



USING SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE DATA TO REVOLUTIONIZE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

ECHO★VATE

“University applications tend to rely on the same few components: academic transcripts, personal statements, standardized test scores, and academic letters of reference.”

Study: Rethinking College Admissions, Ashoka U

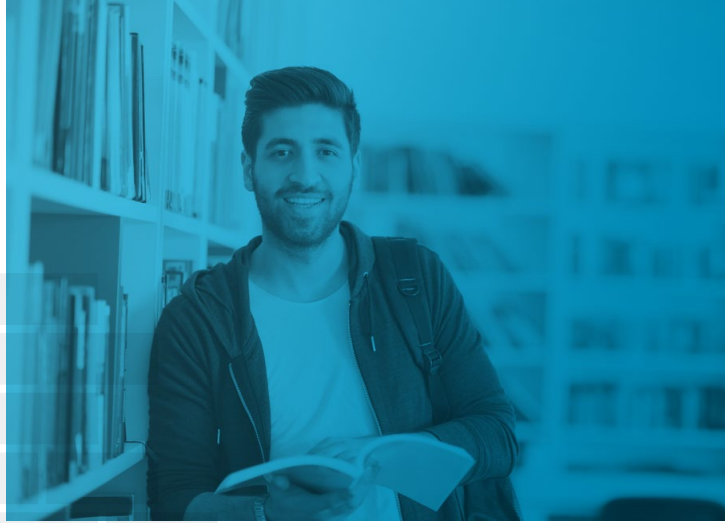
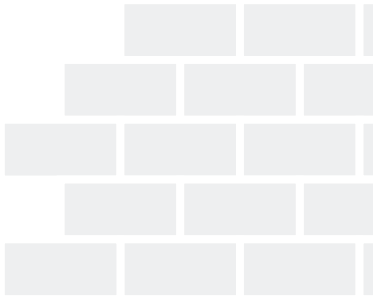
As more students graduate from high school each year, more inevitably apply to college. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling, “Between the Fall 2014 and Fall 2015 admission cycles, the number of applications from first-time freshmen increased 6 percent.” So what does that increase mean for our future scholars? More applicants means a more competitive college admissions process. And therein lies the challenge.

For decades, colleges have admitted students based almost exclusively on academic performance—most specifically SAT/ACT scores and GPAs. “Well that sounds reasonable enough,” you might be thinking to yourself. But in reality, research shows that academic performance isn’t necessarily a great predictor of future success.

One could argue that the current admissions process works perfectly well for students ranking in the top quartile of test scores and grades, but what happens when colleges have to evaluate candidates on the cusp? How should a school make a decision when someone has a decent GPA but struggling SAT scores? How should a university choose between thousands of fringe candidates with relatively similar academic performance?

To further illustrate that point: Let’s imagine a high school senior named John. John does okay in school, a B-average kind of student. He’s never been a good test taker, and as a result, his SAT scores are not strong. To a school reviewing John’s college application, he’d likely fall somewhere in the middle of the pack with thousands of other average-looking students just like him. With limited time and resources, how can admissions officers decide which of the Johns to accept?





BREAKING DOWN BIAS

“Students from families earning more than \$200,000 a year average a combined score of 1,714 (out of 1,800), while students from families earning under \$20,000 a year average a combined score of 1,326.”

Article: “These Four Charts Show How the SAT Favors Rich, Educated Families,” Zachary A. Goldfarb, Washington Post

The challenge with the college admissions process as it stands today goes deeper than simply impacting one type of student. By focusing almost exclusively on academic performance, colleges and universities inadvertently deepen the education gap across socioeconomic classes and races.

The greatest predictor of a student’s SAT score is...wait for it...household income. That’s right, wealthier kids have higher test scores with the highest income group outperforming the lowest income group by an average difference of 388 points! Families with higher incomes not only have the financial resources to pay for professional test prep, they can also afford to allow students to take tests as many times as needed, a big advantage over families that are just struggling to make ends meet.

The unintentional bias doesn’t end there. Race is also closely linked to SAT/ACT scores with Asians and Whites having the highest scores and African American students having the lowest. Case and point: When Hampshire College, a liberal arts school in Massachusetts, removed SAT/ACT scores from its application process, class diversity increased to

31% —the most diverse in the school’s history and 21% higher than two years prior.

Then of course there’s also the issue of creating a disadvantage for students who simply don’t test well—whether from ADD, test anxiety, dyslexia, or any other number of factors.

Furthermore, the college admissions process as it stands today creates issues for the higher education institutions themselves. As the admissions criteria doesn’t necessarily correlate to success, colleges and universities struggle to retain students year over year who simply aren’t a good fit for the school.

