

Using Disciplinary and Criminal History in College Admission

Charlie Carabello, University of Georgia

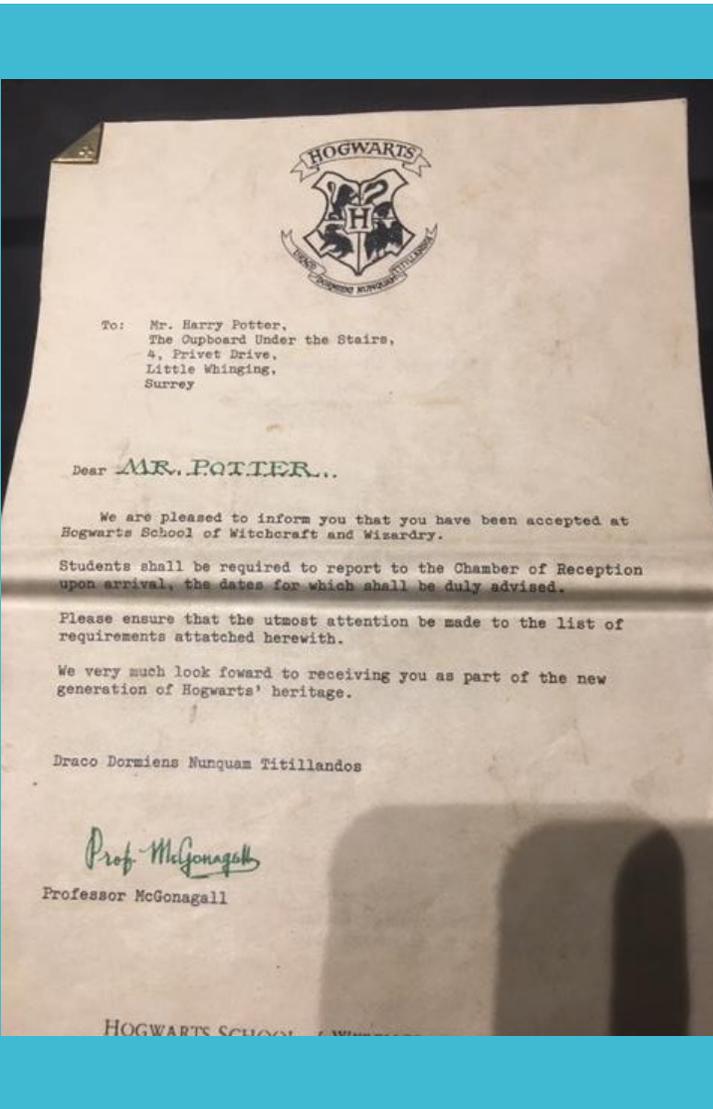
Wes Waggoner, Southern Methodist University (SMU)

Introductions & Session Norms

- Respect for each other's institutional context.
- Listen to learn.
- When you disagree, try first to ask a question for understanding.
- Share ideas and perspectives.
- Introduce yourself when you speak or ask questions.

Introductions & Session Norms

- You're going to need to pay attention...
- Everyone stand!
- Sit down if you are from a college or university.
- If your institution asks about criminal and disciplinary history on your application, turn toward and face the center aisle. If not, face the wall.



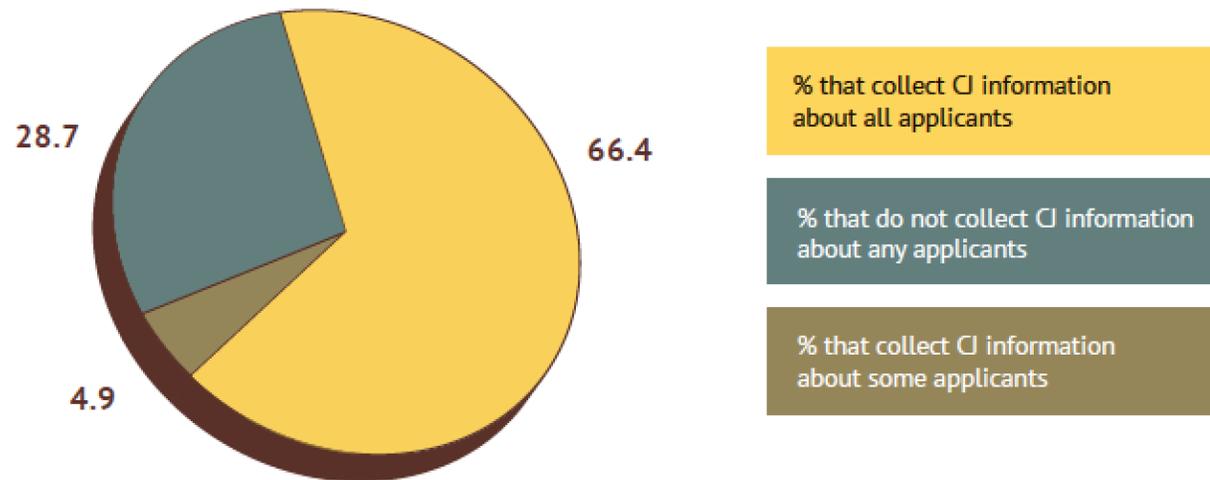
- Everyone, pull up a recent picture you took on your phone.
- For those who ask...show the room your picture if you are a private university.
- Again, for those who ask...show the room your picture if you are a public university.
- Now, for those who don't ask...show the room your picture if you are a private university.
- For those who don't ask...show the room your picture if you are a public university.
- Just to remind us, anyone who asks...raise your hand.
- If you ask because of state or local law, lower your hand.

