

# **Standards-Based Grading & Reporting Practices**

## **Survey Information from College and University Admissions Offices**

### **November 2013**

*Survey created and conducted during the month of November 2013 by Becca Lindahl, Ed.D., and analyzed and compiled by Lindahl and Nikki Roorda, Ed.D., Heartland AEA 11 (Johnston, Iowa) employees.*

Twenty four college and university admissions offices were surveyed in November 2013. Included were several Iowa and Midwest community colleges; four-year private colleges and universities; the three Iowa Regents institutions; and selective universities on each coast such as Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and also Northwestern near Chicago. The survey contained eleven questions that were either multiple choice, free response, or ranking on a Likert Scale with 1 being the most important variable for college admission based on those presented, and 8 being the least important variable. A return rate of 41% was achieved, including information from the Iowa Regents institutions, 4-year private colleges, a selective university, and an out-of-state university.

Potential respondents were informed of the move to standards-based grading and reporting practices by local high schools. Common standards-based grading and reporting practices were explained in detail. Respondents were asked questions regarding how they would view local graduates' transcripts for admission in light of the explanation of the move to standards-based grading and reporting practices, considering letter grades will still appear on transcripts. They were asked about which variables were critical to their admissions process. They were asked whether they would prefer a traditional transcript with letter grades (past practice), a transcript with letter grades with an accompanying cover letter detailing a district's standards-based grading and reporting system, or a transcript with letter grades with pages attached that detail the standards the student has met. The final question on the survey asked whether a standards-based system's transcript submitted for admission would be a benefit, a disadvantage, or neither, to a potential incoming college student.

#### **Compiled results were as follows:**

*Following is the mode for the survey's named variables considered critical to the admission process, according to the respondents. Again, in an overall sense, for each variable below, a mode closer to 1 means that variable was important in their admission selection process, and a mode closer to 8 means it was not as important.*

Overall Student GPA (grade point average): 1

GPA based on specific core courses: 2

GPA excluding or including weight for honors, AP (Advanced Placement), or IB (International Baccalaureate): 1

Background from the high school on the school's students, grading scales, and academic rigor: 7

Class Rank: 1

Evaluation of a high school's past students and their success at the institution: 4

Required or recommended interview with an admissions officer: 5

Visits to high schools, where admissions officers can meet with guidance counseling staff: 6

The mode of preferred option of how a district should provide information about student achievement to admission offices:

A one-page transcript with letter grades with an accompanying cover sheet that describes the local district's standards-based grading and reporting system (eight colleges/universities).

Nine of the colleges/universities stated that the use of a standards-based grading and reporting system would not affect the student's application process.

It should be noted that the above compiled results were a combination of colleges and universities responding directly to the online survey as well as by e-mail and personal phone calls.

**Conclusions:** Data indicate that the admissions process for students in a standards-based grading and reporting system would not be hampered by the submission of a transcript reflecting such a system. Data also indicate that GPA, class rank, and the rigor of high school coursework weigh heavily in the admissions process. Colleges and universities report that a one-page transcript with letter grades with an accompanying cover sheet that describes the local district's standards-based grading and reporting system would be the preferred documents when making college application.