

Colleges Gaming the System

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Staff Writer

As colleges begin admitting freshmen, there will be situations where students must pick between colleges that have accepted them.

Students and families often refer to rankings from sources such as U.S. News & World Report or Forbe's Top Colleges List in making the final decision.

However, the reliability of these lists and the integrity of some institutions of higher education come into question with the recent revelation that some schools have manipulated their data for higher standings. A notable example emerged when Claremont McKenna College's (CMC) President Pamela Gann reported that the school had been deliberately misreporting SAT statistics since 2005.

"The reported critical reading and/or SAT scores were [...] inflated by an average of 10-20 points each," Gann said in an e-mail to the CMC community.

According to the U.S. News & World Report, CMC is currently ranked No. 10 on the National

Liberal Arts Colleges list. At AHS, some suggested that students should be wary of rankings.

"Students should not base their decisions off of these rankings anyway," junior Ryan Dunning said. "The data that they use, such as SAT scores, are not good indicators of a student's ability to do well in college."

Other AHS students believe that while college rankings may be skewed due to misrepresentations, the lists themselves still provide valuable information on potential colleges.

"The list provides other colleges' names that [students] are unfamiliar with," senior Asia Chi said.

In a previous example of higher education institutions attempting to artificially raise their average scores, Baylor University was found to have offered money to its freshmen students to retake and raise their SAT scores by a minimum of 50 points. Students at AHS questioned the ethical issues that surround such practices.

"I understand that higher scores means more recognition and better resources, but it is deceiving for schools to do this," senior Amber Castro said.

Sky-High Achievements of AHS Students

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"In the city of Alhambra challenging the eye, stands a school above all others stands Alhambra High." AHS' Alma Mater states that its school is filled with students who strive to uphold the school's name, and AHS students have risen up to the challenge.

One recognized student this year is senior Robyn Lopez, a semifinalist for the Spotlight Scholarship.

The Spotlight Contest allows students to submit work to apply for a photography scholarship. Lopez received a letter stating that she is one of 15 semifinalists out of 650 entries. Lopez will be interviewed for a chance to present more photos that will determine whether she will place or not.

"Go for something even if you think you are not

good at it. [Even though] photography has always interest[ed] me, I never thought that I had a chance to do anything in that category," Lopez said.

Another student who has been awarded for their exceptional work is senior Jimmy Lin, who is the only National Merit Scholar

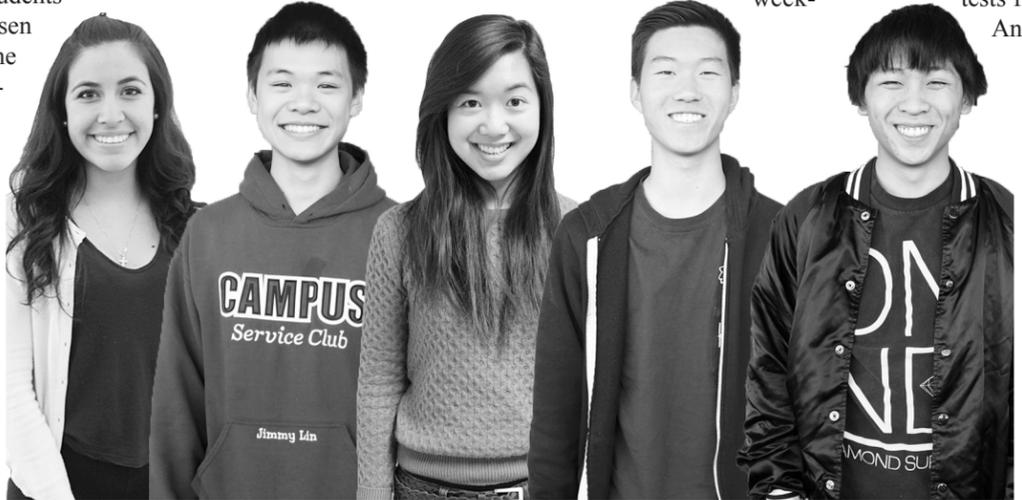
put in a lot of work over time even when you don't expect to earn anything from it," Lin said.

There are also organizations that offer high school students a chance to participate in programs to benefit themselves and the school. One such program is Girls State, which provides a week-

"I want to [...] remember it 10 years down the line and create lifelong friendships," Chen said.

