

# Weighted v. Unweighted Grades



What research, colleges/universities, and other high schools are saying

# What Research Is Showing...

- Weighted GPA
  - Should reflect relative rigor of high school course load
  - Not used in comparing with other applications due to the fact that the weight a school assigns to each class varies, and straight “A” students can graduate with different weighted GPAs depending on the school they attended
  - Usually colleges strip down the weighted GPAs to fairly compare one student against another
  - Weighted GPAs are more deceptive (adjusted thinking would be necessary)
    - Calculating is harder

# What Research Is Showing...

- Unweighted GPA
  - Most colleges use unweighted GPA as the best reflection of a student's high school performance
  - Easier to calculate
  - Doesn't take the difficulty of a student's coursework into account so colleges will have to do the work digging into the actual course-load taken
  - Students who have taken accelerated classes may have lower GPAs on this scale
  - Allows schools and award providers to see a student's performance on the same scale, regardless of the school they attended

# What Research Is Showing...

- “Real” GPA
  - Many colleges are getting rid of “fluff” courses and creating a GPA based on core classes
    - English/Language Arts
    - Social Sciences
    - Science
    - Math
    - Foreign Language
- College admissions officers are aware of the limits of the unweighted system and look closely at course records to determine whether or not a GPA is an accurate reflection of academic potential
  - Admissions committees look at coursework in conjunction with GPA to reach conclusions about a student’s academic potential

# What Research is Showing...

- “Throwing out” applications
  - Universities do not get rid of applications that are under a specific GPA level because the GPA is only a part of the acceptance decision
  - If a GPA is a bit lower than the required GPA, or does not have some of the “required courses” needed, the admissions counselor is going to look deeper into the transcript
- What are they looking for?
  - Colleges want to see what courses have been taken and how well the student has done in those courses
  - Colleges want to see what all is offered at the school because every high school is different and offers different classes
    - “Colleges want to be able to compare your high school, with its three AP classes, and an NYC high school offering twelve AP courses, fourteen languages, and advanced hot yoga as a PE option.”
  - Make sure the college admissions essay discusses any discrepancies and ask the counselor/a teacher to speak to it on his/her letter of recommendation

# What Research Is Showing...

- Resources:

- <https://greatcollegeadvice.com/weighted-or-unweighted-gpa/>
  - Montgomery, Mark. “Weighted or Unweighted GPA?” *Great College Advice*, Montgomery Educational Consulting, [greatcollegeadvice.com/weighted-or-unweighted-gpa/](https://greatcollegeadvice.com/weighted-or-unweighted-gpa/).
- <https://greatcollegeadvice.com/calculating-your-real-grade-point-average-gpa/>
  - Montgomery, Mark. “How Do I Calculate My Real GPA?” *Great College Advice*, Montgomery Educational Consulting, [greatcollegeadvice.com/calculating-your-real-grade-point-average-gpa/](https://greatcollegeadvice.com/calculating-your-real-grade-point-average-gpa/).
- <https://blog.prepscholar.com/weighted-vs-unweighted-gpa-whats-the-difference>
  - Lindsay, Samantha. “What’s the Difference? Weighted vs Unweighted GPA.” *SAT/ACT Prep Online Guides and Tips*, PrepScholar, 8 Mar. 2018, 8:00 pm, [blog.prepscholar.com/weighted-vs-unweighted-gpa-whats-the-difference](https://blog.prepscholar.com/weighted-vs-unweighted-gpa-whats-the-difference).

# What Research Is Showing...

- Resources Continued:
  - <https://www.scholarships.com/news/weighted-vs-unweighted-gpa>
    - Scholarships.com Staff. “Weighted vs. Unweighted GPA”, *Scholarships.com*, Scholarships.com Publisher, <https://www.scholarships.com/news/weighted-vs-unweighted-gpa>
  - <http://smartcollegevisit.com/2018/11/weighted-unweighted-gpa-colleges-use.html>
    - Kiley Thompson. “Weighted or Unweighted GPA: Don’t Freak Out Over the Numbers”, *Smart College Visit*, Smart College Visit, <http://smartcollegevisit.com/2018/11/weighted-unweighted-gpa-colleges-use.html>
  - Phone calls with UMass and Boston College

# What Colleges Are Saying...

- **Yale University GPA Policy**
  - “Since each high school has different ways of measuring student grades, Yale does not have an average GPA calculated for accepted students. The admissions committee does not prefer weighted or unweighted GPAs, instead they prefer to see that students have challenged themselves with the strongest curriculum possible at their high school.”
- **University of Southern California GPA Policy**
  - “There is no minimum requirement or absolute “cutoff” for grades, class rank or test scores. USC evaluates prospective students through an individualized, comprehensive review process that takes these, and many other factors, into account.”



# What Colleges Are Saying...

- University of California GPA Policy
  - UC has a specific way to calculate the GPA required for admissions and different standards for non-California residents
    - For non-California residents the minimum GPA is 3.4 in all college-preparatory courses
      - 2 years of History, 4 years of English, 3 years of Mathematics, 2 years of Lab Science, 2 years of Foreign Language, 1 year of Visual and Performing Arts, 1 year of College-Preparatory Elective (*comes from an additional year/advanced version of the previously listed subjects*)
  - “Honors courses are calculated differently. UC will grant honors weight for AP or IB courses only, but not for school-designated honors courses. The weight is given to letter grades of A, B, or C.”
  - Admission by exception: “Sometimes even the most creative, focused and intellectually passionate students aren’t able to fulfill our admission requirements. Even these students have a chance to attend UC.”

