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SESSION 4: GOING TO COLLEGE STARTS NOW: EXTRACURRICULAR INTERESTS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY # 4: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER— THE GREAT SORTING GAME

### *Opening Discussion:*

The Great Sorting Game engages students in an enjoyable mock-admissions simulation. The purpose is to help students understand the many factors that are weighted in admission decisions. The game should generate discussion that will summarize many of the issues presented so far.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **The Great Sorting Game**

### *Instructions:*

1. Instructions and game materials are in the pages that follow.





## THE GREAT SORTING GAME

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### *A PARTICIPATORY DEMONSTRATION OF HOW SELECTIVE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS WORKS (SORT OF)*

#### **Getting started with play:**

Find 9 volunteers to be admission candidates. Secure an additional volunteer to play the “Director of Admission.” It will be that person who reads the qualities and tells students whether to move up or down in the competition. Hand out the GPAs in RANDOM order and then instruct volunteers to organize themselves in GPA order from highest to lowest. (This is generally a couple of minutes of comedy relief because players have trouble getting organized. This is part of the fun.)

#### **Scenario of play:**

The group of non-volunteers is told that they are the Admission Committee from “Highly Prestigious University” (or you pick a better and funnier name). The committee is at the very end of the admission cycle and still has 9 great applicants from which it can only admit 3 students. All have very appealing qualities, but there is simply not enough room in the class for all 9. Before them they see the candidates. Point out that they are in standing in GPA order from highest to lowest. Also emphasize that all are great candidates and so the committee will have to decide based upon personal qualities and qualifications. Point out that, if the committee were to decide only on academics, the three with the highest GPAs would get in.

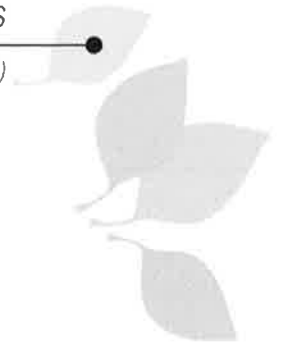
The personal qualities/qualifications are then read and the volunteers are asked to exchange places (move up and down in the order) based upon what is read. (One very important note to make this work: if more than one student is moving down at the same time, the lowest student must move first and visa versa—if more than one student is moving up, the highest student must move first.) You may choose to alter the qualities/qualifications and the weight given to each.

Stop after each quality read in order to discuss why this helped or hindered the candidate. As an example: you may ask, “why do you think it might not be helpful to declare your major as pre-med or psychology?” After reading the “Greek Major” quality, point out that many selective colleges have Classics Professors who are covered with cobwebs and are really hoping to get a few kids in their classes. Stop after the Early Decision qualification to discuss how this may play into a decision by a college. In this way, it is more than reading the qualities. It is a way to generate discussion.

#### **The ending:**

After all qualities have been read and candidates have been “sorted”, have the candidates turn their GPA sheets around to reveal the GPA to reveal to the audience. Read through the GPAs, pointing out the new order and note that the top three, new sorted, candidates are going to be admitted.

You might choose to have a small prize—like pieces of candy to thank the volunteers.



## THE GREAT SORTING GAME

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*Qualities, which are read, and places to move up and down in the line:*

1. IF YOU HAVE TAKEN AN EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG ACADEMIC PROGRAM +2
  
2. IF YOU PLAY THE OBOE OR VIOLA +1
  
3. IF YOU CLEARLY STATED THAT THIS COLLEGE WAS YOUR FIRST CHOICE BY MAKING AN EARLY DECISION APPLICATION AND COMMITMENT +2
  
4. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS PSYCHOLOGY OR PREMED -1
  
5. IF YOUR INTENDED MAJOR IS GREEK +2
  
6. IF YOU DO NOT KNOW ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS WELL AND HAD TROUBLE FINDING SOMEONE TO WRITE YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -2
  
7. IF, WHEN YOU WORD-PROCESSED YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY, YOU FORGOT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COLLEGE YOU WERE APPLYING TO, -4
  
8. IF YOU ARE A LEGACY +2
  
9. IF YOU DID NOT WRITE THE OPTIONAL ESSAY FOR YOUR COLLEGE APPLICATION -1
  
10. IF THE TOPIC OF YOUR COLLEGE ESSAY WAS "WHAT I LEARNED FROM PLAYING SPORTS" -1
  
11. IF YOU WROTE THE ESSAY OF THE YEAR—THE ONE THAT WAS PASSED AROUND THE ENTIRE ADMISSION OFFICE IT WAS SO REMARKABLE + 3
  
