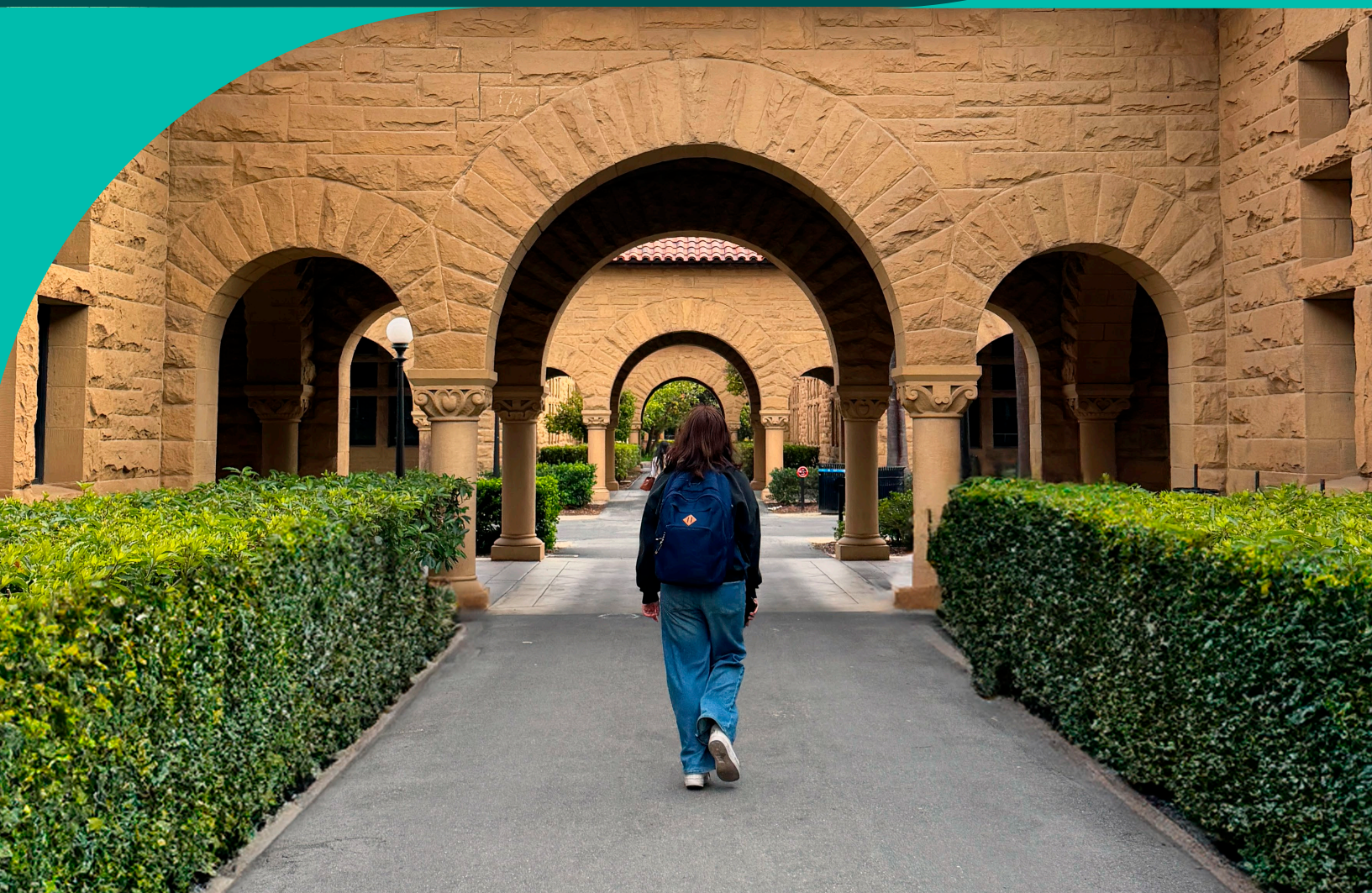
Polygence

College Admissions Report

CLASS OF 2026



The Polygence Class of 2026

In this report, we analyze data from **677 students who participated in the Polygence Mentored Research program** and graduated in 2026.

