

Case Studies Exercise

In this exercise, you work for the Admission Office of a medium-sized American university that has a wide variety of academic programs and seeks students with lots of different talents.

Your assignment is to read four applications (on the next four pages) as if you are the college Admission Officer who is making a decision about whom to admit, waitlist, and deny for admission. Therefore, you should find the things that stand out to you in a positive or negative way, circle or highlight those things, and make notes about each candidate.

Ultimately, you will choose two of these candidates for admission, put one on the waitlist, and deny one.

If you are doing this case studies exercise as part of a group activity, be prepared to share your observations and your votes with the group.

Finally, remember that there is no singular “right answer” in this exercise. Like college admission staff, you’ll do the best you can with the information given. Some information is quantifiable and easy to compare, while other information is more subjective.

Allison (“Alli”) Backer

Personal Information

Age: 17

Gender: Female

Race: White, non-Hispanic

Permanent Residence: Portland, Oregon

Citizenship: USA

School: Lincoln High School (Public, Above Avg)

Family & Financial Information

Parent 1: Roy Backer, Accountant, Bachelor’s Degree from Portland State University

Parent 2: Mary Backer, Homemaker, Bachelor’s Degree from Portland State University

Parents Relationship Status: Married

Financial Aid Analysis: Will Need \$35K/year

Siblings: Brother David Backer, Age 23, Bachelor’s Degree from Willamette University

Academic Grades

Year	Curriculum	A’s	B’s	C’s	GPA	Notes
9 th	Standard	3	2	1	2.86	
10 th	Elevated	4	3	0	3.57	
11 th	3 AP Classes	3	3	2	3.36	Harder courses, lower grades
12 th	4 Courses in-progress, Challenging Curriculum, 3 AP’s and Spanish 4.					

Rank in Class

This school does not rank.

Test Scores

SAT: 560 English, 490 Math (1050 Total)

Recommendation Letters

Biology Teacher: “Super friendly. Social. Nice to have in class.”

Art Teacher: “One of my favorite students. Genuinely loves art. Liked by her peers.”

Counselor: “Always cheerful, positive, and popular. Dip in 11th grade because she was Class President.

Not continuing with Class President in 12th grade.”

Essay Topic

“I’m inspired by the American Painter, Mary Cassatt. There are so few famous painters who are women.”

Co-Curricular Activities

11th: Junior Class President. Did not run again in 12th grade.

11th and 12th: Founded School Feminist Club, 3 hours/week.

9th through 12th: Club Soccer, Goalie. Knee injury in 11th grade. May try out for college team as a walk-on.

11th and 12th: Baskin Robbins, clerk, 8 hours/week.

Other Information

Intended Major: Studio Art

Submitted a sample of a hand-drawn artwork which you would like to display in your office

Has read all of Jane Austin’s books

Brielle (“Bree”) Mathews

Personal Information

Age: 17
Gender: Female
Race: Bi-Racial White/Asian-American

Permanent Residence: Cincinnati, Ohio
Citizenship: USA
School: Hughes STEM School (Public, Magnet, Outstanding)

Family & Financial Information

Parent 1: Michael Mathews, Medical Doctor, M.D. The Ohio State University
Parent 2: Katherine Yang-Mathews (Deceased)
Parents Relationship Status: Mother died of cancer when she was 15, dad is single/widower
Financial Aid Analysis: No aid needed
Siblings: None

Academic Grades

Year	Curriculum	A's	B's	C's	GPA	Notes
9 th	Challenging	3	3	0	3.50	Includes Mandarin 1
10 th	3 AP Classes	1	3	2	3.00	Includes Mandarin 2 and Pre-Calculus
11 th	4 AP Classes	5	1	0	4.50	Includes Calculus
12 th	6 Courses in-progress, most challenging curriculum including Differential Equations.					

Rank in Class

#33 of 351 in the class

Test Scores

SAT: 490 English, 720 Math (1210 Total)

Recommendation Letters

Pre-Calculus Teacher: “One of the hardest working students I have ever taught.”
AP Chemistry Teacher: “Our science department could not challenge her enough.”
Counselor: “Grades suffered in 10th grade when her mother died. Teachers insisted we continue to push her academically. She rebounded in 11th.”

Essay Topic

“As a tribute to my mother, I want to be an Oncologist and treat people with cancer.”

Co-Curricular Activities

11th: Tutored 7th grader in Math. 2 hours/week.
9th through 12th: Asian American Students Organization. 1 hour/week.
9th through 12th: Piano.

