

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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Welcome back to College Bound Notre Dame Admissions Podcast. My name is Maria Finan, and I'm one of the senior assistant directors in the office. I'm also a Double Domer, so I not only received my bachelor's degree from Notre Dame, but I stayed for my master's degree as well. I'll let my co-host introduce himself before we dive into the topic of this episode.

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Everyone at Zach Klonsinski, assistant director here at the University of Notre Dame and a 2017 Notre Dame graduate. Coming to you live from campus in my favorite enclave where I have a nice view of our Golden Dome. I'm really excited to get rolling today.

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All right. So we are actually kicking it back to one of our kind of most popular episodes that we did in a previous season, which was admissions myths. So we're going to debunk a few more admissions myths for you, and we'll start off with some that kind of relate to the application itself. So, Zach, want to kick us off with that?

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Yeah, absolutely. I think one of the myths that is out there is that Notre Dame is not truly test-optional. You know, we did a whole session like kind of our early episode this season on test-optional and what that means and how we review with that. And yes, we are truly test-optional. So yes, go back and check out that first season if you want to learn more about submitting your test score or not. But we are truly test-optional. We want to see your strongest application and we are truly test-optional for other things like merit, scholarship consideration, and the honors programs that we look at through the application as well.

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We are truly test-optional. Absolutely.

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Thanks for that, Zach. I think that's always a piece that kind of causes some anxiety, especially as it relates to kind of merit scholarships and students' eligibility for those programs. Thinking about kind of specifically students applying from different schools. I think there are kind of two different myths we hear related to this one. One is that we only accept a certain number of students from specific high schools or that we have a preference for Catholic schools. And neither of those are true.

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We do not have a set number. We don't have quotas about how many students we accept from any school in any given year. A lot of times the variance just has to do with the number of applications we receive. Some students go to high schools where many of their classmates apply to Notre Dame. Other students go to high schools where they're the only one applying. And of course, want to reiterate that we do not have a preference for Catholic schools. Actually, if you look at last year's admitted students, 36% of students came from Catholic high schools and 45% came from public high schools.

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We had other students coming from private schools, charter schools, homeschooled. So we don't have a preference for school type and we don't have a preference for certain schools. That one is definitely a myth.

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Yeah, absolutely. Transitioning now a little bit to the nonacademic academic side and some that are related to our applications, but maybe on the again, maybe more activities related. I think there's myth out there that Notre Dame expects all students to do service in high school. And that's absolutely not true. Yes, this is an environment where a lot of students are very service-oriented and about 80% of our undergraduate students will engage in service by the time they graduate from Notre Dame, even though there's absolutely no service requirements here at the University.

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But we also understand that students are busy in high school and that you have a lot of demands on your time. Some of it may come from athletics or the arts or student government or other student. Your high school clubs can also be that you have to work or that you have significant family responsibilities, or that there's any number of other things that you might be doing. And there's no set recipe for activities that you should be doing. So no, you do not have to do service in high school to be competitive for admission at Notre Dame.

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I think kind of going along with that, we often hear students wondering, you know, do I have to like sports? Do I have to play sports to go to Notre Dame? We are a division one athletic school, which is a lot of fun, but we are not expecting you to know the rules of football. We see many of our students are involved in sports in high school. Last year's class, about 44% of student captain captained a sports team, which is pretty impressive. But 45% of students were involved in the arts.

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And I think there's a really amazing performing arts scene at Notre Dame. I would definitely say there are great theater performance groups that you can get involved with dance groups on campus. We have the oldest collegiate marching band, so although performing arts are maybe not as nationally well-known from Notre Dame, I would say there's a really great old arts culture on campus. And if you are a student who comes to Notre Dame and you're wondering, you know, can I go to a football game? I don't even know the rules, of course.

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Football 101 is something that many dorms actually put on before the first home football game. So it's kind of a crash course in what is football, you know, how do you score touchdowns? Where is the end zone? All of that. But again, not a requirement. We really value all the diverse interests, passions, lived experiences of all of our students.

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Transitioning now to maybe a few student life-related myths about Notre Dame. One kind of application-related as well, but transitions throughout your time here at the University. One myth is that you must know what you want to study when. You apply to Notre Dame and then kind of going with that, that it can be really hard to switch majors or colleges here at the University and to address the you must know what you want to study when you apply part. We will ask that you indicate something on your application.

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You cannot choose undecided. That is not a major that you can select on the application though. Don't worry, that is probably the most popular, quote unquote major for our first-year students here at Notre Dame. The average college student is going to change majors three times during their college discernment

process. And so we absolutely get it. We just want to have an idea of what is something that you're interested in. You might be one of six things that you're interested in or something that just sort of stood out to you that day when you're going through the application, right? We do. You do not need to know.

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And furthermore, we're going to help you in that process. If you do know what you want to study. Great. We're not going to hold you back. We're going to help you get those classes get rolling. You know, you wanted to be a doctor since you're the time you were three years old. Yes. We can get you rolling on that path right away and getting get you that experience in those classes to help you along your med school journey. But you can also come to Notre Dame and have no idea what you want to study. We have an incredible first-year advising team that really makes sure to get to know you and your academic passions and things that are of interest to you.

