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## **More than a grade**

Every year at this time, parents who have children graduating from high school get very focused on university applications. I talk to many of them, and their stress around this particular rite of passage can be summed up by one question: Are my child's grades good enough?

Strong academic performance and course grades are one of the best predictors of university success, and they will continue to be very important. But should they be the only qualifier? Should we not aspire to a more complete understanding of a person's individual potential?

At the University of British Columbia, the answer is a resounding yes.

UBC students need more than test-taking skills to succeed. They are given enriched opportunities to learn, in many ways and many different settings. We have a better way to evaluate which students will do well, and indeed contribute their individual talents and passions to their learning and that of their classmates.

This year, all students applying to direct-entry undergraduate programs at UBC's Vancouver campus will complete a "Personal Profile." This involves answering four to six questions about other kinds of learning, outside-the-class experiences, and personal goals.

The questions allow each student to shine the light on the person they are – beyond scholastic achievement. Some will reflect on what they learned from volunteer experiences and hobbies. Others may discuss how they've grown as a result of home responsibilities or the jobs they've had.

This more comprehensive approach is called broad-based admissions. A few of our faculties and programs have been using it for several years. But it is new and significant that we will require it for all undergraduate programs at our Vancouver campus this year. We are the largest university in Canada to embrace this approach.

UBC programs that already use this approach see strong results. Armed with better information, they are admitting students who are more engaged with their studies and with the community, and who show strong initiative and leadership.

The questions we use are based on extensive research, and a small army of faculty and staff are professionally trained to review submissions. Two evaluators blind-score each application - they don't know the applicant's name, gender or other personal information. We also have ways to spot responses that aren't authentic.

Going beyond the grades means students can step forth as a whole person, and once they're admitted, they're more likely to thrive and succeed. And that's something a parent can celebrate.

Just remember, deadline for applications is January 31<sup>st</sup>. Good luck!

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