Perspectives

- If you have a choice, why do you choose to ask the question?

Who asks?

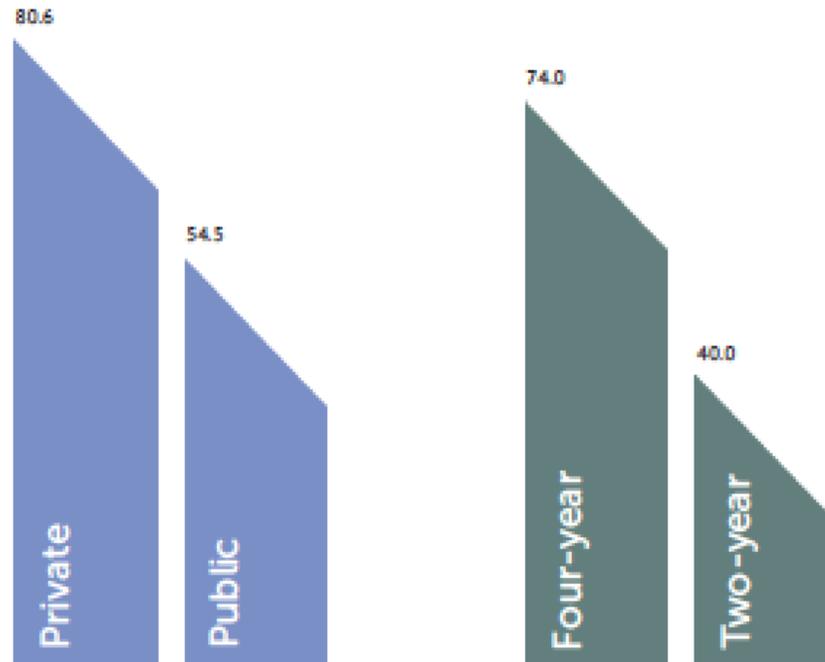
- Clear majority of institutions report using disciplinary or criminal records in their admission process.



Center for Community Alternatives. (2010).
Reconsidered: The Use of Criminal
History Records in College Admissions.

Who asks?

- Private institutions are more likely to ask.
- Four-year institutions are more likely to ask.
- Those who ask tend to be more selective in admission.
- Those who ask tend to be less diverse.



Center for Community Alternatives. (2010). Reconsidered: The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions.

Why do they ask?

In 2014 research, over 75% of those who ask cited at least four reasons:

1. Reduce violence 87.7%
2. Reduce nonviolent crime 84.2%
3. Reduce illegal drug use 82.1%
4. Protect against liability 76.8%

Pierce, M., Runyan, C., & Bangdiwala, S.I. (2014). *The use of criminal history information in college admissions decisions*. London: Taylor & Francis Group.
doi:10.1080/15388220.2013.870061

Arguments Against

- Using criminal histories exacerbates racial inequality in college admission.
 - Black and Hispanic applicants more often have criminal records. This is influenced by what statistics reveal are inconsistent enforcement patterns.¹
 - Reports claim that underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities as well as students with disabilities more often face disciplinary actions in K-12 schools.²
- Lack of evidence that collecting this information reduces crime on campus¹
 - Recent study at a large public university, those who had reported a discipline or criminal violation on their applications were more likely to commit a conduct violation. Still only 8.5% of them did so.
 - Only 3.3% of all graduating seniors with a conduct violation had reported having a conviction on their application for admission.
- Asking the question can lead to application attrition (not finishing the app) and reader bias.³

¹Pierce, M., Runyan, C., & Bangdiwala, S.I. (2014). *The use of criminal history information in college admissions decisions*. London: Taylor & Francis Group. doi:10.1080/15388220.2013.870061

² Abdul-Alim, Jamaal. (2015, May 29). Most colleges weigh student discipline records in admissions. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/05/29/most-colleges-weigh-student-discipline-records-in.html>

³ Jung, H. S. A. (2016). "Ban the box" in college applications: A balanced approach. *Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy*, 26(1), 171.