The Polygence Class of 2026 represents a **diverse group of curious and driven students,** hailing from 25 countries and 35 states.

Students in this year's graduating class were **accepted to 282 universities, and reported over $19M in scholarships.**

This year, in addition to our students' impressive admissions results, we are excited to dive into the projects that these impressive students created as they explored their passions, followed their curiosity and built their unique stories that stood out in competitive admissions.

A Note from Polygence Founders

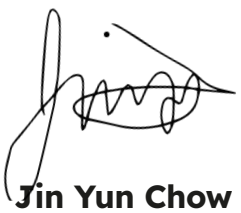
As we celebrate this graduating class, we are filled with pride, not only because of their remarkable college admissions results, but because of the qualities those results represent. These students earned admission to some of the world's most selective universities by demonstrating something far more meaningful than academic achievement alone: curiosity, initiative, intellectual courage, and a genuine desire to explore ideas in depth.

The projects featured in this report span disciplines ranging from astrophysics and neuroscience to economics, engineering, philosophy, and the humanities. Yet what connects them is a shared commitment to asking thoughtful questions and pursuing answers with rigor and authenticity. Rather than following well-worn paths, these students created opportunities to investigate topics that reflected their unique interests, perspectives, and ambitions.

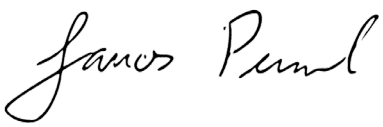
Their admissions outcomes are a testament to the power of that approach. The universities that welcomed these students recognized what we have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand: a group of young people who are not only exceptionally capable, but who are already thinking like scholars, innovators, and future leaders.

We are honored to have played a small role in their journeys. While college acceptances mark an exciting milestone, we believe they are only the beginning. The creativity, determination, and originality demonstrated by this class give us great confidence that their most impactful contributions still lie ahead.

With admiration and gratitude,



Jin Yun Chow



Janos Perczel

The Results Are In

Research Still Matters In Selective Admissions.

When the pandemic disrupted traditional extracurriculars, **research projects surged in popularity.** Many expected that trend to fade once summer programs, competitions, and other in-person opportunities returned. Instead, the opposite happened.

This year's admissions results show that **research and passion projects remain one of the most powerful ways students distinguish themselves in highly selective admissions.** As application pools grow more competitive, colleges continue to reward students who move beyond participation and demonstrate genuine intellectual curiosity, initiative, and contribution.