The admissions officers themselves are overloaded with a time-consuming process that relies on reading personal essays and letters of recommendation in order to determine which fringe candidates to accept. Striking a balance between meeting enrollment goals and giving students personalized attention seems nearly impossible. Ultimately, schools end up with less diverse, inclusive campuses and a portion of students who aren’t set up to succeed.



SEEING THE WHOLE STUDENT IN AN INSTANT

So where should we adjust? How can we look at applicants for more than just their test scores and grade point averages without adding countless hours to an already laborious admissions process? How can we get a more holistic picture of a student and determine whether or not he or she is a good fit for a given college or university? And how do we make decisions faster so as not to have to waitlist applicants?

The answer is simple: Use data. Social intelligence data, to be specific.

I know what you're thinking: "You just told me not to look at the numbers. Now you want me to look at more numbers? How is that going to eliminate bias and recognize qualified candidates from the fringe groups?" Let's explore that further.

Social intelligence data is an aggregated measure of self and social awareness, evolved social beliefs and attitudes, and a capacity to manage complex social change. Research shows that people with strong social intelligence are more likely to succeed—over those with high IQs, or in this case, strong academic performance.

Using social intelligence data, colleges and universities can get a much-needed comprehensive view of candidates beyond just academics, including life experiences, personality types, strengths, and weaknesses. Using social intelligence, a higher education institution can even create a data-driven profile that reflects its strongest, most successful students. Then, admissions officers can compare incoming applicants against the profile to understand how likely it is that any given candidate will fit in and succeed at the school. The result? Faster decision making and setting students up for long-term success. It's a win-win!

Will some students still get admitted into schools based exclusively on their exceptional academic performance? Of course. But for others, the ones who get lost in a mass of average numbers—the Johns, if you will—social intelligence gives higher education institutions a way to quickly get a more complete picture of the applicants and make data-driven decisions about those who fall in the middle of the pack.

Of course, the idea of social intelligence isn't new or radical. Human resources departments have been measuring key behavioral attributes of potential new hires for decades—with measurable success. In fact, 100% of the Fortune 500 companies use a social intelligence tool to measure job applicants. And by doing so, it's been shown that companies see anywhere from 25% to 50% reduction in turnover—providing a meaningful financial impact!

100% of the Fortune 500 companies use a social intelligence tool to measure job applicants.

Research shows that people with strong social intelligence are more likely to succeed.

IMPACT FOR STUDENTS:

Feel valued, understood and invested in.

Find schools that are a better fit to strengths and personality type.

Higher success rates in college.

Less likely to drop out or transfer.



SETTING UP FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Adding social intelligence data to the college admissions process has far-reaching positive impacts for both students and the schools.

Students, on one hand, are more likely to feel valued, understood, and invested in by the college or university—which also has a positive impact on their brand. Additionally, students are more likely to end up at schools that are a better match with their strengths and personality types. And most importantly, students are likely to see higher success rates in college, making them less likely to drop out or transfer.

From the school's perspective, using social intelligence as part of the admissions process can help admissions officers save time sifting through fringe candidates. Social intelligence data quickly highlights the applicants who most closely resemble

an ideal student at that school—much, much faster than trying to glean this type of insight from a 500-word essay or letter of recommendation.

By using social intelligence data, higher education institutions can eliminate bias created by focusing predominantly on SAT/ACT scores and build a more inclusive student body. In turn, this makes the school more desirable and marketable over time, particularly to students from more progressive and diverse backgrounds. From a business perspective, admitting students who are a better fit for the school can increase retention rates, resulting in greater long-term success for the school and students alike. And students are more likely to develop a strong connection with the institution, giving way to an increased potential for alumni giving.

HOPE FOR JOHN

Let's say John applies to a school that uses social intelligence data as part of its admissions process. The school will still see his 3.0 GPA and his sub-par SAT score. But admissions officers will also see that John has strong social intelligence scores. He has unique life experiences—like volunteering at his local senior center and traveling throughout the United States—that make him a well-rounded candidate. His personality is a great fit for the university culture. And he clearly excels in the subjects for which he has a passion, like science and technology. By having this more comprehensive

picture of John, the school can make a quick and easy data-driven decision to accept him into its new freshmen class. Data has already revolutionized the way we bank, apply for jobs, date, buy homes, travel, and so much more. Now higher education institutions have an opportunity to follow suit and establish a holistic admissions process that's as effective and efficient as it is fair.

To learn more about social intelligence solutions for higher education institutions, visit Echovate.com

SOURCES: ["Rethinking College Admissions" - The New York Times](#) // ["Rethinking College Admissions" - Ashoka U](#)
["These Four Charts Show How the SAT Favors Rich, Educated Families" - The Washington Post](#) // ["What One College Discovered When It Stopped Accepting SAT/ACT Scores" - The Washington Post](#) // ["2015 State of College Admission: Executive Summary" - National Association for College Admission Counseling](#)

