

WHAT COLLEGES REALLY LOOK FOR

MONICA THOMPSON, THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

&

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POLICY AND LAWS



STATE OF TEXAS UNIFORM ADMISSIONS POLICY

Before you apply to a 4 year public university...

State of Texas Uniform Admissions Policy

Texas Education Code (TEC) 51.803-51.809 (State of Texas Uniform Admissions Policy) requires that all students meet one of the following college readiness standards in order to be eligible to be considered for admission at a Texas four-year public institution:

- I. Successfully complete the recommended or advanced/distinguished high school program or complete the portion of the program that was available for them; or
- II. Satisfy the College Readiness Benchmarks on the SAT/ACT assessment:
SAT: 1010 out of 1600 (480 ERWS + 530 MSS) or
ACT: 18 English, 22 Reading, 22 Math and 23 Science; or
- III. Successfully complete a curriculum that is equivalent in content and rigor to be the recommended or advanced/distinguished high school program at a high school that is exempt from offering such programs. (ex. Private high schools, out-of-state, etc.)

TEXAS HOUSE BILL 588

- Guarantees Texas students who graduated in the top ten percent of their high school automatic admission to all state-funded universities
- Only guarantees **admission** into the university, not to a specific major
- The University of Texas at Austin has a modified version of the law; they can accept 75% of their students under this law

AUTOMATIC ADMISSIONS STANDARDS



AUTOMATIC ADMISSIONS STANDARDS

- High School Rank
 - Top 10%
 - Top 15%
 - Top 25%
 - Top 50%
- High School GPA
 - Above 3.5
 - Above 3.0
 - Above 2.5
- Test Scores
 - Above 1200 or 30
 - Above 1000 or 25
 - Above 900 or 17

ESSAY/PERSONAL STATEMENT

- Choose a Topic That Will Highlight You
 - **Don't** focus on the great aspects of a particular college, the amount of dedication it takes to be a doctor or the number of extracurricular activities you took part in during high school.
 - **Do** share your personal story and thoughts, take a creative approach and highlight areas that aren't covered in other parts of the application, like your high school records.
- Keep Your Focus Narrow and Personal
 - **Don't** try to cover too many topics. This will make the essay sound like a résumé that doesn't provide any details about you.
 - **Do** focus on one aspect of yourself so the readers can learn more about who you are. Remember that the readers must be able to find your main idea and follow it from beginning to end. Ask a parent or teacher to read just your introduction and tell you what he or she thinks your essay is about.
- Show, Don't Tell
 - **Don't** simply state a fact to get an idea across, such as "I like to surround myself with people with a variety of backgrounds and interests."
 - **Do** include specific details, examples, reasons and so on to develop your ideas. For the example above, describe a situation when you were surrounded by various types of people. What were you doing? Whom did you talk with? What did you take away from the experience?

ESSAY/PERSONAL STATEMENT (CONT.)

- Use Your Own Voice
 - **Don't** rely on phrases or ideas that people have used many times before. These could include statements like, "There is so much suffering in the world that I feel I have to help people." Avoid overly formal or business-like language, and don't use unnecessary words.
 - **Do** write in your own voice. For the above example, you could write about a real experience that you had and how it made you feel you had to take action. And note that admission officers will be able to tell if your essay was edited by an adult.
- Ask a Teacher or Parent to Proofread
 - **Don't** turn your essay in without proofreading it, and don't rely only on your computer's spell check to catch mistakes. A spell-check program will miss typos like these:
 - "After I graduate *form* high school, I plan to get a summer job."
 - "From that day on, Daniel was my best *fried*."
 - **Do** ask a teacher or parent to proofread your essay to catch mistakes. You should also ask the person who proofreads your essay if the writing sounds like you.

HOLISTIC REVIEW

Looking at the applicant as a whole

LEADERSHIP

- AVID
- Student Council
- Elected Positions
- Leader of a team/group
- Supervisory experience at work
- Coordinated events
- Yearbook editor

COMMUNITY SERVICE/INVOLVEMENT

- Sports
- Clubs and Organizations
- All Community Service (Food Bank, Toy Drive, etc)
- Religious groups
- Participation in community events
- Work experience

AWARDS, HONORS & ACHIEVEMENTS

- Honor Roll
- Advance course work
- Varsity Letter
- All region/ all state/ all academic awards
- Perfect Attendance
- Student of the Week
- End of the Year Recognition
- Competitive awards (out of school)
- Fluency in other languages

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

WHO TO ASK

- Teachers/Coaches
- Supervisors/Advisors
- Counselors
- If you need a recommendation letter from a counselor or other school official, follow these guidelines:
 - Make an appointment ahead of time.
 - Talk about your accomplishments, hobbies and plans for college and the future.
 - If you need to discuss part of your transcript — low grades during your sophomore year, for example — do so. Explain why you had difficulty and discuss how you've changed and improved since then.

WHAT YOU CAN INCLUDE

- Talk to them about your class participation.
- Remind them of specific work or projects you're proud of.
- Tell them what you learned in class.
- Mention any challenges you overcame.
- Give them the information they need to provide specific examples of your work.

FINAL TIPS

- Take initiative
 - Apply early
 - Optional essays? Write them
 - Communicate with Admissions Counselors
 - Be enthusiastic for attending the university

QUESTIONS?