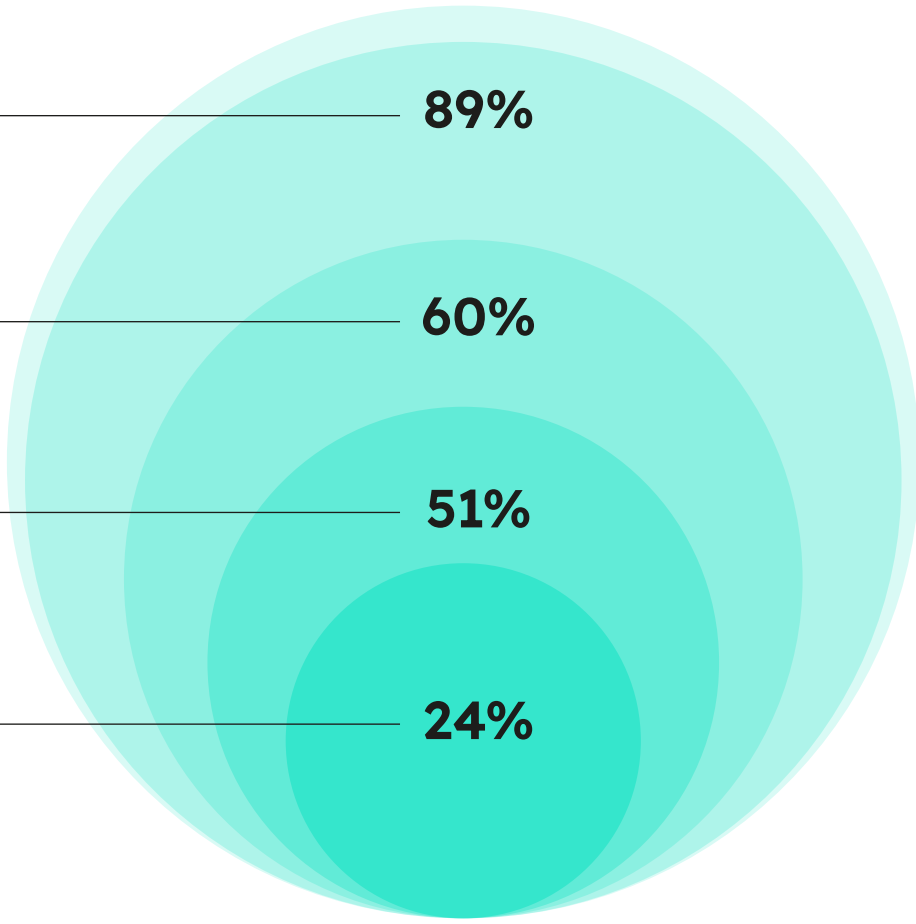
The admissions outcomes below provide an important snapshot of this year's results. But the more revealing story lies beneath the numbers. In the pages that follow, we examine the projects, trends, and defining characteristics that helped students stand out in one of the most competitive admissions cycles yet—and what they reveal about the evolving landscape of selective college admissions.

89% of Polygence alumni who **applied to an R1 University** were accepted to one

60% of Polygence alumni who **applied to a Top 10 Engineering School** were accepted

51% of Polygence alumni who **applied to a Top 25 University** were accepted

24% of Polygence alumni who **applied to an Ivy League University** were accepted



Results at a Glance

	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	Increase of Admissions Odds
Ivy League	259	61	**23.6%**	**4.3x**
Top 25 Universities	530	272	**51.3%**	**5.9x**
R1 Universities	567	504	**88.9%**	**2.3x**
University of California Schools	181	149	**82.3%**	**2.2x**
Top Engineering Schools	294	178	**60.5%**	**3.3x**

Table showing raw numbers and percentages of acceptances from Polygence alumni to top schools. 'Top Engineering Schools' include MIT, Stanford, Caltech, Carnegie Mellon, UIUC, Georgia Tech, Purdue.

Top 10 Spotlight

Rank	University	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	Overall acceptance rate	Increased Odds of admission
1	**Princeton**	24	2	**8.3%**	**4.4%**	**1.9x**
2	**MIT**	21	3	**14.3%**	**4.6%**	**3.1x**
3	**Harvard**	44	4	**9.1%**	**3.6%**	**2.5x**
4	**Stanford**	91	16	**17.6%**	**3.6%**	**4.9x**
5	**Yale**	71	8	**11.3%**	**4.2%**	**2.7x**
6	**University of Chicago**	44	13	**29.5%**	**4.5%**	**6.6x**
7	**Duke**	63	15	**23.8%**	**4.7%**	**5.1x**
8	**Johns Hopkins**	68	9	**13.2%**	**5.0%**	**2.6x**
9	**Northwestern**	56	11	**19.6%**	**7.0%**	**2.8x**
10	**UPenn**	96	14	**14.6%**	**5.4%**	**2.7x**

