

English Transcript for *Santa Clara University: Part 4: Piece-by-Piece Evaluation*

We're back with Becky Connowitz from Santa Clara University. And now we're really going to put Becky to work and ask her to discuss each of the application components piece by piece. So Becky for the quantitative parts of the application. Can you tell us a little bit about what you look at and what you're looking for in each piece. And let's start with the transcripts, with the academic documents. >> Great. For the academic documents, we're really trying to assess the secondary school curriculum. So if your secondary school in your country is two years, three years, or four years, we want to see that whole, curriculum, for those number of years you were in secondary school, and then the marks you achieved. We will, in my case, if I'm not familiar with the country, I will make sure I become familiar so I can assess if you've achieved at the highest level possible in that curriculum. It may not be across all courses, so's we might have an applicant who's more geared towards the humanities than the sciences. But what I'm trying to understand is did you achieve at the highest level for your country, for your curriculum as it relates to what you are applying to at Santa Clara? >> Just a quick followup question to that one. So, many of the students I work with and a lot of the students, you know, taking this course are from a national curriculum and they worry about. How they'll be compared to students who are taking a US curriculum, for instance. How do you look at a student in a national curriculum when all students in the country take the same classes? How can you evaluate them, or how do you evaluate them? That's a great question. First and foremost we don't compare you to a U.S. curriculum student, so you're, that's not our practice at all. So we're going to look at student in their national curriculum and those leaving exams or those Mid-year exams. Any national exams we receive, we're going to look at how do you compare against all the other students in your country who took that exam, and a many times, those exam results give us that in a pretty transparent way, and we know that. so, that's what we are going to be looking at for those. It is not a you're not a disadvantage. Because we are looking at the curriculum you went through and it, it wasn't by choice. You, you are the curriculum that you take. >> Mm-hm. >> And so we're looking for those students who excelled against their peers in that same curriculum. >> Becky you mentioned national examination results, which we always draw the line that a national exam is. An exam you need to take in order to graduate from your countries secondary school system. When a student submits national examination results to you, do you look at them separate from the transcripts, in conjunction with the transcripts or how, how do you view national exam? Results. >> This is one of those it depends situations because national exams will vary around the world. My first recommendation is the student does complete that so they have a high school document proof of graduation from their secondary school because that may be important later, especially in their home country so we never want to deter a student from taking that. Final step in their process. However sometimes the timing doesn't work with our application process. So students will apply to a US university without that leaving exam cause they're not done yet, they haven't taken it or it's not offered till June but the application is due. In January so we often receive question about that. That is okay. We will request that those final leaving exams do come when they are available iff you are enrolling to our university. because we want to make sure that you completed your academic curriculum at the level to which you had said when you applied. So when you applied for admission you said you were going to be graduating from your secondary school with some predicted marks perhaps. And so we want to verify. So it's, it's on the condition that you've maintained that level and you will finish your secondary school.

