

Education

Goucher College allows video applications, without transcripts or test scores

By [Nick Anderson](#)

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Goucher College is offering a novel way for cellphone-savvy teenagers to seek admission if the regular application process seems too confusing or if they fear that their grades and test scores aren't good enough.

They can skip the ACT and SAT admission tests. They don't need to send a high school transcript. Instead, they can submit a two-minute video to the liberal arts college in Baltimore County that answers a simple question: How do you see yourself at Goucher?

In recent years, a growing number of students have begun sending colleges videos to supplement their applications. Some videos are crucial for those seeking entry to a school with a focus on performing arts.

But Goucher President José A. Bowen said Wednesday that he believes his college will be the first to allow general students to submit a self-produced video as the central component of an application.

Students who prefer to apply the traditional way can still do so. But Bowen said he hopes that the alternative method will help Goucher connect with those who otherwise might not consider themselves college material. These students might be intimidated by the Common Application or Universal College Application. Or they might think that a couple of bad grades in key subjects will disqualify them.

“For most Americans, applying to college is a giant mystery,” Bowen said. “The whole system is broken. Nobody thinks this is a good thing. It's very high-stress. It's all about privilege and wealth. I'm convinced we

are leaving talent on the table in this country because the process is so complicated and stressful. I want to level the playing field.”

Many students, Bowen said, “don’t understand that if you got a C in algebra on your transcript, you can still go to college.”

Those who choose the Goucher Video App, as it’s called, will be evaluated on:

- Content/thoughtfulness.
- Structure/organization.
- Clarity/effectiveness.

Applicants will also be asked to submit a brief application form, a signed statement of academic integrity and copies of two completed assignments from high school (with at least one being a graded writing assignment).

These applicants won’t be evaluated on the production quality of their videos: A basic cellphone camera will suffice.

For Goucher, there is more to the initiative than outreach.

The former women’s college, which first admitted men in the late 1980s, is seeking to stick out in a higher-education market that is crowded and fluid. With about 2,100 students as of last fall, Goucher also is known for offering [courses for credit in Maryland prisons](#) and for requiring undergraduates to study abroad or complete an international internship.

For the class that entered in fall 2012, Goucher had 3,615 applicants for undergraduate admission and admitted 72 percent of them. Of those admitted, 16 percent enrolled.


That figure, crucial in admissions, is known as the yield. Bowen, [who took over as president in July](#), hopes to raise that yield, and allowing applicants to submit personalized videos is one way to do that, he said. His notion is that if students take the time to learn enough about Goucher to articulate in videos why they want to go there, they will be more likely to enroll if admitted.

Bowen also acknowledged that maintaining a solid stream of incoming students is a key part of his job.

“Any college president who tells you they’re not worried about enrollment is either at Harvard or they’re lying,” Bowen said.

 **28 Comments**

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