

# SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

LAMEIRE COLLEGE CONSULTING



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## UC IS NOW TEST BLIND

BY CLAIRE SCHADLER

It's been a couple of months since we've given a testing update, and there's lots to talk about! Because UC is such a huge system, any changes to their testing are always big news. Back in our June newsletter, we discussed the changes that UC had announced in terms of their testing policy. They had said they were going test-optional for this year and next year, followed by two years of a test-blind pilot program.

However, that plan has recently changed. *Starting with 2021 fall applicants, all UC campuses will be test blind.* Just a reminder, test blind means that even if you submit your scores, they will not be considered as part of the application. This decision came as the result of a lawsuit, which stated that using test scores was biased against students with disabilities because of the difficulty to safely take tests due to Covid-19.

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All UC campuses will be test blind, but UC is not the only system our students apply to, so it is worthwhile to consider other testing updates. In particular, we need to consider many schools going “test optional.” It goes without saying that this policy differs greatly from “test blind.” With test blind, it’s clear that scores will not be considered. However, with test-optional, the question is always how applicants who do not submit scores will be compared to students who do submit scores. A recent webinar from Case Western Reserve University gave some input on this.

In the webinar offered by Case, they explained that they would be reviewing applicants with or without test scores at the same time and in the same way. To address concerns of fairness, they will read the entire application before seeing an applicant’s test scores. By putting the test score at the end of the process, they hope to avoid the impulse to use test scores as a factor in their decision.

As most schools state in their test-optional policies, students who don’t submit a score will not be at a disadvantage, but what that will look like in the reading of applications is not always as clear.

A few important logistical things to mention about testing is the fact that ACT has announced that they will cancel their international test dates for December 2020 and February 2021. However, at this point they have not cancelled the earlier September date. Why they have made this decision to keep the September date while cancelling a date half a year away is a little unclear, but they may be taking precautionary measures against the concern that there is the possibility we will see a spike in Covid-19 cases during the winter.

While it’s always important to check a school’s testing policy on their website to have the most up-to-date information, a few new additions of schools that have gone test optional since our last newsletter include Columbia, Dartmouth, Yale, Penn State, University of Washington, and Brown. At this point, all Ivy League schools have gone test optional. While there are still some schools that require test scores, that list is becoming shorter and shorter as most schools are becoming test optional and others are moving to test blind.

**"With test blind, it is clear that scores will not be considered."**

# THE UC APPLICATION: RANKING THE UCSD COLLEGES

BY SHIRLEY YOUNG

Out of all the UC campuses, there is one school that does something a little unusual: UCSD. Modeled after a European school system, there are seven different colleges on the UCSD campus and students will need to rank their interest in these colleges from one to seven when they apply. Even though all students who go to this school will be UCSD students, the college on campus that they get sorted into will determine where on campus they live, as well as their General Education (GE) course requirements as freshmen and sophomores. Each college on UCSD's campus also has a different theme.

PHOTO BY MARTIN R. SMITH



It's important that students consider carefully the order in which they rank these colleges. John Muir College, for example - named after the man known as the "Father of the National Parks" - has an emphasis on environmental awareness. The courses that students choose from to take as freshmen include courses in environmental science, marine biology, earth and space science, and so on. In Earl Warren College - named after a former California Governor and Chief Justice of the United States - students take courses on ethics and society, cultural diversity, philosophy, and more.

The seven colleges on UCSD's campus are as follows:

- Revelle College - Revelle students partake in a structured liberal arts program of study that stresses both breadth and depth in its GE curriculum, and it is meant to help students through the lifelong process of intellectual inquiry. Students take part in a core humanities sequence.
- John Muir College - There is a wide range of GE requirements that make this college particularly attractive to students with well-defined academic interests. As mentioned above, this college is good for students interested in the natural sciences and mathematics.
- Sixth College - The theme of Sixth College is "Culture, Art, and Technology" and embraces the rich opportunities available in new interdisciplinary approaches for learning and practice. The GE curriculum culminates with a practicum, an opportunity for students to put education into action, and an academic learning experience in which students address real-world problems by undertaking creative projects.
- Earl Warren College - As mentioned above, this college is named after former California Governor and Chief Justice of the U.S., Earl Warren. Consistent with Earl Warren's principles, Warren College is committed to preparing students for intellectual, social, and professional life as responsible citizen-scholars. Students partake in the two-quarter Warren College Writing Program, and there are required Ethics and Society courses.

