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Welcome back to College Bound, Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. This is Maria Finan and I'm an assistant director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I am also what we call a "Double Domer," so I received my bachelor's and my master's degree at Notre Dame, and I once again joined by my co-host Zach. Zach, would you mind kicking it off, reintroducing yourself and reminding us what we're going to be talking about today?

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Yeah. Thanks again for having me, Maria. My name is Zach Klonsinski, I'm an assistant director with Maria in our Office of Undergraduate Admissions. I am also a graduate of Notre Dame, I do not have my second degree yet, I'm not quite as fancy as Maria, I guess you could say, but we're really excited to debunk some admissions myths today. A lot of it will be from a Notre Dame lens, but many of them are kind of general myths as well. And so things that we hope will help you in your process as you're thinking about in your college discernment process, thinking about what's important to you, where you want to go, things of that nature.

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So Maria, let you start us off?

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Yeah, Zach, so I think myth number one is that there's a magical formula that you can crack for admission.

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Yeah, no, that's not true at all. Maybe at some some institutions, maybe some state institutions, they will have some more posted kind of criteria, like if you have this GPA or this test score in this class rank, you know, maybe there is something like that, but especially at highly selective institutions like Notre Dame, we practice what is called "holistic review." And if you're ever confused about what that means, you can just Google "Notre Dame evaluation criteria" because we have a web page dedicated to this exactly on our website. So we're looking at everything, not just your academics, but your non-academics, what you're doing

outside the classroom, how others are looking at you, in terms of your recommendations and what impact you've really had during your time in high school.

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It's really important to us because everyone has different passions and that's truly what makes a college campus vibrant. We're not looking for the same kind of student every time, because that would be a really boring campus at the end of the day, right? We want people to have different passions. We want people to bring all of that to Notre Dame. And so there's no magic formula that can capture every single passion that is out there, and it's why we use this holistic review process and why we're something or why it's something that we're really excited about every year when we're reading applications.

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Another myth that is out there, Maria, is that freshman year doesn't matter. What do you have to say to that?

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Yeah, so for one, I was a high school English teacher for a few years, and my freshman students very strongly believe this, and it is absolutely a myth. We know that there is definitely an adjustment period in high school, but your freshman year still matters. We want to see you kind of increasing academic performance if you had a rough start freshman year, and your course selection is also an important factor that we're looking at. We hope that freshman year is a time that you're beginning to find clubs and activities that you're passionate about.

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So- if you happen to be a freshman listening to this, definitely take this year as an opportunity to do well in your classes and start thinking about, "What do you care about?" Alright, Zach, callback to last episode- a common myth is that testing is required, or that we even want to see testing.

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Yeah. And so if you recall from our first episode, Notre Dame was test-optional last year. We are test-optional for this upcoming cycle, as well as the next ones. If you're current high school junior or high school senior, we will be test optional, meaning absolutely not- testing is not required. We covered this at length on our first podcast episode, so I won't go too in-depth for it here, but we are truly test-optional, and I encourage you to listen to that first podcast episode if you have any further questions about thinking through test-optional, what that means at Notre Dame.

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Another very Notre Dame-specific question that we get a lot, Maria, is that being a legacy student, and you can also define what a legacy student is at Notre Dame, makes it easier to get in.

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Yeah. So first, to define legacy: a legacy would be a student who has a parent who has attended Notre Dame. Now I really want to state that all students, regardless of where your parents went to school or whether or not they went to school, must demonstrate excellence inside and outside of the classroom. So being a legacy will not just get you into Notre Dame.; every student here earns their place. Legacy is a factor we look at, like every other piece of information you include on your application. So we've talked a little bit about this idea of holistic review at various times, looking at all the pieces of an application. [Legacy] is just another piece of the application that we look at.

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And again, I do want to reinforce that being a legacy does not equal admission. A noncompetitive student will be a non-competitive student in our process, regardless of family ties to Notre Dame.

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Two quick things on that legacy as well. I think when we thinking of a legacy student, a legacy student at Notre Dame in our process is a mother or father who attended and received a degree from Notre Dame. It is not "my grandfather went," that "my aunt went." It is "my mother or father graduated from Notre Dame." Sometimes depending on the situations that can be stepparents and things of that nature, and that's obviously why we

have this holistic review process, is to consider every applicant in their proper context, but that is something to outline as you're thinking about, "What does legacy even mean at Notre Dame?"

