

Telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth on your college application

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You're filling out your college application, and wishing you'd done things differently. Why didn't you stick with the Chinese Club, or tough out another season on the Cross Country team? A few more hours of prep might have meant first prize in the debate contest instead of fourth. Some students are tempted to play with the truth to make themselves appear to be stronger college admissions candidates. They're betting that no one will take the time to check the list of activities for accuracy, or determine whether they really wrote that outstanding essay.

But that's not a wise bet. Putting the very large issue of integrity aside, getting caught is more likely than many students believe. Augustine Garza, Deputy Director of Admissions at the University of Texas at Austin said recently that he's searched for—and found—application essays on Google. “If I see a student whose grades and test scores don't match the quality of the writing, a red flag goes up. Or I might read something that sounds familiar, or isn't in the student's voice. Then I'll check that essay.”

Garza isn't alone. The [San Jose Mercury News](#) reported today that the University of California uses a team of auditors who “review the accuracy of randomly selected applications — and may yank ones shined up by too much balderdash, big-talk or bull.” The

auditing program was created seven years ago, when the UC system expanded its admissions criteria from purely academic to encompassing the whole student. Once activities and accomplishments became part of the evaluation process, “here was concern that some kids would start to pad their applications to make themselves look better,” said Han Mi Yoon-Wu, admissions coordinator for the 10-campus university system.

Today is the deadline for the 1000 students who received letters from the UC “admissions cops” asking for verification of claims made on their applications. The UC team is bracing itself for a deluge of evidence, including plaques, trophies, pay stubs, and DVDs. For students considering a less-than honest approach, Yoon-Wu notes, “We expect integrity.” Although a student can always reapply the following year, she reveals that the indiscretion won't be forgotten. “We keep a record,” she says.



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