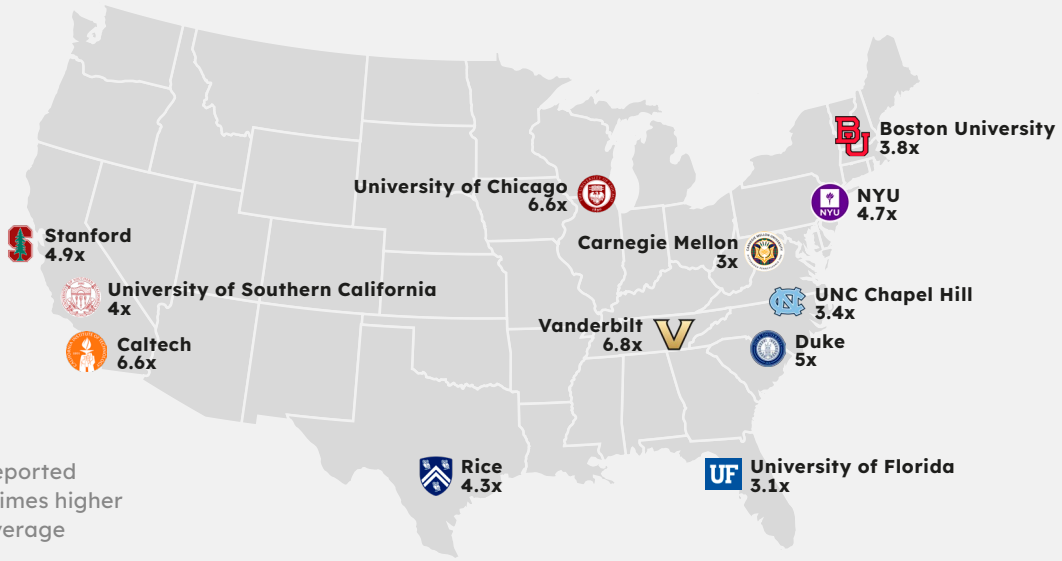
University of California

As interest in the University of California system continues to grow, admission to its most sought-after campuses has become increasingly competitive. The results below highlight how **Polygence students fared in this evolving landscape**—and the level of academic initiative and distinction many students brought to their applications.

	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate
UCLA	139	40	**28.8%**
UC Berkeley	163	51	**31.3%**
UC San Diego	112	56	**50.0%**
UC Davis	76	45	**59.2%**
UC Irvine	84	35	**41.7%**
UC Santa Barbara	73	45	**61.6%**