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You could say, Hey, I picked this major out of the hat to put on the application, but I really need help. I want to get exposed to a bunch of other things. Your first-year advisor is going to do a really great job of helping you along that discernment path. And then if you do decide that something is of more interest to you, you can absolutely switch that major. I had a friend here at Notre Dame who switched majors 11 times as an undergraduate and absolutely was still able to graduate on time. I wouldn't recommend doing it that much, but we are here to support you and understanding that your academic discernment journey requires flexibility from a university, and we're here to support that with great advising so that you do not have to do that or walk on that journey alone.

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I think another point of anxiety for students is whether or not Mass is required. So we really love the fact that so many of our students opt to get involved in faith life on campus. There are all sorts of different faith groups, so many opportunities for students to study theology. But Mass is not required. Mass is something that students choose to go to. It is open to students from all different religious backgrounds. So even if you are not a Catholic student and you're wondering, Can I go to Mass? Of course, we'd love to have you participate.

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Many students really enjoy getting involved with dorm masses. The Dylan Hall Milkshake Mass is probably the most popular mass on campus and has milkshakes afterwards, so lots of opportunities to come together in community. But at Notre Dame community building, it's really authentic. Practicing faith, talking about religion. Those are all pieces that we leave up to individual students to discern what they want to participate in and how they want to participate in faith life on campus. So whether you are a Catholic student, you're not Catholic ...

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You are a different religion. You are not practicing religion. Know that Mass is not required. But there are a lot of great ways for you to engage in a community that is very much focused on spirituality, faith, and really thinking about kind of Catholic social teaching as well. I think that I think is important to talk about kind of before we close out is something that I hear students worry about, which is, you know, how diverse is Notre Dame? What does that actually look like? So Zach, could you maybe talk about kind of all the different types of diversity that we have on campus?

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Yeah, absolutely. So we know that diversity in all of its forms is very important. It's also very important that we, you know, do the extra legwork to make sure everyone feels included and that everyone has a

spot here at Notre Dame, too. So I'll touch on that a little bit as well. But just geographically. Notre Dame's undergraduate student body hails from all 50 states and over 80 countries, extremely diverse geographically. I think the average student travels about 750 miles to attend classes here at the University. So you're meeting people from all over the world? Absolutely.

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33% of our incoming first-year class is a student of color. 19% of our incoming class identifies as first generation or is eligible for a Pell Grant, or has a household income of less than \$65,000. And obviously, if you are first gen, that does not necessarily mean that you're low socio-economic status and vice versa. But we do see a lot of correlation between the two of those, or at least kind of some overlap. So again, about 19% of our students come from that lower socioeconomic background or from a background where maybe they don't have a lot of family experience with higher education.

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So about one in five. Additionally, we have a ton of resources across campus to support students. Again, getting to that inclusion piece to make sure that everyone here at Notre Dame is able to have their best and most full Notre Dame experience. There's some great offices all over campus. The Multicultural Student Programming and Services Office does an incredible job. For we refer to it here as MSPS because we love our acronyms and the MSPS does a great job.

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We have a brand new center for diversity and inclusion in our student union building, the LaFortune Student Center, really excited to see everything coming from that program. We have an outstanding kind of group of scholars called the Transformational Leadership Program. This is especially geared to students who want to be taking advantage of resources at Notre Dame but need a little help finding them and maybe are not super familiar with coming to a university and all the different resources and processes that come with that. And so certainly a transformational leadership program, so excited to see what's coming in that in the next couple of years because there is only a couple of years old.

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And then finally, especially for students who may not be able to afford things like football tickets, you know, football tickets are \$40 a game, give or take. And so that can be a barrier for some students. And we do not want a student to come to our name and not be able to afford football tickets. That would be utterly tragic. And so we make sure that we work with our Office of Financial Aid and they work with the Office of Student Enrichment to really make sure that students are being taken care of for those additional kinds of soft costs of college. Might be that you need a winter coat, might need that you, might be that you need a new laptop or anything like that.

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The Office of Student Enrichment does a great job connecting our students with resources and the opportunities to make sure that, again, they are having just as full a Notre Dame experience than as compared to students who may be not experiencing some of those challenges. Coming to an institution like Notre Dame. Is Notre Dame perfect? No, it's not. You know, we're not going to say that we're perfect and that we don't have any more work to do. We absolutely do. I think every institution across the country is realizing this and working on this very hard.

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But really, we want to make sure that Notre Dame is a place for everyone and has spaces for everyone to come, exist, be their authentic selves, and really again, have their most authentic and most full Notre Dame experience.

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Awesome. Well, hopefully this helps with some of the kind of common myths that we hear. So hopefully a little bit more clarity about kind of what is true and what is not true about Notre Dame. Our last episode of the season will be coming next week, so we're super excited for that one and we'll be diving into the question of should you apply to Notre Dame? But in the meantime, thank you so much for joining us for College Bound. We look forward to talking with you next week.