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TIGHT SQUEEZE PERSISTS AT TOP ACADEMIC CENTERS

Chicago, IL –In the most recent round of Academic Center admissions, mean scores were steady, increasing overall by less than one point as shown in Figure 1. Academic Centers continue to be divided into three “groups” based on admissions scores: Whitney Young, Lane Tech and Taft at the top with an “average” score across all Tiers of 837, Brooks, Kenwood and Lindblom in the middle with an average score of 732 and Morgan Park at the bottom with an average score of 619. Academic Center benefits are increasingly clear to parents – a more advanced curriculum, earlier access to AP classes, greater opportunity to accumulate college credit and guaranteed acceptance to the associated high school. While competition is high overall, competition for spots at any of the top three schools remains especially fierce.

Figure 1. Academic Center Admissions Scores (2019-2020)

	2019-2020 mean admission scores	2018-2019 mean admissions scores	change in points
Young	868	875	-7 points
Lane Tech	849	847	+2 point
Taft	793	792	+1 points
Brooks	742	748	-5 points
Kenwood	741	740	+2 points
Lindblom	714	699	+15 points
Morgan Park	619	622	- 4 points
All Academic Centers	761	760.4	+.57 points

¹In calculating the average score, we assumed the ratio of seats as determined by the Tier admissions formula, e.g., 30% for Rank and 17.5% for each Tier. All numbers are rounded to the nearest point.

In the latest admissions round, significant gaps remain between Tier 4 and Tier 1 cut-offs for the top Academic Centers as shown in Figure 2. At Whitney Young, a Tier 4 student needs to get 86 more points than a Tier 1 student to get admitted, at Lane Tech 127 more points, and at Taft 232 more points. Like Taft, Lane Tech is located in an area far from most Tier 1 students and continues to have difficulty attracting high scoring Tier

1 applicants. This issue may be largely responsible for the persistent difference between Lane Tech and Young average admissions scores.

Figure 2. Tier 4 Minus Tier 1 Cut-Off Scores (2019-2020)

	2019-2020 T4-T1 Cut-Off Gap	2018-2019 T4-T1 Cut-Off Gap	change in points
Whitney Young	86 points	76 points	+10
Lane Tech	127 points	124 points	+3
Taft	232 points	275 points	-43

Required Tier 4 scores at Young, Lane Tech and Taft continue to be extremely high, demonstrating strong demand for these schools among middle class students as shown in Figure 3. A Tier 4 cut-off of 865 for Lane Tech may not seem like such a high score since it's on a 900-point admissions scale. However, because of the way the Academic Center Test is scored – it is extremely high. Students who score at this level have received all A's in 5th grade (for 300 points), are in the top 1% on both the Reading & Math 5th grade MAP test (for an additional 300 points) --- and score in the *top one half of 1%* on the Academic Center Admissions Test. Therefore, having a cut-off score of 865 means that Lane Tech is excluding many students in the top 1% across all admissions components who reside in Tier 4 neighborhoods.

Similarly, a cut-off score of 874 at Young for Tier 4 students, means that a measurable portion of students who scored in the top 1% on all components, but who had the “misfortune” to reside in a Tier 4 neighborhood were rejected by Young.

Figure 3. Minimum Tier 4 Student Performance (2019-2020)

	5th Grade Grades	5th Grade MAP Test Scores	6th Grade Academic Center Admissions Scores	2019-2020 Tier 4 Cut-Off Scores
Whitney Young	All A's	99% in Reading: 99% in Math	99.7%	873 points
Lane Tech	All A's	99% in Reading: 99% in Math	99.5%	865 points
Taft	All A's	99% in Reading: 99% in Math	94.5%	822 points

At the same time, a Tier 1 cut-off of 739 for Lane Tech means that a Tier 1 student needs to get all A's in 7th Grade (for 300 points) – and only an 80% on the Reading & Math 5th grade MAP test and an 85% on the Academic Center Admissions Test to get in to Lane as shown in Figure 4. For Taft Tier 1 students, academic performance is much lower. For example, a Tier 1 student would need only all B's in 7th grade, a 65% in both sections of the MAP test and an 81% on the Academic Center Admissions Test to get admitted to Taft.

Figure 4. Minimum Tier 1 Student Performance (2019-2020)

	5th Grade Grades	5th Grade MAP Test Scores	6th Grade Academic Center Admissions Scores	2019-2020 Tier 1 Cut-Off Scores
Whitney Young	All A's	99% in Reading: 99% in Math	80%	787 points
Lane Tech	All A's	80% in Reading: 80% in Math	85%	739 points
Taft	All B's	65% in Reading: 65% in Math	81%	590 points

Schools in the middle group, Brooks, Kenwood and Lindblom, are located far from most Tier 3 and Tier 4 neighborhoods and continue to have difficulty attracting the most academically advanced upper Tier students. This distance helps keep Tier 4 scores at these schools either modestly above or below Tier 1 scores.

Finally, Morgan Park, continues to struggle to attract academically advanced students. Its average score this year of 619 (-4 points) puts it on the bottom of the Academic Center heap once again. Academic Centers are increasingly seen as six-year programs with the high school component an important part of the student's admissions decision. Academic Centers associated with high schools that are perceived as weak (e.g., Morgan Park) have continued to flounder.

According to Matthew Greenberg, partner of educational services firm SelectivePrep, "Strong demand for seats at the top Academic Centers continues unabated. Unfortunately, where students reside plays an outsized role in the admissions process for these top schools. Too many highly qualified students, scoring in the top 1%, are being excluded. A significant increase in the number of seats at the top schools --- or a new

Academic Center conveniently located to these students, are much needed changes to serve talented middle class Chicago families.”

About SelectivePrep

SelectivePrep was founded by test prep veterans with over 25 years of test preparation experience – and extensive backgrounds in both classroom teaching and curriculum development. SelectivePrep offers the *only* classroom program that prepares students for all of the standardized tests needed to gain admission to a Selective Enrollment High School or Academic Center. SelectivePrep knows what it takes to train and motivate students who are intent upon gaining admission to one of the eleven Chicago Selective Enrollment High Schools or one of seven Academic Centers. SelectivePrep’s programs provide a thorough and rigorous review of test content, so students can approach these competitive admissions processes with confidence.

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