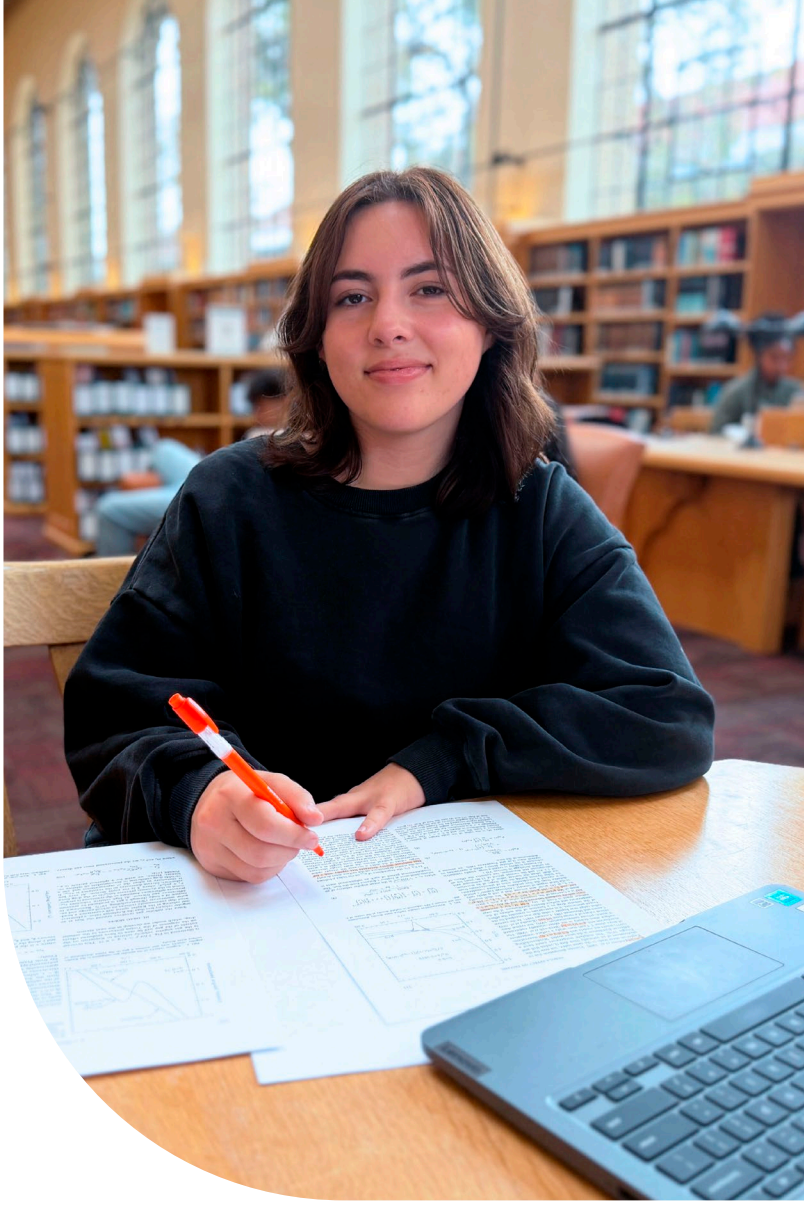
Other Noteworthy Results

While research can strengthen an application at nearly any institution, the universities below show where it appears to have exceptional impact, with **Polygence students earning substantially higher admission rates** than the broader applicant pool.



Polygence alumni reported admissions rates x times higher than the national average

The Standout Students and Projects Behind the Results



We've established that research and passion projects still matter (in a big way) for college admissions. But students in the coming graduating classes will naturally want to know: what kind of work actually helped those students stand out?

The projects completed by Ivy-bound students weren't necessarily the ones that sounded the most impressive. They were the ones that could only have been written by that particular student — because they reflected months or years of genuine immersion in a topic, not a question chosen because it seemed like the 'right' thing to ask.

THE SINGLE BIGGEST PREDICTOR OF A STANDOUT PROJECT ISN'T SUBJECT AREA — IT'S HOW SPECIFICALLY THE QUESTION IS FRAMED.

Across the projects from students admitted to Ivy+ schools, the defining trait wasn't whether a student chose biology or economics. It was whether they asked a mechanism-level question or a generic one. A student admitted to MIT didn't ask "How does TikTok affect teen mental health?" — they asked "What specific features of TikTok's recommendation algorithm and interface might make it effective at promoting disordered eating in teenagers?" Every word narrowed the inquiry toward something original and researchable. **The students who got in weren't necessarily smarter — they just asked better questions.**

THE STUDENTS WHO STOOD OUT MOST WEREN'T JUST DOING SCIENCE — THEY WERE ASKING WHO IT WAS FOR.

A recurring feature of Ivy+ projects: ethics and equity built directly into the research question, not tacked on at the end. A Stanford student studying CRISPR gene editing didn't just ask whether the technology works — they asked how it can be implemented equitably across income groups, and built a cost-benefit analysis around access disparities. An MIT-bound student examining Down Syndrome treatments explicitly framed their question around patient happiness and quality of life, not just clinical outcomes. **The students who got into the most selective schools weren't just curious about science. They were curious about people.**

LONGER ISN'T NECESSARILY BETTER, BUT DEPTH ALWAYS IS.