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- Eleanor Roosevelt College - Roosevelt College prepares students to thrive as global citizens through scholarship, leadership, and service. The core of GE curriculum is “The Making of the Modern World (MMW),” an interdisciplinary sequence designed and taught by faculty from the departments of Anthropology, History, Literature, Political Science, and Sociology.
- Thurgood Marshall College - The focus of this college is the active development of students as both scholars and citizens. There is an emphasis on understanding of the diversity of cultures that comprise contemporary American society. In fact, students at Thurgood Marshall College participate in a unique, three-quarter core sequence called “Dimensions of Culture” that explores the complexity of American experiences across race, religion, class, and gender.
- Seventh College - Last year was the first year Seventh College was introduced to the UCSD campus and to incoming students. At Seventh College, the focus is on helping students to approach their majors of study from a multidisciplinary perspective. The aim is to offer students a breadth of knowledge that will allow them to augment their studies and discover real-world solutions pulled from a variety of perspectives. To aid in this mission, students at Seventh College engage in GE courses during all four years of their college experience, rather than finishing these up in their first or second years. Also, they will produce three capstone projects during the course of their undergraduate studies that focus on this aspect of multidisciplinary problem-solving. This new addition is part of a trend we’ve seen in colleges offering students the option of a more integrative and interdisciplinary course of study.

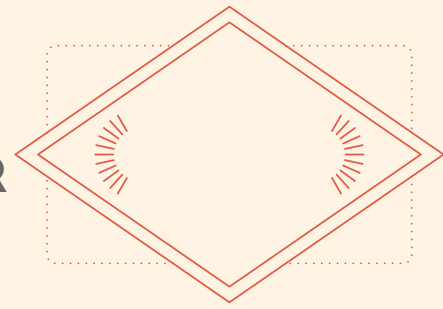
PHOTO BY MARTIN R. SMITH

In the UC application under “Campuses and Majors,” students who choose to apply to UCSD will come across a section asking them to rank these seven colleges in order of preference. Typically, students do get placed into one of their top two college choices, but this isn’t always guaranteed - especially when UCSD may have over-enrolled for a particular year. However, this is a much rarer occurrence and shouldn’t be something to be stressed over, as long as students are diligent in carefully ranking their choices.



# PATH TO BEING PRE-MED PART III: UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITTEE LETTER

BY BELINDA TANG



Previously on Path to Pre-Med, we have discussed the role that research plays in medical school admissions. In short, having research experience is not a prerequisite for an acceptance. However, schools do prefer students who have research experience because it demonstrates critical thinking skills. Additionally, top research medical schools will favor students with a strong research background because they are looking for students who can find the next cure for diseases, such as cancer. Last month, we also discussed that you don't need to go to attend a research-heavy undergraduate program to get quality experience in research. At smaller institutions, there are often more opportunities for undergraduates to play larger roles in projects because there are fewer graduate students. Instead of choosing a university based on its research prestige, we learned how the field of research and the type of research should guide your choice in choosing a college.

PHOTO BY MARTIN R. SMITH

Choosing the right place to start your pre-med journey is important. No college can guarantee you an acceptance into medical school. There are, however, schools that make it easier for you to achieve your dream. One of the ways schools make the pre-med journey easier is by offering committee letters.

A committee letter is a letter written by a pre-health committee or pre-health advisor. Essentially, it is a letter that advocates for you during the medical school application process! The letter includes information from an applicant's personal statement, academic history, and extracurricular activities. Many schools also conduct interviews as an opportunity for candidates to give letter writers a chance to know them better. Once the committee letter is completed, schools will send the committee letter along with letters of recommendation to medical schools.

Many medical schools prefer receiving a committee letter, as it helps them contextualize and review applications more holistically. Though medical schools prefer a committee letter, going to a school that doesn't offer a committee letter will not "lower" your chances of getting into medical school. However, having a committee letter can definitely work in your favor.

A committee letter can help applicants bypass requirements set by medical schools that may be hard to meet. For example, some medical schools strongly prefer or even require a letter that is written by a non-science professor. This can be challenging for students who go to larger universities and don't have the chance to build a close relationship with non-science professors. Having a committee letter can bypass this issue and allow students to send letters from writers that truly know them well. Furthermore, a committee letter gives students an additional chance to showcase who they are and why they should be accepted through a very personalized letter.

Some schools only provide committee letters for students who have a certain GPA. Other schools open committee letters up to all. Therefore, within schools that offer committee letters, there are also differences in the pre-med journey. In all, committee letters make applying to medical schools easier and may play a role in your college decision. Though committee letters will help you get closer to your dream, keep in mind that your passion for medicine is what will carry you to an acceptance – and that doesn't depend on the school you choose!

