 (8.5%)
High School GPA	76 (32.8%)	21 (44.7%)
High School Class Rank	4 (1.7%)	0 (0%)
Extra-curricular Activities	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)
Personal Essay	3 (1.3%)	1 (2.1%)
Letters of Recommendation	1 (0.4%)	0 (0%)
Interviews	0 (0%)	1 (2.1%)
District Factor Grouping	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Course load and Transcript	126 (54.3%)	17 (36.2%)

Note. *Missing= 11, **Missing=3

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This thesis set out to investigate the attitudes of importance towards specific admission criteria from admission officers and guidance counselors located throughout New Jersey. The admission criteria used were defined as both quantitative and qualitative: SAT and ACT scores, HSGPA, high school class rank, extra-curricular activities, personal essays, letters of recommendation, interviews, DFG, and course load and transcript. Guidance counselors from approximately 142 public school districts were emailed surveys, as well as admission officers from nine public four-year institutions in New Jersey. All subjects were surveyed during the spring 2018 semester.

Two separate surveys were developed; one to distribute to admission officers of the selected institutions (Appendix E) and one to distribute to guidance counselors of the selected institutions (Appendix F). The surveys were formatted and collected using the Qualtrics software on demographics, importance of nine number of different admissions criteria using a Likert-scale, the subjects' opinions on the two most important criteria, and the criterion they believe best predicts academic success. After data collection was complete, SPSS was used to analyze the data for frequencies, percentages, and means. A total of 232 guidance counselors and 47 admission officers responded to the survey, yielding response rates of 41% and 51%, respectively.

Discussion of the Findings

Research question 1. What are the most important admission criteria according to selected admission officers and guidance counselors in New Jersey?

Both guidance counselors and admission officers responded with SAT and ACT scores, course load and transcript, and high school GPA as being the three most important admission criteria for a high school senior to be accepted into a four-year institution. While the two subject groups agreed generally on the three most important criteria, guidance counselors reported that each of these criteria, individually, were more important than what admission officers indicated. Because of this difference, it can be concluded that there is a disconnect between guidance counselors and admission officers on what are the most important admission criteria and how important these criteria are for high school students in the application and admission process.

NACAC'S *Admission Trends Survey* from fall 2015, determined that the criteria used most in admission decisions were HSGPA, standardized test score, and strength of curriculum, all of which admissions officers and guidance counselors indicated are most important (NACAC, 2016). Even though there is a disconnect on the level of importance between the two subject groups, they both indicated the same most important criteria that align with the *Admission Trends Survey*.

This disconnect between guidance counselors and admission officers can negatively affect a student's college application process. Research suggests that there needs to be strong communication between admission officers and guidance counselors so guidance counselors can give their students the most up-to-date information to their students about college admissions (Gaitlin, 1997; Ishop, 2008). The results of this study indicate that guidance counselors lack knowledge of the current practices of college admissions, which is a key component of their job, and continues to be an area of concern (Gaitlin, 1997; NACAC, 2000; Richmond, 2011).

Research question 2. What similarities or differences are found between these two groups and their attitudes towards current college requirements?

When first looking at the data collected, it seemed as if both guidance counselors and admission officers responded similarly when asked about the importance of each admission criteria. However, after closer analysis, the two subject groups varied significantly.

As previously discussed, guidance counselors and admission officers generally responded with the same criteria for what criteria were most important. Conversely, the three least important criteria to both subject groups were DFG, interviews, and letters of recommendation. Similar to the most important criteria, guidance counselors responded with higher importance to each of the least important criteria than admission officers. Because of this difference again, it can be concluded that there is a disconnect between guidance counselors and admission officers on what are the least important admission criteria and how little importance these criteria have for high school students in the application and admission process. What varied was how important these criteria were for high school students. Guidance counselors generally responded higher on the Likert-scale, meaning they believed the criteria were more important than admission officers.