# What Colleges Are Saying...

- **Massachusetts Undergraduate Admissions Standards for State Universities/Colleges**
  - “Minimum GPA for freshman applicants, weighted for accelerated courses, is 3.0. However, if an applicant does not have an average weighted GPA of 3.0, s/he must earn special SAT or ACT scores”
  - Special Admissions Applications
    - “...may be admitted based upon the demonstration of their potential for academic success at a state university or UMass campus. Appropriate indicators of success include steadily improving high school grades and academic achievement, a high class rank, special talents, and/or strong recommendations from appropriate individuals who have direct knowledge of the student’s ability to succeed in college.”

# What Colleges Are Saying...

- **Mount Holyoke College GPA Policy** (Located in South Hadley, Massachusetts)
  - Hardly mentions grade point averages on their admissions website, focusing instead on each student's personal talents and accomplishments
- **University of Mississippi GPA Policy**
  - Considers students on an unweighted GPA scale
- **Oregon State University GPA Policy**
  - Only reviews a student's unweighted GPA
- **Concordia University**
  - AP weighted
  - Dual credit courses are not weighted
    - Beneficial to have them as Pass/Fail so they don't possibly negatively impact a student's GPA

# What Colleges Are Saying...

- **George Fox University**
  - Strictly uses unweighted GPA due to the fact that some high schools weight their grades differently than others
    - Unweighted GPA puts everyone on the same playing field
  - All official admission decisions and merit scholarships at George Fox are awarded based on the student's unweighted cumulative GPA
  - Do recognize and note a student's involvement in advanced courses such as AP, Honors, and Dual Enrollment

# What Colleges Are Saying...

- Resources:
  - Email/phone communications
  - <https://www.albert.io/blog/do-colleges-look-at-weighted-or-unweighted-gpas/>
    - Learnwithalbert. “Do Colleges Look at Weighted or Unweighted GPAs? *Albert, Learn By Doing, Inc.* 15 May 2016, 10:00 am, [www.albert.io/blog/do-colleges-look-at-weighted-or-unweighted-gpas/](https://www.albert.io/blog/do-colleges-look-at-weighted-or-unweighted-gpas/).
  - Massachusetts Undergraduate Admissions Standards
    - <http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/admissions/documents/FAQ-AdmissionsStandards-June2016.pdf>
    - <http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/admissions/documents/DHEAdmissionsStandardsReferenceGuide%20June%202016.pdf>
  - University of California Freshman Admissions
    - <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/freshman/requirements/gpa-requirement/index.html>

# What Other High Schools Are Doing...

## Westside Christian

- Records both weighted and unweighted GPA on the transcript
- Reports unweighted for the Common Application
- Weighted is not used for anything on campus
  - Reasoning:
    - Didn't want their "best and brightest" to have to make the decision to be in Choir or take another AP/Dual enrollment class that might be offered at the same time in order to be valedictorian
    - Most colleges don't offer additional financial aid for being valedictorian
- Uses Warner Pacific for dual enrollment courses
  - Only offers dual enrollment on campus, not online
  - Not weighted; select few have AP title

# What Other High Schools Are Doing...

## Westside Christian

- Has not reported class rank for at least the last 15 years
  - In that time students have been admitted to Vanderbilt, Wheaton, Westmont, Pepperdine, 2 military academies, and more
  - Purpose of class rank is to show context for that student's GPA within that school
    - In a small school all students could have a GPA of 3.9 or above which doesn't actually communicate anything about how those students compare to one another
    - In a class with 400 students class rank makes sense but not small schools

# What Other High Schools Are Doing...

## Catlin Gabel

- Don't offer dual enrollment or AP courses
  - Do allow students to take AP exams on campus
  - Offer some courses with an Honors designation to indicate rigor
- Recommended developing a “school profile” to send with transcripts
- Don't report out GPA
  - Forces colleges to dig deeper into the transcript

## Horizon Christian

- No online dual enrollment but does weight the dual enrollment offered on campus



# What Other High Schools Are Doing...

## Portland Christian

- Dual enrollment on campus through Warner Pacific
  - Portland Christian transcript doesn't specify dual credit
- Only AP and Honors are weighted, not dual enrollment
- Colleges are looking at the coursework rigor

## Resources:

- Email/phone communications
- Visiting school websites

# What is the Ultimate Goal of Education at NCCS?

- Challenging thought - “Work Isn’t a Dirty Four-Letter Word” by Glen Shultz
  - “A successful education is achieved when a child is prepared to make maximal use of his God-given talents & abilities in the accomplishment of the child’s calling...Everybody is gifted and has a purpose in God’s world...Each child has a specific calling, framed by his unique talents and abilities.”  
- Kevin Swanson
  - How is the education your children/students are receiving at home, church and school helping them to understand their God-given abilities and talents?
  
- What is the ultimate goal of education at NCCS? How can we be sure to foster that in each of our students?