AHS also has programs that help students excel in various areas, such as Speech and Debate. Juniors Anthony Zhu and Andrew Quach recently placed first at the student speaker contests for the Los

Angeles Lion's Club and the Alhambra Rotary Club, respectively, and will move on to the next level of competition. In these competitions, students prepare speech-



SCHOOL COMMUNITY LEADERS (from left to right) Robyn Lopez, Jimmy Lin, Tina Chen, Anthony Zhu and Andrew Quach have all been recognized this year for their outstanding achievements.

MOOR photos by JOYCE TSUI

ship finalist at AHS this year. The National Merit Scholarship Corporation's (NMSC) mission is to recognize students who display a talent in academics. To compete for this title, a student must take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test and score well.

"Being a National Merit Scholar means that you've

long session for one junior girl from each of its participating high schools to experience being in the California State Legislature. At AHS, teachers nominate girls who they feel perform exceptionally well in academics and possess strong leadership skills. This year's AHS Girls State representative is junior Tina Chen.

es on a given topic; each speech lasts up to ten minutes.

"Over time, the experience and practice added up and finally paid off," Quach said. "I'm glad that I get to represent our school. When I do well in competitions, I'm very proud because I feel [that] I'm showcasing that Alhambra is a school filled with talent."

NSRI Aims to Reduce Sodium Intake, Improve Heart Health

CAROLINE REN
Copy Editor

Across America, individuals generally do not carefully monitor what they consume. According to the Institute of Medicine, the average daily sodium intake in the U.S. is 3,400 mg, which is above the 2,300 mg recommendation by the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Approximately 80 percent of the sodium in people's diets comes from prepackaged and prepared foods, leading to the New York City Health Department's National Salt Reduction Initiative (NSRI). The program aims to lower sodium in prepackaged and restaurant food. Corporations will be encouraged to meet targets in different food categories in order to reduce the average American sodium intake by 20 percent by 2014.

"Salt is needed for our bodies; just don't [consume] too much," school nurse Anita Man said.

The NSRI exists because people do not always know what they are consuming. Not all high-sodium foods taste salty; for example, bread and other cereals contribute one-third of sodium to the typical daily diet. About another one-third of sodium intake comes from foods prepared outside the home.

"I don't normally keep track of the sodium I eat, but now that [I know the risks of excessive sodium intake], I'd consider

[watching what I eat]," sophomore Elizabeth Wong said. Additionally, reducing the

health care costs. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that reducing sodium intake from prepackaged and restaurant foods will save 280,000 to 500,000 lives over the course of a decade. Excess sodium contributes to high blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart attack and stroke; cardiovascular disease alone accounts for 800,000 deaths a year in the U.S.

"It's not just salt that affects blood pressure; other factors contribute as well. A headache might signal high blood pressure, so test your blood pressure every once in a while," Man said.

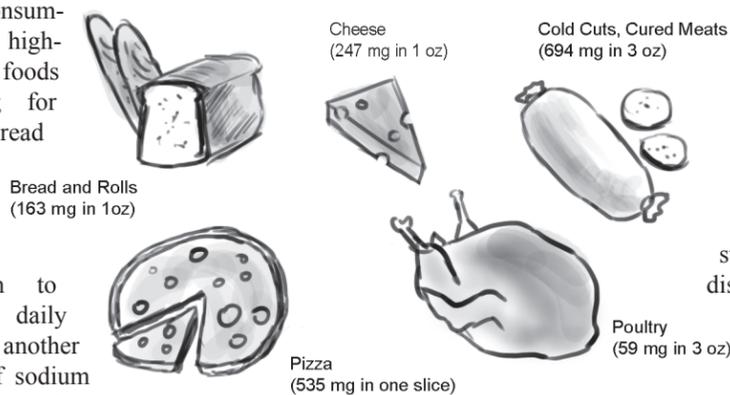
The CDC recommends reducing sodium intake by requesting lower sodium options at restaurants, reading nutritional facts on labels and eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

One way to detect sodium in foods is to read the ingredients list and look for the words "soda" and "sodium." Many forms of sodium are used as preservatives, color enhancers, stabilizers and ingredient binders.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a food cannot be labeled as healthy if it contains more than 480 mg of sodium per reference amount. A food product can be labeled "low sodium" if it has 140 or less mg of sodium per serving.

"Natural foods already have sodium even before you add table salt," Man said. "Don't add more table salt [to foods that are already salty]."

Top Contributors of Sodium in Diets



SOURCE: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
MOOR graphic by SIMON ZHAO

amount of sodium in foods could potentially save thousands of lives and billions of dollars in



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