

# Top 12 Strengths & Experiences Colleges Look for in High School Students

▶ This ranked list is based on a nationwide survey of IECA member Independent Educational Consultants

Just as every college is different, so too, are the criteria and priorities for evaluation in each college's admission process. In fact, one of the great advantages of working with an IEC is their personal knowledge of these differences, helping students to navigate the process.

#1

A rigorous high school curriculum that challenges the student and may include AP or IB classes.

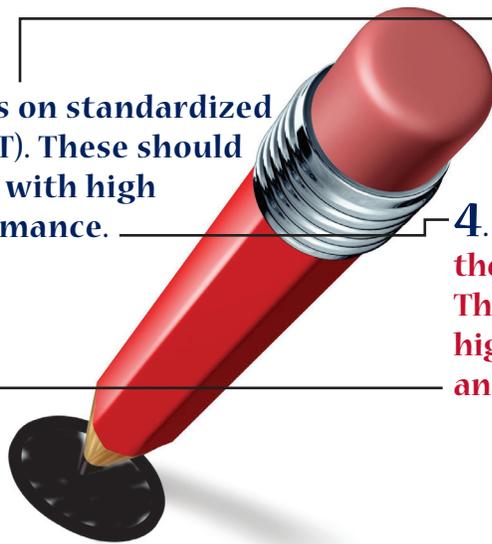
2. Grades that represent a strong effort and an upward trend. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all A's in less challenging coursework.

3. Solid scores on standardized tests (ACT, SAT). These should be consistent with high school performance.

4. A well-written essay that provides insight into the student's unique personality, values, and goals. The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well-constructed writing.

5. Passionate involvement in a few in or out of school activities. Commitment and depth are valued over minimal involvement in a large number of activities.

6. Demonstrated leadership and initiative in extra-curricular activities. Students who arrive on campus prepared to lead clubs and activities are highly desirable.



B-  
B+  
A

(continued on reverse)

**7.** Personal characteristics that will contribute to a diverse and interesting student body. Many colleges seek to develop a freshman class that is diverse: geographically, culturally, ethnically, economically, and politically.



**8.** Demonstrated intellectual curiosity through reading, school, leisure pursuits, and more.

**9.** Demonstrated enthusiasm to attend, often exhibited by campus visits and an interview, showing an interest toward attending the college if offered admission.



**10.** Letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselors that give evidence of integrity, special skills, positive character traits, and an interest in learning.

**11.** Special talents that will contribute to the college's student life program. Colleges like to know what you intend to bring to campus, as well as what you'll take from your college experience.

**12.** Out of school experiences including work, community service, youth organizations, religious groups, etc. Again, passionate involvement is meaningful to the admissions office; casual memberships are not.



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