



Office of Admission

## Alumni Interviewer Program

2018–2019



### Staff Contact

Edna Elnar- Wicker  
Alumni Interviewer Program Manager  
(909) 607-3333/[ewicker@cmc.edu](mailto:ewicker@cmc.edu)

Jennifer Sandoval-Dancs  
Assistant Vice President for Admission  
(909) 607-753/[jsandoval@cmc.edu](mailto:jsandoval@cmc.edu)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About CMC .....	2
Alumni Interviewer Program Overview .....	3
Information Needed when Setting up the Interview .....	3
Important Dates .....	4
Conducting the Interview .....	5
Areas to Cover During the Interview	
Student & Family Background	
Academic Background	
Academic Interest	
Extracurricular Activities/Involvement	
Understanding the Student’s Colleges Being Considered	
Contact with and Exposure to CMC	
Asking the Interview Questions	
Introductory Questions	
Probing Questions	
Concluding Questions	
Sharing your CMC Experiences	
Writing the Interview Evaluation .....	9
Intellectual Curiosity Rating	
Social Skills Rating	
CMC Fit Rating	
Online Interview Evaluation Form	
Dos and Don’ts of the Interview .....	10
Skype Interviews .....	11
Enthusiasm and Disappointments .....	12
Statement about Conflict of Interest .....	12
FAQ .....	12
Staff Contact .....	16

# About CMC

Claremont McKenna College, one of the nation's top liberal arts colleges, prepares students to make a difference. The College educates students for thoughtful and productive lives and roles of responsible leadership through its strong, real-world [mission](#). [Admission](#) to the College is need-blind and emphasizes the demonstration of leadership accomplishments. The College attracts a student body that is broadly diverse and accomplished beyond the classroom.

Located on a scenic, tree-lined residential campus 30 miles east of Los Angeles, Claremont McKenna is a member of [The Claremont Colleges](#), a seven-college consortium modeled after Oxford University. CMC students choose from more than 2,300 classes and participate in co-curricular activities with 7,000 other students at [Harvey Mudd College](#), [Pitzer College](#), [Pomona College](#), and [Scripps College](#), as well as the [Claremont Graduate University](#) and [Keck Graduate Institute](#). Students have the best of both worlds: the intimacy of a small residential college with small classes and a student-faculty ratio of nine to one, and the shared resources of a larger research university.

Below are some data that make us distinct from the other institutions:

- 1,345 students
- 46 states and 43 countries represented
- 8:1 student to faculty ratio
- Average class size of 18 students
- About 1/3 of students will double or dual major
- Over 80% of CMC classes have less than 20 students
- 97% first year to sophomore retention rate (2016 entering cohort)
- 93% six-year graduation rate (2010 entering cohort)
- About 50% of students study off campus
- In 2016, 77% of student reported having worked with faculty on a research project
- Over \$1 million in funding toward unpaid internships in recent summers
- 6 months after graduation, 90% of grads have a job, are in grad school, or volunteer service
- Average salary for 2016 & 2017 graduating cohorts is \$66,675
- 97% of students will live on campus
- 20% of dorm rooms in each residence hall are held for incoming first-year students
- 48% are women; 52% are men
- 17% are first generation students
- 41.8% are students of color; 41% white; 17% international students/non-citizen

# Alumni Interviewer Program Overview

Thank you for finding some time in your busy life to interview with prospective students for Claremont McKenna College. As you are aware, CMC is a highly selective college with thousands of applicants each year. For the past year (2017-2018), our admit rate was 9.3%.

The purpose of the interview is to get the interviewer's impression of the student in terms of the student's interests & skills, leadership potential, personality, and values. It is an opportunity for the interviewer to have a different perspective of the applicant other than what is on paper or what is already in the student's application. Your candid thoughts, insights, and impressions about the student will be a valuable part of the applicant review process and will help the Admission Committee select the best students for CMC. The interview is also an opportunity to communicate your positive feelings about CMC, and for the student to have a good interview experience. Your own experiences at CMC will be useful for the student who may just be starting to understand why CMC is the right fit (or not) for them.