CCA Recommendations

Primary Recommendation

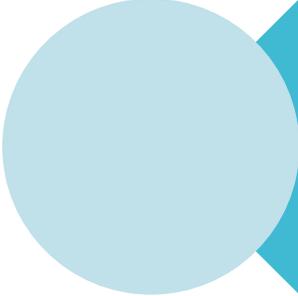
- Colleges and universities should refrain from engaging in criminal justice information (CJI) screening.

Secondary Recommendations

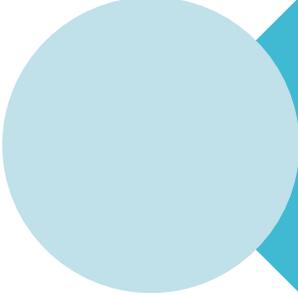
- Remove CJI disclosure requirement from initial application for admission.
- Limit disclosure requirement to specific types of convictions.
- Establish admissions criteria that are fair and evidence-based.
- Base admissions decisions on assessments that are well-informed and unbiased.
- Establish procedures that are transparent and consistent with due process.
- Offer support and advocacy.
- Evaluate the policy periodically to determine whether it remains justified.

Center for Community Alternatives. (2010). Reconsidered: The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions.

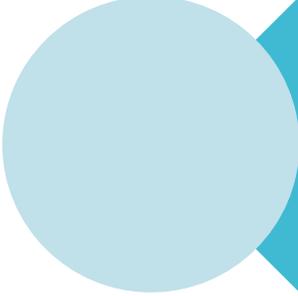
U of Georgia



Regular Admission
Review



Admission Case
Review



University Review

1. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the University to collect information about the prior disciplinary and criminal history of applicants for admission to SMU programs. This information may be considered as part of a holistic review of applicants when deciding whether to offer admission to a prospective student. An applicant's failure to disclose complete and accurate disciplinary and criminal history in a timely manner, as required in the application process, may result in the University revoking an offer of admission or rescinding that person's status as a student.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a welcoming learning and living community at the University where each member contributes in a positive manner. As a part of such efforts and in its pursuit of academic excellence, the University practices selective admission to its academic programs. Prior to an applicant's matriculation to the University, SMU will review each student's application materials including records of intellectual and extra-curricular achievements as well as past behavior. This review process determines the mutual compatibility of the applicant and the University.

3. Applicability

This policy applies to all applicants for admission to SMU academic programs.

4. Rules, Procedures, and Guidelines

Each academic unit, department or program will create and maintain application documents and a review process to ensure appropriate evaluation of applicants consistent with this policy. Application and procedural documents as well as guidelines shall be reviewed and approved by the Offices of the Provost and Legal Affairs to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, as well as to ensure consistency with best practices.

5. Questions

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Provost.



SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY TRANSFER ADMISSION STATEMENT OF GOOD DISCIPLINARY STANDING

Start Term for which you are applying: Spring Summer Fall Year: _____

TO THE SMU APPLICANT

After completing the questions below, give this form to the Dean of Student Life or other college official who has access to your disciplinary and academic records at your most recent institution.

Legal Name _____ Female
Last/Family/Sur (Enter name as it appears on official documents.) First/Given Middle (Complete) Suffix (jr, etc.)
 Male

Birth Date _____ Student ID # at this school _____
(mm/dd/yyyy)

Phone Number (_____) _____ E-Mail Address _____

RELEASE OF RECORDS: I authorize (school name) _____ to release my disciplinary information from my educational records to Southern Methodist University.

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

TO THE SCHOOL OFFICIAL

This section is to be completed by the Dean of Students or other school official with access to the applicant's disciplinary and academic records.

School Official's Name _____ Title _____

School Name _____ CEEB/ACT Code _____

School Address _____
Street Address City/Town State Country Zip/Postal Code

Phone Number (_____) _____ E-Mail Address _____

1. Is this applicant in good academic standing? Yes No

2. Is this applicant eligible to return to your school? Yes No

If you answered 'no' to either or both questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper to provide details.

1. Has the student ever been found responsible for a disciplinary violation at your institution, whether related to academic misconduct or behavioral misconduct, that resulted in a disciplinary action? These actions could include, but are not limited to: probation, suspension, removal, dismissal, or expulsion from the institution. Yes No

2. To your knowledge, has the applicant ever been arrested or convicted of a misdemeanor, felony, or other crime? Yes No

If you answered 'yes' to either or both questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper to give the approximate date of each incident and explain the circumstances.