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Yeah. So the "Notre Dame family" is something we talk about a lot. Some students will have older siblings who are attending Notre Dame, and I think a myth we see is that if you present almost an identical application to a sibling who applied maybe two years ago, you're automatically going to get in. Can you maybe speak to that kind of sibling relationship and also just what's happening with our application and review process?

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Yeah. So you'll notice in my definition of a legacy student, I did not include siblings because sibling does not make you a legacy student. And second, you are your own person. I know that if you're a younger sibling, you may have always had to live in the shadow of the person in front of you or the people in front of you. But the other idea is, you know, don't copy your siblings "just because." You know you are your own person, they're their own person. You're going to have two different passions. Do not feel like you have to follow in their footsteps just because they had a "recipe" or something that got them into a certain institution. That's not what we're looking for. You know, you are your own person.

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And then, second, every year it does become more difficult to get. Every year it seems we receive more applicants than we've ever received before, and that means, unfortunately, that we have to have a lower acceptance rate than we've ever had before. And so every year, it gets harder to get in and something that was admissible application two or three years ago may not be as competitive as you know, as it was in our upcoming cycle. So again, be your own person, though that's really more important to us, and we want to see that at this authenticity. Getting to know you and really making sure that we're understanding who we're admitting to the University of Notre Dame

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On that topic, Maria, there's another myth out there that oftentimes Notre Dame is perhaps an institution that does not have as much diversity as some other institutions, or that we are

composed of a of a student class that is predominantly wealthy, and I want you to speak to some of the things that that make that a myth.

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Yeah, definitely. So obviously, first, there are a lot of different ways to define diversity. And so I'll talk somewhat about kind of the ethnic diversity and also socioeconomic diversity, but I do want to own that geographic diversity is also something Notre Dame has; we have students from all 50 states and around the world. This past year, 48 percent of the students we admitted to the class of 2025 were international students or U.S. students of color. Over 39% of our first year class will have one of those background markers.

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I think it's also important to know that as we're thinking about things like socioeconomic diversity, that's also something that we're really committed to. Over 14 percent of our students are Pell-eligible. If you're not familiar with the Pell Grant, it's a federal grant for low income students. That is not going to include all the students who might be low income on campus, so there are international students who receive financial aid, and students who are undocumented or have DACA often aren't eligible for federal aid, and we're still committed to meeting aid for our undocumented and students with DACA.

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Thirteen percent of our class of twenty twenty five identifies as a first generation college student, so that is also another type of diversity. At Notre Dame, seventy percent of all of our undergraduates are receiving some kind of financial aid, so I think that really also speaks to that socioeconomic diversity piece.

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The median need-based scholarship for first year students this past year was fifty thousand dollars. So again, Notre Dame has a lot of socioeconomic diversity, in addition to that international, geographic, and racial diversity. And that's to say nothing of religious diversity and other types of diversity, some of which will hit on.

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If you are someone who is wondering about the affordability of Notre Dame, we have two great tools on our website, and I'm actually going to kick this over to Zach to just talk about some of the financial resources that Notre Dame has, and a little bit of information about financial aid and merit scholarships.

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Yeah. So two of those those tools that Maria mentioned, especially if you're trying to figure out, is Notre Dame an affordable option for me and my family? There's two great tools on our Financial Aid website. One is called the net price calculator. Essentially, every institution that receives federal funding around the country is required by law to have a net price calculator tool available on their website. That means basically every institution across the country has a net price calculator tool. It'll take a couple of hours to get through, it'll probably take some tax information from your parents, but at the end of the day, it will provide you an estimate of what a financial aid package might look like for you and your family.

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A simpler tool that we also offer, I believe, we're one of maybe a little bit less than a hundred institutions that partner with this organization, is a tool called MyinTuition. MyinTuition is seven questions long, you may not even need your parents to help you answer the questions and parents, you certainly will probably not need any tax information. And so at the end of the day, it will give you a wider range of estimates. And again, these are both estimates. We cannot program everything about a family's financial situation into one calculator. But at the end of the day, MyinTuition will give you a good range of estimates in a very quick manner to see what a financial aid package from Notre Dame may look like from you and your family.