## Information Needed: Setting up the Interview

- Exchange contact information. In the event that you or the student is running late, it will be very helpful to have the other person's cell phone information.
- If possible, get relevant information from the student before the meeting. The information will include the following:
  - Student's full/legal name [Last name, First name, Middle name]
  - Student's DOB
  - Student's email
  - Name of the high school s/he attends
  - City and State of the student's high school
- Confirm the time, location, date and day of the week. If you are meeting at a Starbucks, be clear exactly which one and on which date.
- Do not interview any students in your home or apartment. You can interview them at a local coffee shop, your office, public park, public library, public museum, lobby at a hotel, or any suitable public place but one that has minimal distractions.
- Tell the student what you look like (approximate height, color of hair, etc.) and get the same information from the student. This will minimize the awkwardness of trying to find out who each other is at the coffee house or at any agreed upon location.

# Important Dates

## Alumni Interviewers

Alumni Interviewing Begins – September 1  
Interview Reports ED I applicants – Your reports due by November 5  
Last day to interview – December 14  
Interview Reports ED II/RD applicants – Your reports due by December 18

## Admission Deadlines

### Early Decision I

Application due Nov. 1  
Merit application due Nov. 1  
Decision notification Dec. 15  
Candidate's reply due early January

### Early Decision II

Application due Jan. 5  
Merit application due Dec. 1  
Decision notification Feb. 15  
Candidate's reply due early March

### Regular Decision

Application due Jan. 5  
Merit application due Dec. 1  
Decision notification April 1  
Candidate's reply due May 1

## Financial Aid Deadlines

### Early Decision I

CSS/Financial Aid Profile due Nov. 1  
FAFSA due Nov. 1  
Award notification Dec. 15

### Early Decision II

CSS/Financial Aid Profile due Jan. 5  
FAFSA due Jan. 5  
Award notification Feb. 15

### Regular Decision

CSS/Financial Aid Profile due Jan. 5  
FAFSA due Jan. 5  
Award notification April 1

# Conducting the Interview

The interview is a conversation, not an interrogation. You will set the tone for the interview. How you are dressed and how you interact with the student can be influential in how the interview progresses. The more relaxed and comfortable you are, the more at ease the student will be. Generally, a student who is comfortable is more confident and much more interesting to interview than one who is nervous. Always remember to keep the student's comfort level foremost in your mind. Interviews should be positive and informative experiences. **This is not a job interview!** While you are sizing up the student and trying to make impressions on them, the real point of the interview is for them to leave feeling good about the interview and with a more positive impression of CMC. Parents may or may not be accompanying the student to the interview. If a parent is present, introduce yourself and let him/her know that you will be meeting with the student for approximately 30-45 minutes. Offer to meet with the parent after the interview is conducted to answer any questions they may have. It is not appropriate for the parent to sit in on the interview.

When conducting an interview, we suggest covering the following areas:

## Student & Family Background

At the beginning of the interview you might encourage the student to talk about subjects with which s/he is most comfortable and familiar: him/herself and his/her family. Helpful information includes: where the student grew up, the parents' occupations or interests, information about brothers and sisters and colleges attended by family members. Disruptions in family life, e.g., relocation, divorce/separation, etc. can sometimes help us understand academic inconsistencies or challenges.

## Academic Background

Information describing the courses that the student has pursued and achievement in those courses will be available from a secondary school transcript. Therefore, you should not be asking about the specific courses that the student is taking and their grades. The Admission Office will have that information. The interview should focus on the academic program available at the student's secondary school and why the applicant has selected the academic program being pursued. The Admission Committee expects that most CMC applicants have maximized the academic resources at their high schools, so you should strive to compare the student's course load to what is available at the school.

An understanding of how a candidate's academic interests have developed and which courses have generated particular interest are helpful. Realizing that most applicants are very good students, are the academic interests and achievements of this student unusual?

Keep in mind CMC's discussion-oriented classroom environment. Will the student feel comfortable and thrive in that environment? Getting a sense of the student's critical and

analytical abilities is also important. Good candidates should be able to show that they enjoy learning and possess a level of intellectual curiosity and creativity.

### Academic Interest

A student need not have a clear commitment to any area of study or vocation at this point in his/her life. It is important for students to understand that CMC's commitment to a liberal arts educational philosophy requires a broad educational background.

