

BEYOND GRADES: THE 5 Cs COLLEGES ARE LOOKING FOR



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Two types of information in a “holistic” college application:

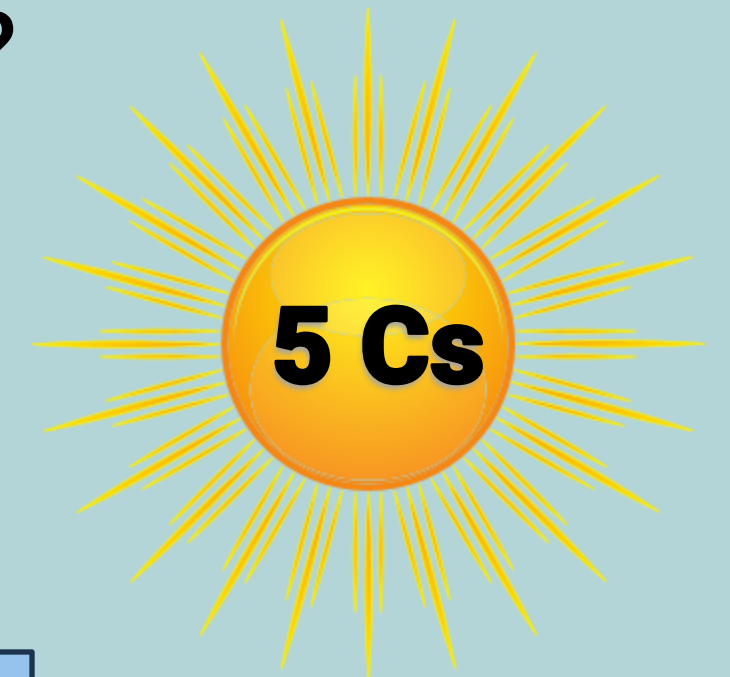
“Cognitive”



- Grades
- ACT/SAT scores

“Non-Cognitive”

- Who are you as a person?
- What have been your experiences?
- What will you contribute to campus?



Today:

- ❖ The sections of the college application that reveal your 5 Cs
- ❖ How to be intentional about sharing your 5 Cs



Non-Cognitive (holistic) sections of the college application :

ACTIVITIES

How you choose to “spend” your time reveals your 5 Cs

ESSAY

An opportunity to reveal your 5 Cs to your reader

RECOMMENDERS

What your counselor, teachers, and others say about you reveals your 5 Cs

Next, I'll share each **C**, provide ideas for incorporating them in your activities and essay, and suggest ways to nurture them in your recommendations.



ACTIVITIES

Participate in activities that require resilience, persistence, empathy, or integrity, for example.

Activities are a great place to demonstrate initiative and a growth mindset.

ESSAY

Ask your friends and family what they see as your key character traits.

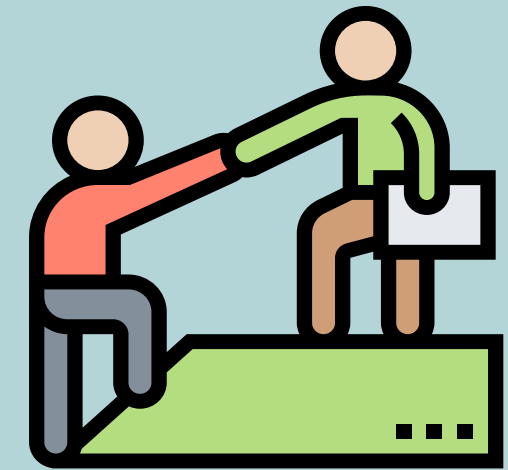
Tell a story demonstrating these traits in your essay/personal statement.

RECOMMENDERS

Demonstrate empathy and other valued character traits in the classroom—you'll be rated!

Get to know your school counselor beyond just choosing classes.

C #1: CHARACTER



Examples of traits colleges value:

- Integrity
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Persistence
- Self-reflection
- Adaptability
- Growth mindset
- Initiative



ACTIVITIES

Describe your activities so they intentionally demonstrate connection to other people.

ESSAY

Incorporating some connection to a community in your essay/personal statement is a good idea.

RECOMMENDERS

Be friendly with and help others in your classes. Be a good team member. Give teachers, counselors, and others nice things to say about how you interact with people.

C #2: COMMUNITY

Colleges want to make sure you'll fit and make the most of their community

- Will you connect with others?
- Will you contribute to the social and intellectual environment?
- Do your values align with those of the college community?
 - *Mission Statement*



ACTIVITIES

Use powerful verbs in your activity descriptions to demonstrate your impact

ESSAY

Caution: Be careful not to portray yourself as a hero at someone else's expense.

Humility is valued when demonstrating your contributions.

RECOMMENDERS

Ensure the teachers you choose as recommenders know your contributions beyond the classroom.

