

English Transcript for *Rhodes College: Part 3: The Evaluation Processes*

Now that we've heard about the application process from Rhodes, we're going to hear from Lauren Sefton, Associate Director of Admissions at Rhodes College, about the evaluation process that they use when reviewing applications. Just to begin. How many spaces does Rhodes have in a first year class? And how many applications do you receive to fill those spaces? >> Mm-hm. Last year we received about 3,700 actionable applications, for a first year class of about 550 students. And of those, about 215 applications came from international students. >> So now that we've learned about your requirements and about the numbers, can you walk us through the evaluation process? Beginning with when an international application becomes complete. Until the decision is made and, maybe you can include some information about who is making that decision. >> Absolutely. There are two staff members in our office that work primarily with international students. Myself, and a woman named Kristin Wilkinson. And so, once a student, an international student, submits an application, they'll receive an email from one of the two of us, just touching base, and letting them know that we're excited that they've applied, and we look forward to receiving the rest of their application. Once their application becomes complete, then the application is first evaluated by a member of our staff, where they take a close look at the transcript. And basically, it's kind of a check to make sure that all documents are complete, that we have the information academically that we need to render a decision. And they do a quick count of rigor of curriculum, and grades. Then the application gets passed to a first reader. Either Kristin or I tend to be the first reader for international applications. We're the ones most familiar with the schools, most familiar with the country requirements, most familiar with different cultural experiences that students have from these countries. And so we read the application, and will render an admission recommendation as a first reader. And then the application gets passed to a second reader. If Kristen has read it, it gets passed to me, if I read it, it gets passed to Kristen. So that we can verify and confirm decisions and, and gut reactions to, to a folder. And then for a third read all international files that are admissible, get passed through our dean, our vice president for enrollment Carrie Thompson. And so there are quite a few sets of eyes on every single application, international applications especially. It's a great human process, we get to really explore the application, and get to know the students throughout it. And hopefully render a, a fair decision. >> It's pretty impressive how many people will actually read the application. But that brings us to the big question of, how does Rhoades decide who's accepted, and who is denied? >> Mm-hm. So we're so fortunate to have a great applicant pool of international students, and I wish we could admit every single one of them. >> Mm-hm. >> But there's not space, nor is every single student qualified. And so, the very first and most important question that we ask ourselves in the admissions process is, is this student capable of doing the work at Rhodes? Is the student going to be successful academically. Academics certainly play the greatest role, in our admission decision. Because Rhodes is challenging. It's challenging without being competitive, but there's a great sense of rigor. And so we want to make sure that students have the academic foundation to be successful. >> Mm-hm. >> Not just in their first year, but in all four years that they are at Rhodes. >> Mm-hm. >> And, so, the biggest decision, the most important decision. >> Mm-hm. >> Is looking at the student's academic records and figuring out will they be successful. >> Mm-hm. >> Academically. The answer to that question is yes. >> Mm-hm. >> The second question is, what can the student offer the Rhodes community? And looking at their extracurricular accomplishments, and their level of citizenship,

and what they will bring to our campus community. International students bring so much in terms of cultural and geographic diversity and global perspective. Our students are eager to share those perspectives in the classroom. In fact, over three-quarters of our students will study abroad. So they're looking for that global interaction. And when we can bring international students to our campus, that brings the world immediately into the Rhodes classroom for all of our students. And so, what are, what are our applicants going to bring to our campus community? Once we get a sense of that, the third question And I would argue, well academics are the most, but I think this really is the second most important question, is Rhodes the right fit for the student? A Liberal Arts and Sciences education, well I think, is amazing. Is not going to be the right fit for every single student. And if a student is passionate about starting with Engineering from their freshman year, and they solely want to look at Engineering, then Rhodes is not the right place for them. But if they're excited about exploring options along with engineering, doing those internships, doing the research, making those connections across campus with faculty and with their classmates, that gives us a sense. So, are they capable of doing the work? What will they bring to the Rhodes campus? And, is Rhodes the right fit? And hopefully by the time we answer all three of those questions, we've got a pretty good sense of who we can admit to our incoming class. >> Rhodes has around a 55 percent acceptance rate, meaning you accept about 55 percent of your applicants. Can you put that into perspective for us? >> Mm-hm. What that means is, Rhodes is a selective institution. >> Mm-hm. >> We what it means for me, as an Admission Counselor, is that I get to say yes. I get to admit about half the students that I meet during my travels. And that's a really exciting thing I think. It also means, when it comes down to trying to figure out who to admit academically, we want to make sure that we're admitting the right class, but it's also looking at shaping a full incoming class. And making sure that we have lots of perspectives. In that class we also have to look at institutional priorities. And these are sometimes things that prospective families have no idea are even in play. It could be something as simple as we created a new lacrosse program three years ago, and so we were in search of lacrosse players to fill the new program. For some institutions it might be that they are graduating their best tuba player from an award winning marching band, and they need a new tuba player, those are some institutional priorities that students can't control. Students will probably never know about, but they do impact our decision making. But for the most part we're really pleased that we get to admit about half our students who apply. I think it also on some level means that students are doing their research, and being thoughtful in the college search process. I think that means that students, our applicants, are taking the time to be thoughtful in making sure that Rhodes is the right fit for them, before they choose to submit an application. >> So you mentioned that first question that you ask, about, academics, and being, academically successful. How likely is it that an academically qualified student would be denied admission? And why would an academically qualified student be denied admission at Rhodes? >> Mm-hm. If you look at our overall applicant pool, about eighty to eighty five percent of our applicants are actually academically admissible, and so we simply don't have the space to admit and enroll eighty five percent of our applicant pool. And not enroll everybody and still be able to provide the level of service and personalization and individualization that you get at a small school with 2,000 students. And so, unfortunately, we simply don't have the space to admit everybody who is academically admissible. And that's when you start looking at those institutional priorities. That's when you start looking at community citizenship. and, it becomes less about the student and more about the other applicants. And looking at the number and nature of the applicant pool in its entirety. Which is a