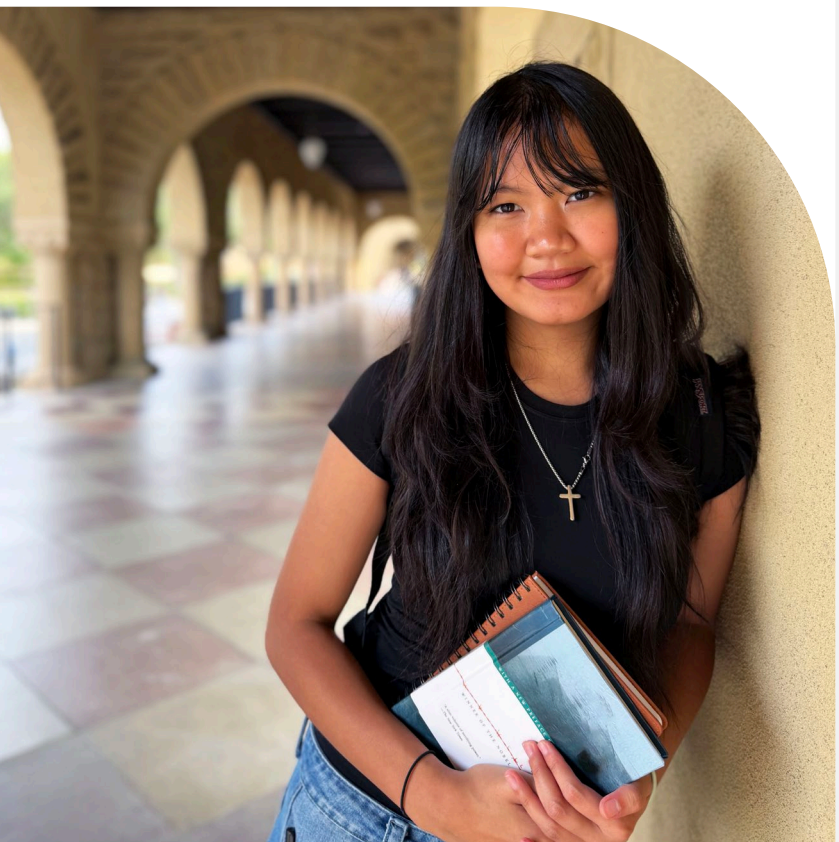
The median Ivy+ research project clocked in at 5.5 months (the range was 3-23 months). More than half were done in six months or fewer. At first glance, that sounds like research can be shortcut. It's the opposite.

A UPenn-bound student wrapped up a CRISPR gene therapy project in four months — one of the most technically sophisticated projects in the entire project dataset. But that wasn't speed. It was years of genuine curiosity and building an understanding of gene editing, distilled into an efficient execution once the formal project began. The question was precise on day one, but how?

Here's what the data shows: the formal project timeline is just the visible part. **The students who moved fastest had already done the slow work — reading papers, following the science, building real fluency in a field they actually cared about.** Their big project wasn't where they learned the field. It was where they contributed something new to it.

STUDENTS ADMITTED TO TOP SCHOOLS WERE DRAMATICALLY MORE LIKELY TO USE MULTIPLE RESEARCH METHODS.

One of the clearest patterns among standout projects was the use of multiple methodologies. Rather than relying on a single approach, **students often combined literature reviews with statistical analysis, computational modeling, interviews, experiments, or other forms of original inquiry.** A strong literature review remains a valuable foundation for understanding a field, but projects that build on that foundation through additional methods often create more opportunities for originality, allowing students to contribute new insights and distinguish themselves in a crowded applicant pool.



How Polygence incorporates these findings into our programs

Polygence programs have evolved just as the expectations for standout student research have. **Scholar Pathways** — our newest Mentored Research program, structures the research experience in two phases: first, **guiding students through building genuine subject matter fluency** in a chosen field, then **supporting them as they channel that foundation into an original in-depth project.**

Across Scholar Pathways and our original Core program, timelines are flexible by design, so **students can keep working until they reach their breakthrough** rather than rushing to meet an arbitrary deadline. Our programs also **support a broader range of research outcomes** than most — not just papers, but **apps, models, prototypes, and other tangible contributions** — because it's clear that what distinguishes elite student research isn't the format. It's the depth of the question behind it and the uniqueness of the findings themselves.

Curious about the results at a specific college or university? Admissions data tables for the Top 50 universities can be found on the following pages.