C #3: CONTRIBUTION

Colleges want students who have an impact

- Where do you make a difference?
- It doesn't have to be in a leadership role
- Family, a workplace, your school community, church, organization, or a cause



ACTIVITIES

The activities you've participated in for multiple years should appear near the top of your activities list.

It's more likely you'll have a leadership role here, too.

ESSAY

Telling a story about something you've been involved in for a long time allows you to demonstrate many desirable character traits.

RECOMMENDERS

Choose "other" recommenders from activities you've demonstrated a commitment to.

C #4: COMMITMENT

Colleges like students who demonstrate a long-term investment

- Activities that lead to skill development over time
 - *Music, sport, work, crafts, writing*
- Long-term contribution to a cause, organization, etc.
- Digging deep into participation across multiple layers

100%



ACTIVITIES

If there is a way to demonstrate how an activity satisfies your curiosity, incorporate it.

Words like “discovered” and “wondered” demonstrate curiosity.

ESSAY

Demonstrate curiosity in your essay.

Whether it’s about understanding interpersonal dynamics, computer code, baking ingredients, or velocity, there’s always room for curiosity.

RECOMMENDERS

Be an engaged learner who asks questions in class. Talk to teachers when you need an explanation, demonstrating your engagement and curiosity.

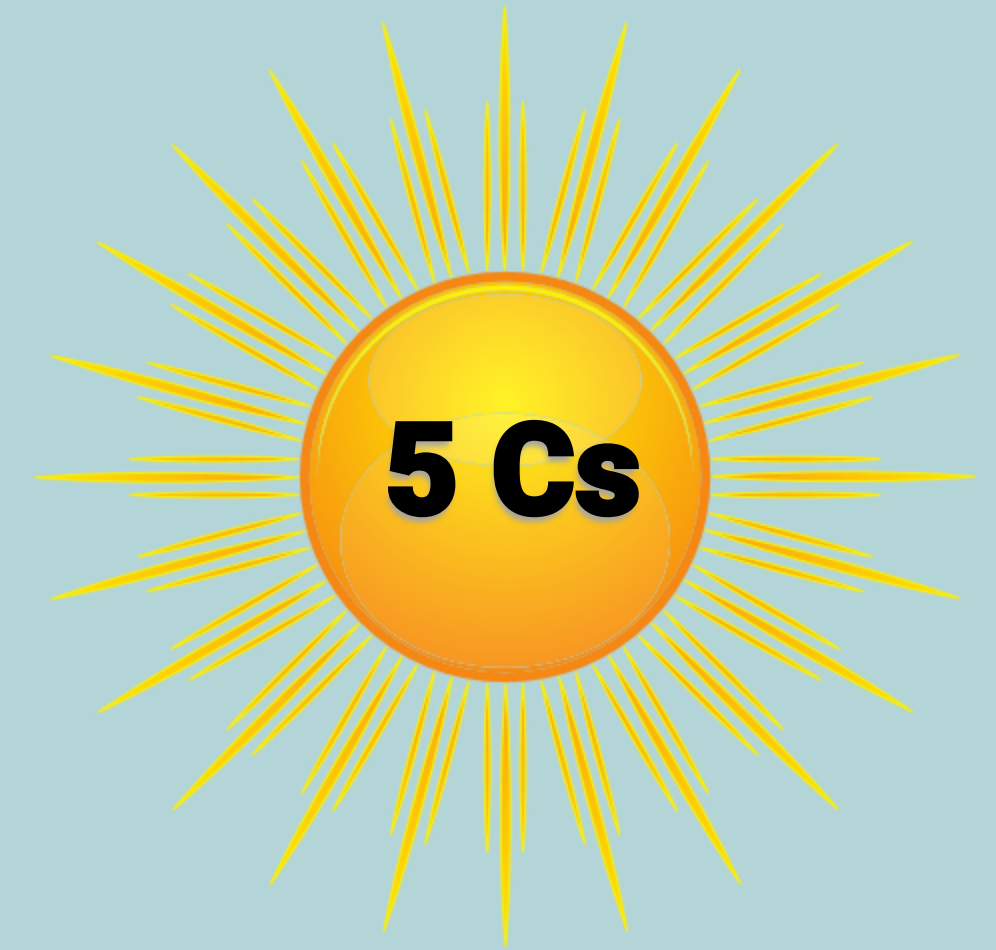
C #5: CURIOSITY

Colleges look for evidence of curiosity because...

- It fuels deeper learning
- Enhances problem-solving skills
- Encourages meaningful connections through discussions with professors and peers
- Fosters independence
- Prepares students for lifelong learning



Your application reader wants evidence of:



- Your **C**haracter
- Your likely success in their **C**ommunity
- What you will **C**ontribute to life on campus and beyond
- Your **C**ommitment to who and what interests you, even when it becomes challenging
- Your **C**uriosity driving intellectual growth as a student and lifelong learner



Questions?