DFG, interviews, and letters of recommendation were all defined as qualitative criteria in this thesis. The literature discussed in Chapter II revealed that quantitative criteria seemed to be favored over qualitative requirements. The previous findings suggested that quantitative criteria were most important to being accepted into college, which is consistent with these subjects believing that qualitative criteria are not as important (Getler, 2007; NACAC, 2016). Usually, qualitative criteria, like course load

and transcript, are not taken into consideration as strongly as quantitative criteria, like SAT and ACT and HSGPA, when admissions offices review an application; they are normally given more consideration when the application is reviewed holistically, taking both quantitative and qualitative criteria from the applicant into consideration (Carlock, 2014; Gilroy, 2007; Hornberger, 2010; Richmond, 2011). However, both subject groups indicated a strong importance for course load and transcript.

Research question 3. Do the subjects' attitudes towards the chosen admission criteria correlate to the literature on the predictability of student academic success?

As Chapter II discussed, there is an abundance of literature on the predictability of admission criteria used in this study, mainly relating to SAT and ACT scores (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; Zwick, 2007a). Chapter II also noted that the research continues to differ on what are the best predictors of college success (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; Getler, 2007; Zwick, 2007a). Therefore, I made sure to ask subjects if they have read any research, specifically on the SAT, since standardized test scores are so prominent in admissions, but lack predictability of academic success once a student is in college.

The results found that 83.2% of guidance counselors and 66% of admission officers have read past or current research relating to SAT scores and predictability of academic success SAT research. When asked what criterion best predicts academic success, guidance counselors chose course load and transcript (54.3%), and admission officers chose HSGPA (44.7%). The literature reveals that the strength of curriculum may be best at predicting academic success (Betts, 2011; NACAC, 2016). It is possible that reading past or current research on the predictability of SAT scores could have possibly influenced the subjects' decisions on what criterion best predicts academic success.

When asked which criterion best predicts academic success, SAT and ACT scores were not chosen as much as GPA and course load and transcript. These results are consistent with findings on predictability of academic success; HSGPA and course load and transcript are more likely to determine academic success through a student's FYGPA compared to standardized test scores, like the SAT and ACT (Betts, 2011; Carlock, 2014; McGinty, 2004).

Conclusions

Data from this study suggest that the three most important criteria for students to be accepted into a higher education institution are SAT and ACT scores, HSGPA, and course load and transcript; analysis suggests that guidance counselors and admission officers agree on these three being the most important, but what varies between the two subject groups is the level of importance. Guidance counselors responded higher on the Likert-scale than admission officers, concluding that the admission criteria were more important to them than to admission officers.

It is interesting to note some of the characteristics of the sample. All guidance counselors held a Master's degree or higher, while admission officers held Bachelor's or higher. The guidance counselor and admission officer subject groups were made up of 74% and 55% females, respectively. Fifty-five percent of admission officers were at their current institution for under five years, while guidance counselors responded almost evenly to how long they have been working in their current school district. Lastly, 70% of guidance counselors have held their current position for over five years, while majority of admission officers (38%) have held their current position for one to three years.

This study provides considerable insight into the attitudes of admission criteria from guidance counselors and admission officers in New Jersey. A clear disconnect was discovered between the two subject groups on the importance of each of the admission criteria. This disconnect could have an effect on high school students applying to college; if guidance counselors believe that some of these criteria are extremely important, while admission officers believe they are slightly important, guidance counselors may be putting more emphasis on admission criteria that are not as important for a student to be accepted into a four-year institution.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on my findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommendations for practice of the current admissions process in New Jersey:

1. Share results with guidance counselors and admissions officers across New Jersey to inform them of the discrepancies found through the research.
2. Encourage more communication from admission officers to guidance counselors about what criteria are most important to being accepted into their institution.
3. Strengthen the relationships between local admissions officers and guidance counselors to allow for students to have an easier application process.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon my findings and conclusions of the study, the following are recommendation for further research into the current admissions process:

1. Future studies should involve a larger sample to generalize the results to both populations to use the data across the country.

2. Vary the locations of the high schools and institutions studied to retrieve data from a variety of demographics, school systems, institution types, and location in the state.
3. Survey private institutions instead of only public to see if results vary between institution types
4. Investigate the attitudes of the subject groups in a state other than New Jersey
5. Include students as a subject group to discover what attitudes students have towards the admission criteria and to see if their perceptions line up with the admissions officers and guidance counselors.
6. Utilize a qualitative research design to investigate why these admission criteria are most important to these subject groups and see if their opinions vary from their school or institution.