So when the, national exams are available we look at them as a way of an academic assessment with the transcript. And so what we're saying is how did you achieve compared to all your peers taking this exam. And where, what courses did you take the exam in? And are they in preparation with the major of your choice to Santa Clara? >> But like you said, it does all depend, since national exams are so different from country to country. >> Correct. >> So. Great. [SOUND]. So now the question that strikes fear into all the hearts of all international students testing. >> Yes. >> So Santa Clara as you mentioned before requires students to take either the SAT or the ACT. First, does Santa Clara have a preference between the tests, and second, what is it that you're looking for in, in testing for international students. >> We do not have a preference. It's the ACT or the SAT. We only need one of those exams. I would encourage students to understand the exams first. Because they're tested and graded in two different ways. And so if you might have, a natural, tendency to be stronger in one exam over the other. So that would be a piece of research and advice I'd encourage. What we look for, it is, think of it as, it, it truly is, it's a standardized test that we require of all students, so we are comparing you in a standard way, your score results across all 15,000 applications that we've received. Please keep in mind, as an international admission officer, I understand that this exam is not meant for an international student. I understand that you might be doing math with our currency of quarters and dollars versus your home currency. Or maybe miles versus kilometers. I understand that those hurdles are there with these standardized exams that are met for a very US audience. However, especially, for example, with the math section, we do believe that students should have a certain level of comprehension especially with math-orientated majors such as math, computer science, engineering. The critical reading and the writing section is again, just a balance for us to understand are you ready to handle an entire academic curriculum in English. The test of English for TOEFL or IEL is testing your English. We want to understand your academic ability, and so that's really what that critical reading and writing. Is giving us information on. >> Mm-hm. >> Is that can you handle this environment completely in English? >> Mm-hm. >> But you will be helped in Santa Clara's review process to a similar level as domestic students and this is because we have plenty of international students who apply, who achieve quite well on those standardized tests. >> Mm -hm. >> It's not because we're trying to cause an extra hurdle for you, it's because we do attract students. Who have taken the time to study for that exam and have achieved at a high level. And, many of them will tell you that their national curriculum has already prepared them for some of the topics in the exams. >> And finally, an area you have already touched on a little bit. But English language proficiency testing, specifically the Tolforts or the ILs, when you look at those scores, what are you looking for? >> I'm looking for consistency, because those exams have several parts as you are aware of, everything from speaking to writing to listening. And to reading. And so I'm looking for a student who's consistent across all areas. Because it is a challenge in the U.S. classroom. You are expected to read a lot, to write a lot, to speak. >> Mm-hm. >> You have to give many presentations at Santa Clara. And so, I am making sure that a student whose second language is English, that they can handle our academic environment. So I look at that exam looking for consistency. The faculty at have set the minimum score. So they are the ones who've said at this level a student can, exceed, or succeed, in our classroom environment. So, for, for us, it's both, making sure the student can be successful, but it's consistent across. All venues of the English language. >> Along with testing another area of the application that causes some anxiety is the essay. Santa Clara's a part of the common application which you mentioned previously. And the common application requires all students to answer one essay question. In your opinion, what makes a good

essay? >> First and foremost that is was thoughtfully written with correct grammar, punctuation. Because ultimately you're coming to a university where you're going to have to write. >> Mm-hm. >> And so we're looking at that you have a strong. Understanding of writing well. And you've taken the time. It is ok to get help, it's ok to write multiple drafts, we encourage that. So, we're looking for a student who has a strong writing capability. The second piece is voice. And this is where, for an international student, it's a little bit more challenging, because you're often not asked to write this way. We are looking for a student who can tell us a little bit about themselves. In a way that we might not see that anywhere else on the application. It's a chance for them to maybe tell us about a personal background piece or about their family or about their culture and so we're trying to get to know them beyond the grades, the standardized testing. >> Mm hmm. >> So to, maybe have them come alive a little bit more. Along with the common application essay, Santa Clara also requires 2 supplemental pieces of writing. The first is, briefly describe how you learned about Santa Clara University, which is limited to only 150 words. So, what is it that you're hoping to learn from that questions? And why, why the short limit? Why so few words? >> [INAUDIBLE] [LAUGH]. For our purposes we just want the student to okay, I gotta start over, cause I'm not prepared to answer this question [LAUGH] oh, god. [LAUGH] Okay, Santa Clara would like to learn why you've decided to apply to us and so in a brief statement. Please be as honest and transparent, there's not a wrong answer. If you heard of us by researching us on a college board website or you heard of us cause your friends auntie told you about it. We're just looking for that. We're just trying to understand how Santa Clara's reputation is spreading around the world. [INAUDIBLE] >> Mm hm. So that includes this class, too, right? This interview that's going on. Great? >> Correct. >> [LAUGH] >> Yes. Please, please let me know if you heard about Santa Clara through this course. >> [LAUGH] Alright. The second supplement question, is, Santa Clara University's strategic vision promises to educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience. And compassion, and cultivate knowledge and faith to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world. What aspect of SCU's strategic vision appeals to you, why? Obviously, a lot of students are going to come to my office, my students are going to come to my office and say, wow, that's quite a question. So. From this question, what is it that you are hoping to learn about students, or what advice can you share for students that are answering this question? >> Yeah. The first piece of advice I would offer is if you, if you enjoyed the question, does it make you think in a different way? Did this get you excited for the mission and the values that we have on campus? We want this question to attract. Students who want to write an answer they get excited to write an answer >> mm hmm >> about this topic. So that, that should be a first clue on fit is this question is really meant to attract a student who, who is interested in these topics of creating a humane and just society and, and be a part of that. That growing trend, in the world around us. So what we're trying to hope to learn from this student is is their voice in this. A student can't be everything and anything, but we're hoping that maybe one piece resonates with them, and what is that piece? Again, there is no wrong answer. You might, feel more compelled to write about confidence, you may feel more. Inclined to write about humility. >> Hm-mm. >> But what we're trying to do is get at the answer of why does that piece resonate with you? So we can understand you again in a more three dimensional way- >> Hm-mm. >> Than just your grades and your standardized testing because you're going to be joining our community if we met you and you decide to enroll, and so we want to know what aspect of that community. We may see you in the future getting involved in. >> And at Santa Clara, how important are these essays in the context of the evaluation process, in the context of the