At the time of the interview, it will be helpful to learn the academic or career interests of the student and how these interests developed. It is also helpful to know the level of exposure to those academic interests or vocational choices and how long the student has held these interests. Are these interests grounded on a good understanding of the field, or on superficial reasons?

### Extracurricular Activities/Involvement

The admission application will require candidates to list their activities, travel, and work experience. The information of most interest to the Admission Committee will not be a listing of activities but an understanding of the significance of a student's extracurricular involvement and the level of interest a student has had in these activities. The interviewer may gain a better understanding of the energy of an applicant and the impact and contribution that the student has made on the school or community. Has the student's activities or achievements been above average or attracted local or national recognition?

When discussing a student's activities it is important to ascertain the degree or level of activity, e.g., has the student been editor-in-chief of an award-winning newspaper published weekly or been one of four editors of a one-page newspaper published three times a year?

### Understanding the Student's Colleges Being Considered

In the fall 2017, the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) new policy made it unethical to ask prospective students their schools or university preferences. **Please do not ask your interviewees where else they are applying or planning to apply on admission applications.**

However, it is helpful to have an understanding of how the candidate is selecting a college or university. What criteria are important to a student in evaluating a college or university? Who is assisting the student in the selection process? What expectations does the applicant have of a college or university? What does "fit" mean to the student?

Do NOT engage in any kind of college bashing! Negative comments about other schools reflect poorly on you and CMC.

## Contact with and Exposure to Claremont McKenna College

How has the student's interest in CMC developed? Does the candidate know a student on campus or alumni of the College? How much did the student know and understand about CMC? What makes CMC distinctive? Exploring these questions with an applicant frequently leads to a better understanding of an applicant's perspective.

## Asking the Interview Questions

So, now you know what we would like you to discuss, but how to discuss these things is not always obvious. We suggest you organize your questions into 3 categories below. Try some of these questions to get the ball rolling or to get through a lull or two.

Categories:

### Introductory Questions

- What do you like or dislike about your high school?
- What are some of your favorite classes? Why?
- (If attending a private school) How did you decide to attend that school?
- (Single sex school) What advantages or disadvantages have you experienced in your school?
- (To an athlete) What have you learned in the field/court/pool that you try to incorporate into your day-to-day life?
- What does your typical day look like? What do you look forward to and why?
- What activities do you enjoy most outside of the classroom?

### Probing Questions

- Describe your most exciting intellectual or academic experience. How has that affected the way you learn?
- What is your take on (current event)?
- What current issue are you comfortable and confident in talking about? Please elaborate.
- What do you get excited or enthusiastic about?
- What book would you recommend me to read and why?
- If you were chosen to be your high school graduation commencement speaker, what would you talk about and why?
- Suppose you could select two people with opposing views on a controversial topic to speak at your school, what issue and what speakers would you select?
- If you were given a round trip expense paid ticket to anywhere, where would you go and why?
- How do you want your friends and teachers to remember you while in high school?
- What are you most proud of as a person?



### Concluding Questions

- Is there anything that you wanted or expected to discuss that we have not touched upon?
- What questions do you still have about Claremont McKenna College?

### Sharing your CMC Experiences

And, Most Importantly---

The interview should include a period of time where you discuss and share your experiences at CMC. The student will be very interested in hearing about how you chose the college and your favorite aspects of your college experience. By the time a student sits down to speak with you, they will know a number of "facts" about the school, but, most likely, will not have a good "sense" or "feel" for the school and its community - this is where your personal experiences will be extremely helpful.

### Possible Topics to Talk About:

- How did you choose CMC?
- What do you like the most/the least about CMC
- Residence halls
- Your participation in clubs/extracurricular activities at CMC/5Cs
- What did you do after graduation
- Your career path
- What do you do now
- Parting words/advice to the student

# Writing the Interview Report

You should write your interview report as soon as possible after the interview. It will be very easy to put off writing the report and the longer you wait the less strongly you will remember the interview. You may submit your report online through the [Alumni Interviewer Evaluation Report](#). Reports sent via email will be returned, and you will be asked to resubmit it **electronically**. Your interview report should cover the following:

- Academic and intellectual pursuits and performance
- Ability to articulate one's thoughts
- Extracurricular activities (qualifying extent of involvement)
- The kinds of things the candidate wanted to discuss with you
- Anything you found particularly compelling, interesting, or impressive
- Your sense of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses
- How much do you think the student will thrive here at CMC

Interview comments or reports should not be a blow-by-blow account of your conversation. Rather, they should capture the spirit of the conversation and include your insights and overall impressions.