Other Information

Intended Major: Biology, Pre-Med
Her Robotics Team (of four students): Took Third place at Ohio State Championship
Drove one hour to Columbus for Alumni Interview: Great kid, smart, could easily see her at our college

Carlos Delgado

Personal Information

Age: 17
Gender: Male
Race: Latino, Hispanic
Permanent Residence: Santa Fe, New Mexico
Citizenship: USA
School: Santa Fe Prep School (Private, Outstanding)

Family & Financial Information

Parent 1: Luis Delgado, Carpenter, Associate's Degree from Santa Fe Community College
Parent 2: Angela Delgado, Office Manager, Capitol Ford Dealership, Bachelor's Univ of Arizona
Parents Relationship Status: Married
Financial Aid Analysis: Will Need \$27K first year, \$8K/year in following years
Siblings: Sister, Anna Delgado, Will be a Senior at Southern Methodist University (TX)

Academic Grades

Year	Curriculum	A's	B's	C's	GPA	Notes
9 th	Standard	5	1	1	3.57	This GPA is at the school's median
10 th	Challenging	5	2	0	3.71	Includes AP US History
11 th	Moderate	5	1	0	4.33	This GPA is slightly better than average
12 th	4 Courses in-progress, light Senior Year, but will meet graduation requirements.					

Rank in Class

This school does not rank.

Test Scores

SAT: 580 English, 620 Math (1200 Total)

Recommendation Letters

Spanish Teacher: "Really great guy. Liked by his peers. Going places."
Employer: "He has the social skills to be very successful in the business world."
Counselor: "When Carlos gets serious, which he will in college, his academic curiosities will expand."

Essay Topic

"Blockchain technology, used in cryptocurrencies, can be applied in lots of other places. I want to get in on those new applications."

Co-Curricular Activities

9th through 12th grade: Baseball Team (not recruited by college coaches).
Summer Job: Lifeguard at Santa Fe Country Club.
9th through 12th grade: Snowboarding Club.

Other Information

Intended Major: Economics
Alumni Interviewer Comments: "Firm handshake, big smile, but gave very short answers. We finished in only 20 minutes."

David Benjamin

Personal Information

Age: 18
Gender: Male
Race: African-American, non-Hispanic

Permanent Residence: Atlanta, Georgia
Citizenship: USA
School: DeKalb School of the Arts (Public, Magnet, Good)

Family & Financial Information

Parent 1: Dre Benjamin, Music Producer, Associate's Degree from Los Angeles Film School
Parent 2: Diane Benjamin, Real Estate Agent, Bachelor's Degree from Spelman College
Parents Relationship Status: Divorced
Financial Aid Analysis: No aid needed for first year, but that could change for subsequent years
Siblings: Brother, Ronnie Benjamin, will be a Sophomore at DeKalb School of the Arts

Academic Grades

Year	Curriculum	A's	B's	C's	GPA	Notes
9 th	Standard/Music	3	3	0	3.50	Strong Grades in Arts
10 th	Standard/Music	4	2	0	3.67	Improvement in Math
11 th	1 AP Class	4	2	0	3.67	School Offers 4 AP classes
12 th	Courses in-progress: 2 AP Classes, 2 Standard Classes, and School-Sponsored Music Internship.					

Rank in Class

This school does not rank.

Test Scores

SAT: 540 English, 540 Math (1080 Total)

Recommendation Letters

Music Teacher: "Has an appreciation of music that is beyond any student I have ever taught."
Theater Teacher: "Lights up any room he walks into. Charismatic. Love this kid."
Counselor: "May not have the strongest academic credentials, but his intangibles are off the charts. Loves his peers and they love him. Fearless. Funny. Can do it all."

Essay Topic

"America is going through a moment right now. Let's not squander it. Let's do what we haven't before."

Co-Curricular Activities

11th and 12th: Vice-President of the Pan-African Student Alliance. 3 hours/week.
9th through 12th: Member, Advocates Club. 1 hour/week.
9th through 12th: Volunteer, DeKalb County Community Food Cupboard. 2 hours/week.
11th and 12th: Started Young DJ's Club. 2 hours/week.

Other Information

Intended Major: Music
Has toured the campus twice and met an Admission Staff member at a College Fair.

For Consideration

1. Which applicant do you think had the most interesting essay topic?
2. When you read each application, do you think it revealed things about *you* in terms of how you prioritized various talents, skills, and backgrounds?
3. When thinking about each applicant, did you give them “nicknames” (such as “the artist”, or “the sciency kid”, etc.) to help remember which each one is?
 - a. If you did give them nicknames, do you think certain nicknames make it easier to convince your fellow Admission Officers to admit or deny specific students?
4. Would it be easier or harder to evaluate each applicant if you had significantly more information from each applicant? (For example, their full essays, transcripts, and recommendation letters.)
5. Did you think about each applicant in terms of what they might add to the university’s sense of community?
6. What is the most fair and expedient way for an admission staff to resolve disagreements about whether to admit a certain applicant? Examples:
 - a. Vote, and the majority of votes received wins.
 - b. Discuss, and try to come to a consensus decision.
 - c. Defer to the most senior Admission staff member.
 - d. Waitlist all applicants who receive conflicting votes and move on.
7. Based on what you learned in this exercise, what would you do differently in applying to college?