little bit difficult I think for a student to understand, because it's such a personal process and you're suddenly asking them to take the personal out of process when looking at the greater applicant pool. For our international applicants, it oftentimes will, oftentimes, it sometimes will come down to finances. We are need-aware for our international applicants, and we recognize that we cannot afford to fully fund every international applicant who is academically admissible. >> Mm-hm. >> In order to come to Rhodes. And so we do ask international applicants to contribute a certain level of, of finances to their college education. And if we're not going to be able to, to meet their need or meet what they can make Rhodes affordable with, scholarship money. Then it may not be a, the right fit for them to, to join our community. And then in general, for international and U.S. citizens, I think a lot of it comes down to fit, and something called demonstrated interest, which I think we'll get to in a little bit. [LAUGH] >> Lauren, you've mentioned fit, a couple times, in your answers to the last questions. How much does Rhodes emphasize the fit between the college and the applicant when making the admissions decision? >> Very much so, and I think every small school would have that response. It really is about the fit because your four year experience at Rhodes. It's not just in the classroom. It's an entire four year experience on campus, in the city as part of a community, as part of a living and learning community. And so, it really is about fit and shaping an entire class and how a student will fit into that class. We ask a lot of our students, academically and socially. And so, I think fit goes both ways in trying to figure out whether or not, Rhodes is the, the right place for a student to choose to be in. And I think we make that decision in that determination on fit in our vision decision. And applicants make that decision on fit, at both the beginning and the end of the process. So they get the last word. They let us know that they think Rhodes is the right fit when they apply. And send us that signal with an application. But then when they make their final college choice, they ultimately get the final decision to determine whether or not Rhodes or whatever their institution of choice is is the right fit. >> And that's a, a really interesting way to look at it. That, and you're right. The student does have the final say about fit. But from Rhodes' perspective. How can you actually tell who's a good fit, and who's maybe not such a good fit? >> Our former dean of admission and financial aid used to refer to the five P's, and we still use that as a benchmark today to determine a good fit. I'll run through the five P's and then clarify them a little bit. But they are performance, program, potential, participation and personality. The first P is performance and that's academic performance. Looking at how a student is performing academically over the course of their four year's high school performance. And looking at their transcript for the most part. The second P is program, and that's paying attention to the rigor of curriculum. I mentioned Rhodes is challenging, and we're looking for students who are excited to embrace that challenge. And we can read between the lines in the transcript to see if a student has taken advantage of additionally challenging courses. Honors-level courses, Advanced Placement, international baccalaureate, whatever their high school may offer. If they offer an additional level of rigor, we want to know about it. And sometimes, we can understand that through the council report, and sometimes we rely on the student to determine, to explain that in their application if we're not as familiar with the school system. And so we're looking at performance in program, most importantly. But the third P is potential, and that's measured by standardized tests. Either the ACT or the SAT gives us a, a guidemark of what their potential might look like over the course of four years at Rhodes. The fourth P's, the fun P, of participation. And that's looking at how a student contributes to the world around them. Whether it's through clubs or sports. After school job, whatever it is their doing with their church community, their local community, their high

school community. How are they getting involved? How are they participating? Because chances are if they're participating on the high school level, they'll continue to participate in, some way, on the college level as well. And the final piece for personality. And that shines through in the student's essay, in the recommendation letters, if they do an interview or if we meet them when we're traveling. Or if they are lucky enough to have the opportunity to visit our campus, maybe during their summer break. We get a sense of who they are as an individual. We rely on those five Ps quite a bit in evaluating applications. I was hoping that you could address a popular myth among international applicants. Does Rhodes have quotas or limits on students that they can accept from a single country? >> No. We do not. We're looking for a wide diversity of students on our campus. So when we look at the research, data tells us that, smaller selective schools, like Rhodes, put a lot of weight on the, quantitative parts of the application, the grades and test scores, the numbers. But that as a smaller school, there's also a lot of weight put on the qualitative parts of the application, the, essays and recommendations, some of the things that you've mentioned already. Is that true at Rhodes, and if so, how do you balance the quantitative with the qualitative? >> Yes, that's very much true. At Rhodes, we have a holistic process. Our holistic approach to our admission process, and so we're looking at everything a student sends us. From the official documents to an art portfolio that we didn't even ask for. What we look at all. And so, academics come first and foremost. They are most highly emphasized in our admission process, but everything else, holistically, is pretty much a close second in that rank order list of priorities. It's definitely a human art, not an exact science. The application doesn't go through a computer system, it doesn't spit out an answer at the end. We can't predict if you have x GPA and y test score you're automatically going to get this kind of admission decision. >> Mm-hm. >> Or this kind of scholarship. It's very much a holistic review. >> And we'll be right back to hear more from Lauren about the individual pieces of the application.