This institution has a policy which prevents me from responding.

I would prefer to discuss this applicant over the phone with the SMU Office of Undergraduate Admission.

School Official's Signature _____ Date _____
(mm/dd/yyyy)

Applicants are expected to immediately notify SMU should there be any changes to the information requested on this form.

Please complete this form, sign, and mail or email to: SMU Office of Undergraduate Admission
 P.O. Box 750181
 Dallas, TX 75275
 ugadmission@smu.edu

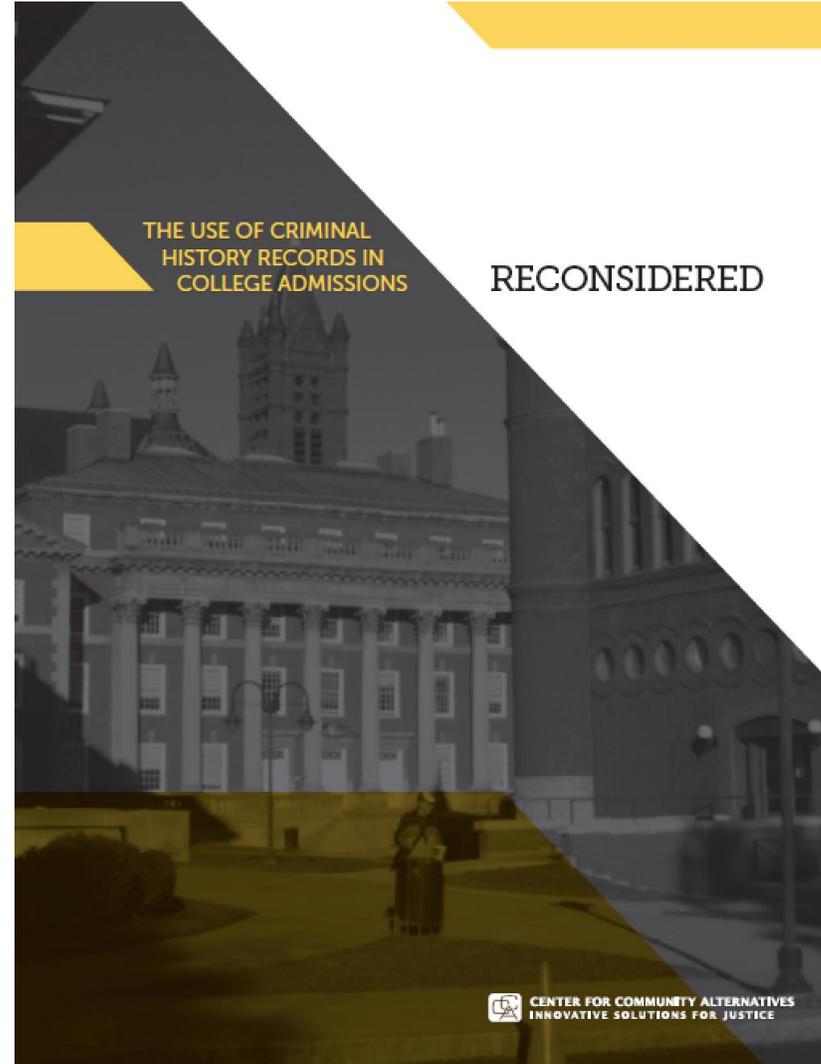
Further Thinking

- What is the policy and practice for conflicting or third-party information?
- Should you be consistency among undergraduate and graduate programs in the policy, questions, and process?
- Should we have one university committee or individual program/school committees?
- How to document your discussions and actions?

Your Move

- Have a policy
- Run it through legal
- Tap into experts on your campus
- **Follow your policy**

CCA Report



<http://www.communityalternatives.org/pdf/Reconsidered-criminal-hist-recs-in-college-admissions.pdf>

AACRAO Joint Task Force



U.S. GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE
(2018)

**K-12 EDUCATION:
Discipline Disparities
for Black Students,
Boys, and Students
with Disabilities**

AACRAO (2017)

**Disciplinary Notations
Guidance**

BROOKINGS INSTITUTE
(2017)

**Thinking 'beyond the
box': The use of
criminal records in
college admissions**

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION (2016)

**Beyond the Box:
Increasing Access to
Higher Education for
Justice-Involved
Individuals**

<https://www.aacrao.org/signature-initiatives/trending-topics/criminal-history-and-college-admissions/2>