evaluation process, when you're deciding who's accepted and who's denied what role do these essays play? >> These, these are as important as every other aspect of the application because we are taking the time to ask them, and we are taking the time to review them. And so, they are important. Because, we know we're different than many other universities you're applying to and so we want to also try and find out how you're different among all of our other applicants. And so we think these extra questions will give us that clue. To who you are and how you may be different in offering, some unique aspects to our community. Santa Clara requires one academic letter of recommendation, letters of recommendation are something that's foreign to some cultures. So can you talk a little bit about what. In your opinion, makes a good letter of recommendation? And how do you use the letter of recommendation in the evaluation process? >> Yeah. This is, again, another area of it depends. We understand that many, education curriculums or teachers don't really understand the, the letter of recommendation for the purpose of university entrance, because it is not common and, Among systems around the world. So, we understand if we receive a letter of recommendation that does not give us what we need it does not hurt the student's application. But we hope the student would take some time, to maybe educate their teacher. And the things that we look for is to provide context for the student. In their academic learning, that we would not know about just looking about their grades. >> Mm-hm. >> So things that, resonate in a lot recommendations, do they, are they naturally curious? A teacher knows that in their classroom. >> Mm-hm. >> That if a student is naturally curious. Is it a student whose, whose developed some discipline to turn in their work on time and, and study extra. Or maybe they're a student who tends to help out those students who don't understand the subject very easily. >> Mm-hm. >> And they have patience to teach. >> Mm-mm. >> And be a peer tutor. So we're looking for key characteristics that we can't learn from just a grade or result on a national exam. So I hope, as international students, if you're asking somebody to write a letter of recommendation from an academic standpoint, if they're unfamiliar with the process, to educate them a little bit. But certainly if you can't get that across it's not going to be something, at least from a Santa Clara perspective that we're going to hold against you as the applicant, because we understand that it's not a normal process in many curriculums around the world. >> As a common application school, Santa Clara requires students to submit school forms. Actually, I should say, as a common application school, the common application [LAUGH] >> [LAUGH] >> requires students to submit school forms. How important are the school forms in the evaluation process? >> Yeah. Great question, Eric. I think the first piece is to know that when this is a requirement It is a piece that really helps complete you application for review. Now how we evaluate it is a different story. >> Mm hmm. >> First off I always tell my international students if your resourceful enough to get this form filled out. >> Mm hmm. >> By a non native English speaker in your school that's pretty amazing to me, because it is a complex form. And so, I value that resourcefulness, that a student can submit this and get an administrator to do that. So please work hard at doing that, because that will stand out. But how we actually use the form will depend on what information is filled out. some, some of the information, for example, is, how many students are in your class? So we have a sense of your learning environment. Mm hmm. >> It may ask, it may answer a question about the curriculum your on, so it's verifying that a school administrator's telling us you're on national leaving exams. >> Mm-hm. >> Or that you're on a curriculum that is different, that we may need to do a little more research on. It will also give us information about your peers and do they go on to. Go on to university work. Are you in an academic environment where everybody is trying to get a higher

