New Research on Equity in College Access and Admissions

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Data Reveal College Access Gaps

College Access Gaps by Socioeconomic Status

### The Need for Contextual Information

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<tr>
<th>Colleges want to understand applicants fully to consider them fairly</th>
<th>Students are applying to more colleges than ever before</th>
<th>Knowledge of each high school and neighborhood varies</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Colleges consider many things when reviewing an applicant, including their GPA, personal essay, letters of recommendation, test scores, and more. They also consider what students achieved in the context of where they’ve learned and lived— their high school and neighborhood.</td>
<td>This year, colleges will receive more than 10 million applications from students attending nearly 30,000 high schools. With more applications coming from more places, getting consistent, quality information for every applicant on their high school and neighborhood is becoming much more difficult.</td>
<td>With colleges receiving more applications from more places, there’s simply no way for any admissions officer to know every single high school. In fact, admissions officers in the Landscape pilot estimate that about 25% of the applications lack a high school profile.</td>
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We heard a need for better and more systematic, reliable information about context:

- “We think about what a student has accomplished within the context of the opportunities and challenges he or she has faced.”
- “We are looking for better information about context from high schools we know less well.”
- “We have tried to develop in-house measures but lack national data and the staff resources and systems to do this on our own.”
- “We have some data but need national benchmarks.”
Three Categories of Information

**Basic High School Data**
- Locale (e.g., Rural)
- Senior class size
- Percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch
- Average SAT® scores at colleges attended
- AP® participation and performance

**Test Score Comparison**
- Applicant's test score compared to others from the same high school
- 25th Percentile
- 50th Percentile
- 75th Percentile

**High School and Neighborhood Indicators**
- College attendance
- Household structure
- Median family income
- Housing stability
- Education levels
- Crime

Research shows these indicators are related to students’ education outcomes. Two averages are created based on these six indicators. Values are shown on a scale from 1 to 100 relative to the U.S. average.

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# Evolution of Research on Context

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>References</th>
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<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>Foundational Work</td>
<td>Admissions officers provided with more robust information about an applicant's context were more likely to recommend admitting a low-SES applicant from an underserved high school.</td>
<td>Bastedo &amp; Bowman (2017)</td>
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<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>Research Pilot</td>
<td>Contextual information about an applicant’s neighborhood and high school influenced admissions decisions, particularly for low-SES applicants and students from non-feeder high schools.</td>
<td>Bastedo, Bell, Howell, Hsu, Hurwitz, Perfetto, &amp; Welch (2018)</td>
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<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Operational Pilot</td>
<td>When Landscape is available to supplement individual applicant information in holistic admissions, the admission rates of applicants from more challenging environments increase, on average.</td>
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<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>Expanded Pilot I</td>
<td>Year-over-year analyses now underway to understand how the use of Landscape relates to changes in admission and yield rates for applicants from different high school and neighborhood contexts.</td>
<td>Howell, Hurwitz, Mabel, Perfetto, &amp; Turcich (2020)</td>
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<td>2019-2020 and Beyond</td>
<td>Expanded Pilot II</td>
<td>Research partnerships continue into the next phase of learning with 2019-2020 partner colleges, universities, and scholarship organizations.</td>
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Additional Landscape Information

- General information: [www.collegeboard.org/landscape](http://www.collegeboard.org/landscape)
- Appropriate usage guidelines: [https://professionals.collegeboard.org/landscape#usage](https://professionals.collegeboard.org/landscape#usage)
- More information for education professionals: [https://professionals.collegeboard.org/landscape](https://professionals.collegeboard.org/landscape)
- For more information or to join the research partnership, email: [FutureAdmissions@collegeboard.org](mailto:FutureAdmissions@collegeboard.org)