

What Do Colleges Look For?

TRIO Pre College Programs

When colleges and universities assess potential students, they want to feel comfortable they are accepting a well rounded and prepared student.

Most colleges review the following aspects of student applicants:

- **COURSE SCHEDULE:** Colleges want to see you have challenged yourself in high school. Taking easy classes will not prepare you for the rigors of college and admissions personnel know this. Start early, this is not something to consider when scheduling for your last semester of high school.
- **STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES:** Schools look for a solid score, but this does not mean a perfect 36 on your [ACT](#), or blowing the roof off the [SAT](#) (that will now be administered in Michigan High Schools). Admissions personnel want to see your ability to perform well on standardized tests, but just because you receive a 19 does not mean you *will not* get into a good school. Work hard, retake the test, and show improvement. Most students who make the effort to retake standardized tests see some gain in score, simply by being more familiar with the testing experience. (Remember, TRIO Pre College Programs offer two [fee waivers](#) to take or retake the ACT or SAT; it doesn't hurt to take both.)
- **HIGH SCHOOL GRADES:** If you bombed Biology as a freshman, it does not mean you will not be accepted at a good school. Still, admissions personnel want to see consistency and improvement also known as an "upward trajectory". This means colleges appreciate student growth. Take difficult classes, and do your best in them. Grades are not everything, but remember that they are a part of the whole package colleges are looking for.
- **ESSAYS:** Think of a related story about you no one else will have. Admissions personnel want to see you as a person, not a robotic student or boxes on an application. Talk about life experiences that set you apart from other students and how you are a well-rounded applicant.
- **EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:** Schools want to see you are a leader more than being an all-conference player. Students who are leaders in and outside of the classroom and have

TRIO Pre-College Programs are community based programs proudly hosted on the campus of Finlandia University and 100% grant funded by the US Department of Education.

- good grades are ideal college students. These students show their ability to juggle various responsibilities, while maintaining a good GPA. Work hard, be involved, and don't forget about volunteerism when you are completing college applications. Colleges respect students who have continual relationships and experiences with the people or organizations they volunteer with in their communities, as they seek such impact and positive attitude on their campuses.
- **LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION:** Collect at least three letters of recommendation from people who know you well as a student and/or leader. Examples are teachers, principals, coaches, and other school personnel, as well as other important people in your life - supervisors where you might volunteer/work, clergy, personnel in sports or activities outside of school (TRIO Pre-College Programs staff), and anyone else who can say what a great person you are. Please do not forget to request these letters with plenty of time to spare.