References

- About NJACAC*. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.njacac.org/about-njacac/>
- ACT, Inc. (2016). ACT profile report: National. Graduating class 2016. Retrieved from https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/P_99_999999_N_S_00_AT-GCPR_National.pdf
- Admission Interview Tips*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/guidance/applications/college-interviews>
- Atkinson, R. (2001, February). *Standardized tests and access to American universities*. Paper presented at the Eighty-third Annual Meeting of American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.
- Beard, J., & Marini, J. P. (2015). *Validity of the SAT for Predicting First-Year Grades: 2012 SAT Validity Sample* (College Board Research Report No. 2015-2). New York: The College Board.
- Betts Jr., A. L. (2011). *Looking to the future: An examination of the potential for SAT optional admissions*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Rowan Digital Works.
- Carlock, M. A. (2014). *The use of the SAT in college admissions decisions*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Class of 2016 SAT results*. (2016). Retrieved from <https://reports.collegeboard.org/sat-suiteprogram-results/class-of-2016-results>
- Clinedinst, M., Koranteng, A., & Nicola, T. (2015). *2015 State of college admission*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/publications/research/2015soca.pdf>
- Cohn, E., Cohn, S., Balch, D. C., Bradley Jr., J. (2004). Determinants of undergraduate GPAs: SAT scores, high-school GPA and high-school rank. *Economics of Education Review*, 23(6), 577-586.
- District Factor Groups (DFG) for School Districts*. (2000). Retrieved from <http://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/rda/dfg.shtml>
- Gaitlin, L. P. (1997). *Comparing secondary school counselors' and college admission officials' perceptions of selected college admissions criteria*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Getler, L. A. (2007). *Accepted or denial: What matters most in college admissions?* (Master's Thesis). Retrieved from Rowan Digital Works.

- Gilroy, M. (2007). Colleges making SAT optional as admissions requirement. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, 73(4), 35-39.
- Help and FAQ's*. (2017). Retrieved from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/help.html#contactus>
- Hornberger, R. (2010). *Predictors of academic success for conditionally admitted first time freshmen at a four-year public university*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Ishop, K. B. (2008). *The college application essay: just tell me what to write and I'll write it*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Kronholz, J. (2012). Academic values of non-academics: The case for keeping extracurriculars. *Education Next*, 12(Winter 2012), 9-14.
- Lawhorn, B. (2008). Extracurricular activities: The afterschool connection. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, 52(4), 16-21.
- Letukas, L. (2015). *Nine facts about the SAT that might surprise you*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED562751.pdf>
- Martin, C. J. (2015). *Student involvement in extracurricular activities and post-secondary education placement*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- McGinty, S. M. (2004). *The college application essay: Revised edition*. New York: College Board.
- Murphy, S. C., Klieger, D. M., Borneman, M. J., & Kuncel, N. R. (2009). The predictive power of personal statements in admissions: A meta-analysis and cautionary tale. *College and University*, 84(4), 83-86.
- Nack, D. L. & Townsend, M. M. (2007). *Are high school GPA, rank in high school graduating class or ACT scores adequate predictors of college freshmen success?* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- National Association for College Admission Counseling. (2000). *Statement on Counselor Competencies*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/statement-of-principles-of-good-practice/counselorcompetencies.pdf>

