

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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Welcome back to College Bound, Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. We're super excited to share what is unique about Notre Dame with you, and we're looking forward to having some current students and members of the Notre Dame community share their experiences with you as well.

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We're going to continue providing insight into our application process and help you learn about all of the academic and extracurricular opportunities at Notre Dame. I'm Maria Finan, one of the Admissions Counselors at Notre Dame. I was an English major, and I am a "Double Domer," so I not only got my bachelor's degree at Notre Dame, but I stayed for my master's degree as well. I'm really excited to introduce my co-host to you, Matt.

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Thanks, Maria. My name is Matt Greene. I am also an Admissions Counselor with Maria. I am not a "Double Domer," but I am a Notre Dame grad. I graduated in 2016 and I studied American Studies. I am also originally from Canton, Michigan, which is a suburb of the Detroit area. I am here to introduce our topic for this episode of College Bound, which is our application, specifically, explaining our non-academic criteria.

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In the past few episodes, we had mentioned that we have a very holistic application review process, and part of that is academic, but then also part of that are the non-academic pieces of your application. And those pieces are the extracurricular activities, the recommendations that you receive, as well as the essays that you write. And, again, we cannot stress this enough- everything with your application in the holistic review is contextual. With that, Maria, would you want to discuss and talk about the activity section, and what that involves on the application?

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Yes. So we think about activities really broadly; it's anything you're involved in outside of the classroom. That can be sports and may be clubs, music, theater, you may have a job, you may be doing service, or you may have significant family responsibilities. All of those are things you can include in your activities section. Within that, we like to see leadership roles. So, if you are president of a club, or you're captain of a sports team, or you're a shift manager at work, all of that gives us a little bit of insight into how you've been recognized as a leader in your community, so don't forget to include those.

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It's also the way in the application that we get a sense of what you're passionate about, and how you're spending your time. If you have something that is impacting your ability to participate in activities-- maybe you have a really long commute to school--be sure to tell us about that, too. That, again, helps us read your application in the correct context. There is an "additional information" section, and you can put a little bit of information there. Sometimes counselors or teachers will also bring that to our attention.

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I think a common misconception we see a lot is students think we're looking for very particular activities. That's not true. There are no specific activities that we are looking for a student to have. We know that some of you are very highly focused, so maybe you want to be a doctor., and most of your activities are STEM-related. Some of you have a lot of diverse interests, so maybe you're doing theater and mock trial

and soccer. We know that interests vary and you are unique, so whatever those activities look like for you, that's what you should put in your application.

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We really want you to be genuine, so don't think about what we want to see, tell us who you are, instead. Another piece that we look at are recommendation letters. I'm going to let Matt talk a little bit more about those, and what role they play in our review and specifically what we're looking for there.

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Thanks, Maria. The recommendations, as a second part of the application after the activities, are also very, very important. At Notre Dame, we are mainly looking for two recommendation letters: one is the counselor recommendation, so a recommendation letter that comes from your school counselor (could be a college counselor, or a guidance counselor). That is an optional recommendation, and you do not need to have that sent in with your application, but a lot of times, counselors will send one to us, and it does give us great insight into who you are in your overall school community.

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And then we require a recommendation from a teacher that teaches a core academic subject. Those core subjects are English, science, math, social sciences and foreign languages. We prefer that you submit a teacher recommendation from a teacher that you had in your junior or senior years. It does not have to be somebody from your junior or senior years, but one of those teachers taught you very recently, maybe as your academic rigor in your classes was ramped up, they taught you some great things. So, again, one counselor recommendation is optional, but the teacher recommendation is required.

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You also can send in an additional recommendation or two, but we don't need or expect these extra recommendations. If you are going to send in an additional recommendation, they must be a letter that will add something to your application. And what I mean by that, is will they give us more context into who you are as a person outside of the classroom? So it could be maybe a pastor, or a boss, it could be another teacher, but they are the supervisor of one of the clubs that you're a part of. We really want to see that extra context if you want to provide that.

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One thing that we definitely don't need to see are any letters from Notre Dame alumni, or letters from somebody like a neighbor whose lawn you mowed, or a friend. It's awesome that somebody would give that great insight into who you are and be great support to you, but those don't necessarily give us any different context. Quality has been more important than quantity. We did have a record number of over eighty recommendations submitted by one student. That person who sent in all the recommendation letters was ultimately not admitted. That wasn't the main reason why, of course, we do read everything you submit and we have a holistic review of recommendations.

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So, with that, Maria, after recommendations and the activities, I want to bring you in here for some expertise, because you did teach high school English before you started in Notre Dame Admissions, so if you wouldn't mind talking about the essay section of the application.

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Definitely, I love the essay section, and I just love getting to know students. The way we do that is through the personal statement, which is the longer essay that you will submit on whatever application you use to apply, whether that's a QuestBridge application, the Coalition Application, or the Common

App. And then we have our supplemental essays and those are unique to Notre Dame. Many schools will have their own supplemental essays, so make sure you check that. I always like to note that we do not have interviews, so these essays are really how we get to know you.

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Every year we always have a question that's required of, "Why Notre Dame?" Why do you want to attend Notre Dame? What do you think that experience will be like for you? How do you hope it transforms you? This year, and in other years, we have additional questions. You are going to pick two questions to answer. Those are only two hundred words each, so they're pretty short responses. We don't have preferred topics, but I always recommend to students that you use those supplemental essays to tell us something we don't already know about you.

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You should not be reusing any part of your personal statement. You also should be really careful about not reusing essays from other applications. A lot of times that actually is pretty obvious to us, and it doesn't necessarily send the best message. So read the options you have and decide what you are most excited to answer. It's okay to try a few and just submit your best two. Please note that we do not need you to answer all of the questions. We're giving you choices because we want you to be able to pick what's best for you, but you do not need to answer all of them.

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I'm going to let Matt talk a little bit more about what resources we have to help you out with the essay section, knowing that that piece, and all of the pieces of the application can be a little bit difficult to navigate.

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Yes, definitely. We want to make sure that we provide the most amount of resources that we can to help you students who are applying. So if you do want to learn more about the application, and especially about some tips for writing the essays on your college application, we have on our website [admissions.nd.edu](http://admissions.nd.edu), blog posts from admissions staff, as well as some testimonials from current Notre Dame students that will address topics of the essays and how you can navigate those and write them to the best of your ability.

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Also, very recently, we hosted some virtual preview days. We had some virtual information sessions on a lot of topics geared toward the application, and one of those was tackling the college essay. So we had a couple of our Admissions staff members discuss the essays and what those are like, and how you can answer those to the best of your ability with the Notre Dame application. We also had a couple of staff members talk about extracurricular activities in your application. Feel free to check those out, watch those videos on our website, as well as understand and read the blog posts from current staff and students.

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Well, that is it for our explanation of the non-academic pieces of the application. We cannot wait to spend the next few episodes telling you more about financial aid, merit scholarships and life as a student on campus at Notre Dame. In the meantime, if you'd like to connect with us, feel free to send us a message on Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat @NDAdmissions, or you can follow Notre Dame Admissions on Facebook.