12. IF YOU PLAGERIZED AN AP AMERICAN HISTORY PAPER AND GOT CAUGHT—SIT DOWN, YOU'RE OUT OF THE COMPETITION ENTIRELY



## STEP-BY-STEP TO COLLEGE WORKSHOPS FOR STUDENTS

National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC)

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13. IF YOU WILL BE FIRST IN YOUR FAMILY TO ATTEND COLLEGE +2
14. IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN AN ENRICHING SUMMER PROGRAM BETWEEN YOUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEARS +2
15. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES -3
16. IF YOU HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A SIGNIFICANT COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT +1
17. IF YOU ARE AN EAGLE SCOUT +2
18. IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE +2, AND IF YOU ARE A VARSITY ATHLETE AND TOOK SECOND-PLACE AT REGIONALS IN YOUR SPORT MOVE UP ONE MORE (A TOTAL OF 3)
19. IF YOU GOT A "D" IN AN ACADEMIC COURSE AT THE END OF YOUR JUNIOR YEAR -3
20. IF YOU CAME TO THE COLLEGE INFORMATION SESSION AND INTRODUCED YOURSELF TO THE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE (AND IN THE CASE OF THE STUDENT WHO JUST GOT THE "D", EXPLAINED THE EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES) +1
21. IF YOU ARE A LEGAL RESIDENT OF IDAHO +3
22. IF YOU NEVER GAVE YOUR COUNSELOR ANY PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR USE IN WRITING YOUR COLLEGE RECOMMENDATION -1
23. IF YOUR LAST NAME IS TRUMP—THE NAME ON THE COLLEGE LIBRARY IS TRUMP—AND IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE, MOVE ALL THE WAY TO THE FRONT AND STAY THERE



# 4.0

- You did not write the optional essay for your college application
  - You have participated in no extracurricular activities
- You are a legal resident of Idaho

4.0

## 3.9

- Your intended major is Pre-Med
- You wrote your essay on “What I learned from playing sports”
- You participated in an enriching summer program between your junior and senior years

3.9





## 3.8

- You have taken an exceptionally strong academic program
  - Your intended major is psychology
- When you typed your college essay, you forgot to change the name of the college to which you were applying
- You plagiarized an AP American History paper and got caught

3.8

3.8

## 3.7

- You play the viola
- You do not know any of your teachers well and had trouble finding someone to write your college recommendation
- You did not write the optional essay for your college application
- You never gave your counselor any personal information for use in writing your college recommendation

3.7



## 3.6

- You clearly stated that this college was your first choice by making an early decision application and commitment
  - The topic of your college essay was “What I Learned from Playing Sports”
- You have been involved in a significant community service project or trip
- You attended the college information session at your high school and introduced yourself to the college representative

# 3.6



## 3.5

- You play the oboe
- You plan to major in Greek
  - You are a legacy
- You participated in an enriching summer program between your junior and senior years

3.5





## 3.4

- You are a varsity athlete
- You have taken an exceptionally strong academic program
- You will be the first in your family to attend college
- You have been involved in a significant community service project

# 3.4

## 3.3

- You wrote the essay of the year—the one that was passed around the entire admission office it was so remarkable
- You are a varsity athlete and took second-place at regional competition in your sport
- You got a “D” in an academic course at the end of your junior year
- You attended the college information session at your high school and introduced yourself to the college representative (and offered an explanation of your “D” grade)

# 3.3



## 3.2

- You are a legacy
- You are an Eagle Scout
- Your last name is Trump—the name on the library is Trump—and it's not a coincidence

3.2

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## WRAP-UP

### *Keep in Mind:*

Colleges are not looking for any one type of student. However, all schools look for an accomplished student who brings a lot to the table. While colleges search for truly well-rounded students, they do take into account that grades might not be as high for a student who is committed to many activities outside of the classroom, and vice versa. Students should continue to keep a record of all of the activities that they do outside of school and should also keep in mind how those activities have shaped who they are and will make them better candidates at their chosen colleges.

### *Homework:*

1. Instruct students that they will be writing a two-paragraph essay on "The Ideal Student."
2. In the first paragraph, the students are to pretend that they are a college admission counselor reviewing student applications. They should write what they are looking for in the ideal student. Remind students that admission counselors don't just look for good grades but take many things into account.
3. In the second paragraph, students should write how they ARE or CAN BECOME that ideal student. Here, students should focus on actions that they have or will take in the future.
4. Remind students that each paragraph should be 5 or more sentences.



