

## Tips for distinguishing yourself in the college application process

Prepared by Western Washington University

**At Western, we know there is much more to you than your GPA and test scores.** There is no doubt that your academic performance is highly important as we assess your readiness for college, but we also realize that there are countless factors that indicate potential. It is our hope that you will use your course selection, grades, grade trends, personal statement, personal experience, and passions inside and outside the classroom to paint a real picture of your achievement and potential.

**Here are just some of the ways you can positively influence the decision on your application:**

- **Take coursework beyond minimum core requirements.** We like to see students take initiative and challenge themselves academically all the way through their senior year. While advanced classes such as AP, honors, Running Start, and IB are great options for many students, taking a full schedule of "regular" classes beyond our requirements is also impressive.
- **Continue in a tough academic discipline** – particularly math – even if your grades have started to drop. We know that math is an area where many students struggle, but hang in there—the better preparation you have in high school, the less stressful math will be in college.
- **Write a personal statement** that helps us get to know what is important to you, what excites you, what is important to understand about your transcript, and any circumstances that have helped or hurt your grades.
- **Make a positive difference** in the lives of others, whether in your community, family, or school.
- **Demonstrate sustained involvement** in activities you are passionate about rather than occasional or one-time participation in activities that don't make much of an impression on you. Tell us how those experiences affected you as a student or as a person.
- **Convey your potential contributions** to the Western community such as perspective, cultural pride, exceptional talent, leadership, "heart," etc.
- **Express your pride and appreciation for cultural diversity.** Enthusiasm and experience working in culturally diverse environments will be key to your success here at Western and beyond. We are committed to graduating students who will both treasure and contribute to the richness of the diversity around them.
- **Take a risk.** Stand up for your beliefs; accept new challenges; push yourself.
- **Follow instructions.** Proof-read your application, respond to requests for information quickly, and meet deadlines.
- **Make contact directly** with the Admissions Office rather than letting your parents do all the work! Personal initiative and responsibility are valuable qualities in an applicant.

The bottom line is that you are much more in the driver's seat when it comes to college admissions than you may believe. Everyone has distinctive characteristics and everyone has the opportunity to excel in one or more of the ways listed above. We wish you the best!