You should focus on the significance of the student's academic experiences, non-academic experiences, academic and career interests and expectations for the college. Do not worry about listing classes or reporting test scores since the Admission Office will receive that type of information with the student's application.

In the brief period of an interview, it is not possible to know a student with certainty. Your report will be kept in perspective and combined with other information about the candidate. Frequently, your perspective will confirm information about a student, but it may add new information about experiences and achievements. Please be honest and candid in your report but support your opinions and conclusions using examples. If applicable, please include the student's specific statements that inspired your impressions. Your report will be kept confidential and will not be available for review by the student at any time during or after the application process.

The online interview evaluation report that you will submit will be in this format:

Student's First Name  
Student's Middle Name  
Student's Last Name  
Student's DOB  
Student's Email  
Interview Date  
Student Type (Freshman or Transfer)  
High School/CEEB code  
School Address  
Interviewer

### **Intellectual Curiosity ([1]Weak ----- [5]Strong)**

- Did the student sustain an intellectual conversation?
- Aware of the current events?
- How would s/he contribute in the classroom?

### **Social Skills ([1]Weak ----- [5]Strong)**

- Was the student engaged or engaging?
- One-word answers vs elaborate or comprehensive answers?
- Articulate?
- Appeared polished or professional?
- Nervous?
- Desire to connect with others?

### **CMC Fit ([1]Weak ----- [5]Strong)**

- Would the student fit in on campus?
- Can s/he contribute to the culture?
- Leader?

## **Dos of the Interview**

1. Have the student's contact information (full name, DOB, high school, and email) at the interview and confirm the details with the student. This information is useful when you complete your interview evaluation.
2. Make the student feel comfortable and welcomed. Treat them with understanding, patience, and respect.
3. Be a good ambassador of the College. Respect the student's opinions and their diverse backgrounds. Talk about your experiences at CMC, but remember that this is an interview and the focus is on the student.
4. Interview the student at an agreed upon location with minimum distraction.

## Don'ts of the Interview

1. Do not interview your own child, sibling, or relative.
2. A student can only interview (with alumni or on campus) once. If the student confirms that they have been interviewed, please politely end the session.
3. Do not interview the student in your own apartment, your house, or any location without other adults present.
4. Do not ask about the student's GPA, grades, test scores. If the student volunteers the information, just listen. The Admission Office will have that information in their applications.
5. Do not ask the student about their political or religious affiliations. If the student chooses to speak about these topics, feel free to engage them but please remain neutral to opinions that may be different from your own.
6. Do not ask the student about other colleges or universities they are applying or planning to apply, and do not make any negative comments about those institutions.

## Skype Interviews

In our effort to provide opportunity for most students to interview, we can accept Skype or FaceTime interviews. This opportunity should only be utilized if several attempts to conduct an in person interview with the student or alum were not possible. Skype interviews are not advertised and are offered only at the discretion of the alum. Please make sure that the student has not had any interviews either on campus or with another alum. **They can only interview once.**

If the student is still unable to do Skype interview, please direct them to our website so they can submit an optional video response. Remember that interviews are not required for admission to CMC; they are only recommended.

Please submit interview reports by the deadlines specified below:

**November 5** for Early Decision I (ED I) applicants

**December 18** for Regular and Early Decision II (ED II) applicants. By then, the Admission Committee is delving in the applications and beginning to make admission decisions. If you have gone through the trouble of conducting an interview, then we certainly want to ensure that your perspective is included in the application file. The sooner you can submit the interview report, the better. Many students may be applying Early Decision I to CMC or for our Scholarship Awards. These students' applications will be evaluated way before January 5.

## Enthusiasm and Disappointment

Ironically, the more successful you are in encouraging students to apply to (and to like) CMC, the greater the likelihood that you, personally, will be disappointed. The larger the number of qualified applicants, the tougher it is to get into CMC.