- National Association for College Admission Counseling. (1990). *Statement on precollege guidance and counseling and the role of the school counselor*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacacnet.org/globalassets/documents/advocacy-and-ethics/statement-ofprinciples-of-good-practice/roleofschlcounsnew.pdf>
- National Association for College Admission Counseling. (2016). *Use of predictive validity studies to inform admission practices*. Retrieved from <https://www.nacacnet.org/news--publications/Research/report-validity-studies/>
- Richmond, L. (2011). *Students' college preparation level based on quality factors of the high school attended*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Shahani, C., Dipboye, R. L., & Gehrlein, T. M. (1991). The incremental contribution of an interview to college admissions. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 51(4), 1049-1061.
- Shaw, E. J., Marini, J.P., Beard, J., Shmueli, D., Young, L., & Ng, H. (2016). *The redesigned SAT pilot predictive validity study: A first look* (College Board Research Report No. 2016-1). New York: The College Board.
- Tremblay, C. W. (2013). Agents of change: Roles, barriers, and opportunities for college admissions professionals and high school counselors. *College and University*, 88(3), 12-27.
- Zwick, R. (2007a). College admissions in twenty-first-century America: The roles of grades, tests, and games of chance. *Harvard Educational Review*. 77(4), 419-429.
- Zwick, R. (2007b). College admission testing. *National Association for College Admission Counseling*, 1-44.
- Zwick, R. (2013). *Disentangling the role of high school grades, SAT scores, and SES in predicting college achievement*. (Research Report No. RR-13-09). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval



** This is an auto-generated email. Please do not reply to this email message.
The originating e-mail account is not monitored.
If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office **

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111
IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman
IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy
Effective Date:

eIRB Notice of Approval

STUDY PROFILE

Study ID: Pro2017001917

Title: Making College Admission Count: The Importance of Admission Criteria in the Current Undergraduate Admission Process, A Thesis

Principal Investigator:	Burton Sisco	Study Coordinator:	None
Co-Investigator(s):	Amanda Tessler	Other Study Staff:	There are no items to display
Sponsor:	Department Funded	Approval Cycle:	Not Applicable
Risk Determination:	Minimal Risk	Device Determination:	Not Applicable

Review Type:	Exempt	Exempt Category:	2
Subjects:	291		

CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

Submission Type:	Research Protocol/Study	Submission Status:	Approved
Approval Date:	11/27/2017	Expiration Date:	
Pregnancy Code:	No Pregnant Women as Subjects	Pediatric Code:	No Children As Subjects
Prisoner Code:	No Prisoners As Subjects		

Protocol:	Surveys Alternate Consent Protocol Email to Subjects	Consent:	There are no items to display	Recruitment Materials:	Emails to Subjects
-----------	---	----------	-------------------------------	------------------------	--------------------

* Study Performance Sites:

Glassboro Campus

201 Mullica Hill Road Glassboro, New Jersey 08028

Appendix B

Initial Email to Potential Subjects

Good afternoon,

My name is Amanda Tessler and I am a graduate student at Rowan University. As part of a requirement for my M.A. in Higher Education Administration, I am conducting a thesis that explores the attitudes of college admission requirements between admission officers and guidance counselors in New Jersey.

As higher education continues to change, the common question from potential students is, “What are the most important qualifications for a student to be accepted into four-year institutions?” This study hopes to discover what these criteria are to both guidance counselors and admission officers in the local area.

Since you fit into one of these positions I am researching, I am asking you to help me discover the differences and similarities in attitudes of college admission requirements by taking a quick survey. The survey will take no more than ten minutes to complete with no identifying information being asked and all responses being kept confidential. By taking your time to complete this survey, you will be helping to clear up any misconceptions about college admission requirements to current and future high school seniors.

Thank you in advanced for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at tessle05@students.rowan.edu or my thesis chair, Dr. Burton Sisco, at sisco@rowan.edu.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey Link]

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,
Amanda Tessler
M.A. Higher Education Administration
Rowan University, 2018

Appendix C

Reminder Email to Potential Subjects

Good Morning,

My name is Amanda Tessler and I am a graduate student at Rowan University. Last week, I emailed you a survey seeking information on your opinions of college admission criteria for my graduate thesis requirement. I understand that this is a busy time for you, but it's very important for your opinions to be included in this study. The link for the survey is in this email for your convenience.

The survey will take no more than ten minutes to complete with no identifying information being asked and all responses being kept confidential. By taking your time to complete this survey, you will be helping to clear up any misconceptions about college admission requirements to current and future high school seniors.

Thank you in advanced for your participation. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at tessle05@students.rowan.edu or my thesis chair, Dr. Burton Sisco, at sisco@rowan.edu.