Class of 2026 Admissions Data

University	U.S. News Rank	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	General College Acceptance Rate	Increased Odds of Admission Conferred by Polygence Projects
Princeton University	1	24	2	8.3%	4.4%	**1.9**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	2	21	3	14.3%	4.6%	**3.1**
Harvard University	3	44	4	9.1%	3.6%	**2.5**
Stanford University	4	91	16	17.6%	3.6%	**4.9**
Yale University	5	71	8	11.3%	4.2%	**2.7**
California Institute of Technology (CalTech)	6	12	3	25.0%	3.8%	**6.6**
Duke University	6	63	15	23.8%	4.7%	**5.1**
Johns Hopkins University	6	68	9	13.2%	5.0%	**2.6**
Northwestern University	6	56	11	19.6%	7.0%	**2.8**
University of Pennsylvania (UPenn)	10	96	14	14.6%	5.4%	**2.7**

University	U.S. News Rank	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	General College Acceptance Rate	Increased Odds of Admission Conferred by Polygence Projects
Cornell University	11	76	22	28.9%	8.4%	**3.5**
University of Chicago	11	44	13	29.5%	4.5%	**6.6**
Brown University	13	49	8	16.3%	5.4%	**3.1**
Columbia University	13	37	4	10.8%	4.2%	**2.6**
Dartmouth College	15	24	3	12.5%	5.8%	**2.2**
University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)	15	139	40	28.8%	9.0%	**3.1**
University of California Berkeley (UC Berkeley)	17	163	51	31.3%	11.4%	**2.7**
Rice University	18	42	14	33.3%	7.7%	**4.3**
University of Notre Dame	18	17	3	17.6%	9.0%	**2.0**
Vanderbilt University	18	50	14	28.0%	4.1%	**6.9**
Carnegie Mellon University	21	42	14	33.3%	11.1%	**3.0**
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	21	92	28	30.4%	16.4%	**1.9**

University	U.S. News Rank	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	General College Acceptance Rate	Increased Odds of Admission Conferred by Polygence Projects
Washington University in St. Louis	21	39	7	17.9%	11.9%	**1.5**
Emory University	24	55	19	34.5%	12.3%	**2.8**
Georgetown University	24	30	6	20.0%	13.0%	**1.5**
University of Virginia	24	37	13	35.1%	12.5%	**2.8**
University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill	27	52	27	51.9%	15.3%	**3.4**
University of Southern California (USC)	27	85	35	41.2%	10.4%	**4.0**
University of California San Diego (UCSD)	29	112	56	50.0%	28.1%	**1.8**
New York University (NYU)	30	77	28	36.4%	7.7%	**4.7**
University of Florida (UF)	30	24	15	62.5%	19.8%	**3.2**
University of Texas Austin (UT Austin)	30	69	23	33.3%	22.2%	**1.5**
Georgia Institute of Technology	33	68	10	14.7%	12.8%	**1.1**
University of California Davis (UCD)	33	76	45	59.2%	44.6%	**1.3**
University of California Irvine (UCI)	33	84	35	41.7%	28.7%	**1.5**
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC)	33	86	50	58.1%	36.6%	**1.6**

University	U.S. News Rank	Applied	Accepted	Polygence Acceptance Rate	General College Acceptance Rate	Increased Odds of Admission Conferred by Polygence Projects
Boston College	37	30	5	16.7%	12.7%	**1.3**
Tufts University	37	37	8	21.6%	10.0%	**2.2**
University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB)	39	73	45	61.6%	38.2%	**1.6**
University of Wisconsin - Madison	39	42	25	59.5%	40.8%	**1.5**
Boston University	41	57	28	49.1%	12.8%	**3.8**
Ohio State University	41	21	20	95.2%	60.5%	**1.6**
Rutgers University	41	30	27	90.0%	58.2%	**1.5**
University of Maryland	44	42	28	66.7%	34.0%	**2.0**
University of Rochester	44	17	13	76.5%	36.0%	**2.1**
Lehigh University	46	7	7	100.0%	25.0%	**4.0**
Purdue University	46	67	50	74.6%	43.4%	**1.7**
University of Georgia	46	17	13	76.5%	29.8%	**2.6**
University of Washington	46	69	40	58.0%	43.0%	**1.3**
Wake Forest University	46	5	2	40.0%	20.4%	**2.0**

Where did Polygence alumni feature their research projects on their applications?

85% Activities List / CV

37% Supplemental Essays

13% Personal Essay

38% Recommendation Letter from Mentor

98% Included their Polygence project in their application