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I know there's another kind of question or another myth out there of like when you apply to Notre Dame, impacts your financial aid, and that is not true at all. Whether you applied August 1st, you finish the application the first day it came out, or whether you apply January 1st at 11:59 p.m, we are committed to meeting 100 percent of your family's demonstrated need if you are admitted to the University of Notre Dame. You still have to fill out the FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, as well as the CSS Profile and provide some tax documents, but our financial aid office does an incredible job of getting to

know every family's financial situation, regardless of when they apply. You are still eligible to have 100 percent of your family's demonstrated need met through Notre Dame's need based process.

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Going into then another myth, family financial information is taken into account when reviewing applications, and that is not true at Notre Dame. There are about 67 schools across the country that are what we call "need-blind" and meet 100 percent of your family's demonstrated need. So I talked about that family demonstrated need right before this, but need-blind means that when we are reviewing a student's application, we know nothing about that family's financial situation unless they choose to share something with us. So it's really important to us that we are making decisions based on what the applicant has put in front of us, not because the applicant can afford to pay at Notre Dame. That is not something that we are taking into account for domestic students here at the university.

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The other thing is another myth of many institutions have merit scholarships that you need to apply for separately. That is not the case at Notre Dame. Your application to the university serves as your initial application for all of our merit scholarships as well. If you are nominated as a semifinalist based on your original application, you will then be invited to fill out a further application. But all you have to do to be eligible and to apply for all of our merit scholarships are to just apply to the University of Notre Dame and put your best foot forward on that application.

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Awesome. Thank you so much for that, Zach. So the last myth that I want to debunk is that you have to be Catholic to go to Notre Dame, and that is a myth. So about 80 percent of our students do identify as Catholic. We are a Catholic university, so that piece certainly makes sense, and we see a lot of Catholic students applying to Notre Dame. But Notre Dame is welcoming to students from all different religious backgrounds and those who might not identify as religious. Our Campus Ministry department on campus is really excellent and provides a lot of support for students.

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So if you are non-Catholic and you want to go to off campus services, they'll help you find rides to make sure that you can practice your faith. Mass is open to all on campus, and dorm Masses are a lot of fun, as we've already talked about in prior seasons, but Mass is never mandatory at Notre Dame. You can join different clubs related to your religious affiliation, so if you're Jewish, maybe you want to join our Jewish Club or if you are Muslim, maybe you join the Muslim Student Association. If you are someone who's interested in interfaith or faith sharing groups, Iron Sharpens Iron can be a great option.

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And if you are somebody who maybe is just curious about other religions, whether that's their major holidays or services, there is also a lot of opportunities to learn about other religions. So maybe you want to go to your first Diwali celebration, maybe you want to go to a Jewish Passover Seder or go to a local mosque. There's black ecumenical prayer at Notre Dame, and we even celebrate Eid al-Adha. So regardless of what your religious background is, Notre Dame is a warm and welcoming environment, and I'm going to have Zach close this off with a personal anecdote.

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Thanks, Maria. Yeah, it's really important to me to understand that Notre Dame is Catholic with a Big C, meaning related to Catholicism, while also Catholic with a little C, meaning "universal" and "welcoming." And while Notre Dame is a Catholic institution and I and I do work here, I am not a Catholic, nor am I really a person of faith. That being said, I absolutely loved my time at the university because Notre Dame will challenge you in a very organic and open way to ask the big questions like, "Does God exist? What kind of person do I want to be? How do I want to for my morals and ethics? How do I want to kind of exist in the world?" And all of that happens very naturally at Notre Dame.

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I did go to dorm Masses sometimes just because I love the communities. I did go to other occasional masses., the Easter mass in the Basilica is a must-do just because it is so gorgeous and such a great ceremony. But absolutely, I loved my time at Notre Dame. It was a welcoming place for me and it was really important for me to be asking myself these questions and developing my spiritual self, even if it was not necessarily in the same way that the Notre Dame is as a Catholic institution, it was really important for me, and as evidenced by the fact I still work here, I absolutely love the university and loved my



experience and know that it was really pivotal and an formational experience for me as a person.

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Well, thanks for sharing that, Zach, and to all of you listening, thank you for joining us this week. We're really excited to dive deeper into Notre Dame's history and mission next week. Thanks for joining us this week on College Bound. Have a great day!