education, and so we can again put you in context of the environment. But the biggest message I hope I can get across to international students is many of these forms are complicated enough meant for national. Curriculums around the world. So, international students do have a hurdle with them. But if you can be resourceful, and find a way to fill, have an administrator fill it out. You've stood out in our application process. >> The common application has a section for students to list their activities. But on the Santa Clara supplement. You do something unique, which is allow students to upload a resume. So what information do you recommend a student to include on their resume, and do you have any tips about how long it should be or what they should focus on or how to model it, anything about the resume, that, that you'd like to share. >> Yeah, great question. I'm really glad [INAUDIBLE] allow students to upload a resume or a CV. But my advice is, Don't leave that extracurricular section blank on your Common app, because then that shows us, that you didn't care to fill out a section. So make sure you fill out that section as best as possible. The resume for an international student is really a chance, on one page, maybe two pages. Six or seven is too much and we won't get to that but one to two pages explain your community roles. Explain any leadership opportunities, any additional outside of school activities or camps or work shops you've been a part of. And I think for an international student, you can design that resume as flexible as you want. It's really about how you want to get the information across. The biggest piece of advice is, don't forget number of hours. Because that explains in a very quantitative way how involved you were in the community or how involved you were in this extra summer program or how involved you were in this internship with your father's business. Hours can really help us. There's a difference between 10 hours a week and 30 hours a week, and so that would be the one piece that I think international students leave out is quantifying those involvements on a resume. Otherwise, I think keeping it one to two pages and letting those, Bits of information about what you're involved in beyond the classroom is really helpful in our review process. >> This one may be a little trickier, but international students will come to me a lot and say, well my high school isn't like a US highschool. We don't have clubs or activities. So do you, as an admission officer do your expectations for activities, and involvement, and outside interests, do those expectations differ for international students? >> Yeah, great question. They do differ slightly, but remember, you're applying to a pool of students that maybe found ways to meet those expectations of ours, because they knew they wanted to apply to US system. So just because it maybe wasn't available at your highschool, we realize that, but just know, there are applicants who found. Other ways. >> Mm-hm. >> So that's to put that in context. But we do understand that. That is a very American model of, of again developing soft skills outside the classroom. >> Mm-hm. >> But, you'll be surprised. We read applications every day from countries around the world where extracurriculars are not valued. >> Mm-hm. >> And somehow they're. Our students were able to show us that they are more than just their leaving exams. And they may do that through NGO work, summer work, helping their parents' business in some way taking care of a large family traveling, so, there is a way to showcase that you are more than just your leaving exams. And if you're taking this course as a younger student and you have time,. To go out and strengthen you extracurricular activities. I highly recommend, looking into non-profit work with NGOs. I highly recommend talking to your school about starting a club. We often read student's applications and they were the first to start, an inter-school soccer tournament, and that's the student we want on our campus. They decided to make a change in their school. There's a lot that's being published about demonstrated interest. At Santa Clara, do you consider demonstrated interest in the evaluation process? And why or why not? >> This is another one

of those depends. Demonstrated interest would be very challenging for an international student to show us mostly because I think for a student that lives 30 minutes away from our campus, we would expect them to have visited. >> Mm-hm. >> 30 minutes take the time. But for an international student that might have a 10 hour flight to visit us we would never have that same expectation. >> Mm-hm. I think it's a little bit more subtle- >> Hm-mm. >> For an international student to submit an application, and, and know something about us can come out in those extra supplemental writing. But. >> Hm-mm. >> We don't weight it as heavily as we might for other students because given the context of the distance- >> Hm-mm. >> Demonstrated interest wouldn't be something I would say an international student has to be concerned with. In our process. >> So you alluded to it a little bit with demonstrated interest coming through in the writing supplements. But, are there other ways at Santa Clara that a, an international student could demonstrate interest in the University without visiting? Absolutely. I mean, first and foremost, I think, a student who is actively engaged with the application process. >> Mm. >> So they have emailed with good questions that aren't, the answers are not easily findable on our website. >> Mm-hm. >> Students who have checked in and then maybe introduced themselves to the International Admission Counselor, like myself. >> Mm-hm. >> I think international students who have connected with a current international student. >> Mm-hm. >> Again, shows that you're engaged. You are trying to understand who we are. And let us know that. So participating in any web chats or Skype chats that we have as you're applying would be a welcome way to demonstrate your interests to Santa Clara. We'll let you think about that for a minute, and we'll be right back.