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Survey Link]

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[Survey Link]

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:

[Unsubscribe Link]

Thank you again for your participation.

Sincerely,
Amanda Tessler
M.A. Higher Education Administration
Rowan University, 2018

Appendix D

Online Alternate Consent

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Making College Admission Count: The Importance of Admission Criteria in the Current Undergraduate Admission Process. You are included in this survey because you are either an admissions professional at a New Jersey institution or a high school guidance counselor in New Jersey. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be approximately 300.

The survey may take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. Data collection for this survey is expected to last approximately two months.

The purpose of this research study is to discover and compare the attitudes of various college admission criteria between high school guidance counselors and college admission officers. The study seeks to focus on what is most important for being accepted into an undergraduate program at a four-year institution in New Jersey, as well as discovering the similarities and differences between attitudes of guidance counselors and admission officers. Approximately 300 professionals from New Jersey will be contacted for participation in this study.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help to understand the current college admission process, according to high school guidance counselors and college admission officers, and help make the admission process easier to understand for high school students in New Jersey.

Your response will be kept confidential. I will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been analyzed, and the thesis is approved. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me or my thesis chair at the email addresses provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Please complete the checkbox below.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and have access to this survey. Place a check box here

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey

Researcher Contact Information:
Amanda Tessler
tessle05@students.rowan.edu
Rowan University

Burton Sisco, Ed.D
sisco@rowan.edu
Rowan University, Thesis Chair

Appendix E

Survey for Admission Officers

Section 1: Demographics

1. Sex

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. Age

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

3. Education

- High School/GED
- Some college
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

4. How long have you been working for your current institution?

- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- Over 15 years

5. How long have you been in your current position?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- Over 5 years

6. Have you read any past or current research relating to SAT scores and predictability of academic success?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Section 2: Admission Requirements

Please choose a number from 1-5 (not important to most important) for each of the following statements to indicate how important the following criteria are for high school seniors to being accepted into your institution.

1= Not important

2= Less important

3= Important

4= Very important

5= Most important

1. SAT/ACT scores:	1	2	3	4	5
2. High school GPA:	1	2	3	4	5
3. High school class rank:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Extra-curricular activities:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Personal Essay:	1	2	3	4	5
6. Letters of recommendation:	1	2	3	4	5
7. Interviews:	1	2	3	4	5
8. District Factor Grouping:	1	2	3	4	5
9. Course load and Transcript:	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Open-ended

1. Out of the criteria listed, which two are considered most important for a student to be accepted into your institution?

2. Out of the criteria listed, which one criterion best predicts academic success?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email tessle05@students.rowan.edu

Appendix F

Survey for Guidance Counselors

Section 1: Demographics

1. Sex

- Male
- Female
- Other

2. Age

- Under 30
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

3. Education

- High School/GED
- Some college
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree

4. How long have you been working for your current school/school district?

- Less than 5 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-15 years
- Over 15 years

5. How long have you been in your current position?

- Less than one year
- 1-3 years
- 4-5 years
- Over 5 years

6. Have you read any past or current research relating to SAT scores and predictability of academic success?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Section 2: Admission Requirements

Please choose a number from 1-5 (not important to most important) for each of the following statements to indicate how important the following criteria are for high school seniors to being accepted into a four-year institution.

1= Not important

2= Less important

3= Important

4= Very important

5= Most important

1. SAT/ACT scores:	1	2	3	4	5
2. High school GPA:	1	2	3	4	5
3. High school class rank:	1	2	3	4	5
4. Extra-curricular activities:	1	2	3	4	5
5. Personal Essay:	1	2	3	4	5
6. Letters of recommendation:	1	2	3	4	5
7. Interviews:	1	2	3	4	5
8. District Factor Grouping:	1	2	3	4	5
9. Course load and Transcript:	1	2	3	4	5

Section 3: Open-ended

1. Out of the criteria listed, which two are considered most important for a student to be accepted into a four-year institution?

2. Out of the criteria listed, which one criterion best predicts academic success?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email tessle05@students.rowan.edu.