



Community Service and College Admissions Survey:

# DOES IT MATTER?

September 2008

## Executive Summary

In the summer of 2008, Do Something surveyed admissions officers of top colleges and universities in the United States. The purpose of the Community Service and College Admissions Survey is to understand the importance of community service in the college admissions process. Does it matter? Are there kinds of service that are more meaningful than others? The results of this survey are summarized in this document.

## Methodology

Do Something surveyed these college admissions officers to assess the impact that community service has on the college admissions process. The Community Service and College Admissions Survey is composed of 22 questions. The questions are a mixture of multiple choice, yes or no, and fill in the blank.

The Community Service and College Admissions Survey was administered from June 28th to July 28th, 2008. Do Something received feedback from 25 of the top 50 colleges and universities, as compiled by US News and World Report. Do Something required that participants be a currently employed admissions officer, responding on behalf of his or her college or university.

## About

Do Something is a 501(c)(3) national not-for-profit organization, which believes teenagers have the power to make a difference. We leverage communications technologies to enable teens to convert their ideas and energy into positive action. We inspire, empower and celebrate a generation of doers: teenagers who recognize the need to do something, believe in their ability to get it done, and then take action. All rights to the Community Service and College Admissions Survey are the property of and reserved by Do Something®.

## Highlights

Below are five major findings of The Community Service and College Admissions Survey.

### Passion and Consistency Valued Most

When asked, "Which would you value more: four years volunteering at a local community center or one month helping orphans in Somalia?" 100% surveyed chose four years at a community shelter. This response indicates passion and consistency hold much higher value than a smaller, even more intensive program. This theme is reiterated in the entire study.

### Time Spent Worth More than Money Raised

When asked, "Which would you value more: raising \$100,000 for the homeless or spending a summer working at a homeless shelter?" 68% surveyed valued time spent over money raised. While raising such funds is admirable and impressive, time spent indicates the universality of volunteerism. Anyone can find a homeless shelter where they can volunteer, but not everyone has the ability to ask for money. Admissions officers "get it." They are looking for evidence of actual service, not the ability to connect with wealthy people.

### Community Service Ranks Fourth Amongst Valued Criteria

When asked to rank GPA, SATs, legacy, reference letters, extra curricular activities, and community service, 37.5% surveyed ranked community service fourth. While GPA and SATs are obviously the most valued criteria, community service ranks higher than then legacy and reference letters. Quite simply, hard academic numbers remain the most standard and significant factors of getting into a top college, but community services are noted and valued experiences.

### Organizational Affiliations Don't Matter

When asked, "Does being a member of a service organization like the Boy Scouts have more or less weight than an unaffiliated student volunteering?" 84% surveyed gave no weight to such affiliations. One admissions officer noted, "Service is service, that's always a good thing."

### Tell Your Story Well

When asked to list the three words admissions officers most like to see when students describe their community service, the most recurring words were "commitment," "passionate," and "dedication." When asked to list the three words admissions officers least like to see, most recurring were "required," "mandatory," and "tedious." Therefore, when describing community service, it should include positive and encouraging descriptors, rather than words of obligation.

The full Community Service and College Admissions Survey is published by Do Something.  
To procure a copy of the full report, or for additional questions, please contact [survey@dosomething.org](mailto:survey@dosomething.org).  
This executive summary can be found online at [DoSomething.org/survey](http://DoSomething.org/survey).

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