

NACAC Releases 2023 Factors in College Admission Decisions Report



Toward the end of 2023, the National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) released an updated report called the “State of College Admissions” report. The results come from a wide-ranging survey that details how much weight colleges put on different factors in admissions decisions. Categories include things like grades, course rigor, extracurricular activities, essays, and much more.

The entire report is not available to the public, but they do provide a sample with overall results.

While this is not a “Holy Grail,” and there seems that there is nothing LESS scientific than college admissions decisions, these results do provide a nice little window into those admissions rooms.

Here are the 2023 results:

PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGES ATTRIBUTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE TO FACTORS IN ADMISSION DECISIONS: FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN, FALL 2023

	N	Considerable Importance	Moderate Importance	Limited Importance	No Importance
High school GPA in college prep courses	185	76.8	15.1	4.9	3.2
Total high school GPA (all courses)	185	74.1	18.9	5.4	1.6
Strength of high school curriculum	185	63.8	22.7	10.3	3.2
Positive character attributes	184	28.3	37.5	18.5	15.8
Essay or writing sample	185	18.9	37.3	26.5	17.3
Student’s interest in attending	185	15.7	27.6	25.4	31.4
Counselor recommendation	185	11.9	40.0	27.6	20.5
Teacher recommendation	185	10.8	40.5	28.1	20.5
Extracurricular activities	185	6.5	44.3	30.8	18.4
High school class rank	183	5.5	22.4	43.2	29.0
Admission test scores (ACT, SAT)	185	4.9	25.4	38.9	30.8
Portfolio	185	4.9	10.8	24.3	60.0
Interview	185	4.3	8.6	32.4	54.6
Work	185	2.2	30.8	40.0	27.0
State graduation exam scores	185	1.6	6.5	18.4	73.5
Subject test scores (AP, IB)	185	1.1	22.2	25.9	50.8

It's interesting to see the Top 5 Factors:

1. High school GPA in college prep courses
2. Total high school GPA (all courses)
3. Strength of high school curriculum
4. Positive character attributes
5. Essay or writing sample

The great news here is these are all factors that are, to some degree, under your control. The top 3 factors indicate that taking challenging courses, in which you can perform well, is very important. The #4 and #5 factors are also great to know because your personal statement essay provides an opportunity to showcase good writing that highlights your positive character attributes!

Knowledge is always power, so keep this information in the back of your mind as you go through high school and your college application and admissions journey.