
Debunking admissions myths

What do admission counselors REALLY look for on an application?

September 2026

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**Students need straight A's to
get into a UC school.**

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Straight A's does NOT guarantee admission to a UC campus

- Rigor is important! Is the student challenging themselves based on the available coursework?
- All campuses conduct a comprehensive application review, which includes both academic and non-academic factors.
- Selection criteria (including GPA) will depend on the UC campus and intended major.

How many extracurriculars do students need on their applications?

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Extracurriculars. Is there a right way?

- Quality over quantity
- No specific checklist (ex: 1 sports activity, 1 performing arts, 1 volunteer).
- Commitment over time to one activity that demonstrates passion is great!
- Unclear of interests? Exploring? That's ok too!

**Don't bother filling out the additional
comments box, admission
counselors never read it!**

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The additional comments box is a great tool!

- This is a free space in BINGO.
- This should NOT be a 5th PIQ. We will not consider that.
- If there is added context about the student that has not been mentioned anywhere else on the application, they may use this space to share.
- Anything from additional activities, challenges that have impacted their academics, etc.

The truth about “sob stories”

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“Sob stories”: A necessity or a hindrance?

- Admission counselors are empathetic.
- Students need to articulate **why** this challenging part of their lives is important to their growth as a young adult and student.
 - Without these details, the challenge itself is not going to add value into the overall application.
- Overcoming big challenges is NOT an admission requirement.
- We acknowledge any and all unique journeys that students may face.

**All UC campuses compare notes
on students & decide together
which schools students get into.**

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We can see which campuses students applied to, but that's it!

- Each UC campus is their own entity and has different selection criteria.
- Yield and enrollment goals are unique to each campus.
- It's a myth that if your student is admitted to certain campuses, they are automatically not admitted to others.
- We encourage students to apply broadly to improve their chances of admission to UC.

**Activities must be related to a
student's intended major to add
value**

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Activities and value

- Activities are valued for skills, growth, impact, leadership, and commitment.
- Students are not expected to have their career path fully figured out in high school.
- Employment, family responsibilities, caregiving, and community involvement are all valuable experiences, regardless of major.

**Having a family member who
attended a UC influences the
admission decision**

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Legacy status is not considered

- UC does not consider legacy status as part of the review process.
- Each applicant is evaluated independently through UC's comprehensive review process.
 - Focused on the individual applicant and their unique experiences and opportunities

UC campuses don't admit local students

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Local students

- UC campuses admit from their local regions, across CA, throughout the US, and around the world.
- Proximity to a campus does not determine admission outcomes.
- Applicants are evaluated within the context of their school and community, regardless of where they live.

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Questions?

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