As you help us increase the number of applications, we may turn down students you would like or expect to be admitted. Unfortunately, this occurs more often than we would like. Please understand that the Admission Committee has access to more information about each applicant than you might have. We also have an overview of the whole applicant group, and we may find it appropriate to respond according to the needs of CMC.

Also, keep in mind that for the fall 2018 class, we received 6,272 applicants for the approximately 325 slots in our first year class. For the past year, our admit rate was 9.3%. Clearly, CMC is one of the most selective liberal arts colleges in the entire country. In August 2017, Forbes ranked CMC Number 2 in the Top Liberal Arts Colleges category, moving up from No. 13 in 2016 (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/patrickfederle/2017/08/02/top-25-liberal-arts-colleges-2017/#d7408d6bc709>).

## Statement about Conflict of Interest

At Claremont McKenna College, we strive to be fair with our decisions during the admission process. If you have a child, sibling, or relative who plans to apply to Claremont McKenna College for admission in 2019, we ask that you let us know. To avoid any potential conflict of interest, we will not ask you to serve as alumni interviewer during the admission cycle in which your child is applying. We will look forward to your resuming the role of alumni interviewer the following admission cycle.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Will my evaluation be a part of the student's application?***  
Yes. All interview reports will be reviewed by the Admission Committee and they become part of the student's application file.
- 2. Can a student interview more than once?***  
No. If a student mentions that they have already interviewed on campus or with another alum, you are NOT able to interview them again.
- 3. What happens if I fail to submit my evaluation?***  
You will have hurt the student's application. Since a student is not able to interview twice, your evaluation will be the ONLY interview evaluation the

student will have. If you do not submit the report, we will have less information from which to assess the student.

**4. *Do my comments and statement in the evaluation carry weight in the admission decision?***

Yes! The alumni interview often sheds light on the personality and more importantly the "fit" with CMC more than any other part of the application. A very positive evaluation can go a long way in helping an applicant gain admission. It is important to note, however, that the interview is only one piece of the application. Often a student can come across very well in person, but might not have the grades and other credentials to support admission. Other times, a student may not be good in an interview but very strong on paper. It is always a careful balancing act to determine how best to assess the applicant – from a 45-minute interview or from what is in the application.

**5. *What do I do if I don't know how to answer a question from the student?***

You are not expected to know every detail and statistic about CMC. If you do not know the answer to the question, please do not guess. Tell the student you do not know the answer and then offer to find out the information, or refer that student to the Admission Office. Even though you are a volunteer, you are a representative of the College and any incorrect information could jeopardize their chances of admission.

**6. *What do I do if the student asks what their chances are for admission?***

The application review is a holistic process, and many aspects are considered in making admission decision. Feel free to explain that the admission process is complex and that the interview is used to provide context ONLY. You are not a trained admission counselor and therefore could not give accurate odds or prediction for admission.

**7. *I am receiving interview requests but neither the student nor I could agree on a specific date or a location. Can I offer to Skype interview them?***

In special cases and circumstances, we can accommodate Skype or FaceTime interview requests. This opportunity should only be utilized if several attempts to conduct an in person interview with the student and alum were not possible. Please indicate in your report that the interview was conducted via Skype.

**8. *Will my interview report/evaluation be available to the student?***

No. Your interview report will be included in the applicant's file and will be kept confidential. It will never be made available to the student or to their counselor during or after the admission process.

**9. *My child or sibling or relative is applying this year. Can I still interview?***

Unfortunately, no. At Claremont McKenna College, we strive to be fair with our decisions during the admission process. If you have a child, sibling, or relative who plans to apply to CMC for admission in 2019, we ask that you let us know.

To avoid any potential conflict of interest, we will not ask you to serve as alumni interviewer during the admission cycle in which your child is applying. We will look forward to your resuming the role of alumni interviewer the following admission cycle.

**10. *Can I ask about my interviewee's grades or test scores?***

No. The Admission Office will have the applicant's record of their GPA, grades, and their test scores. They are confidential information, and some students are not comfortable being asked about these. If a student voluntarily talks about them, you can just listen.

**11. *Can I ask about other colleges/universities my student is applying or planning to apply?***

No. Per the National Association and College Admission Counseling (NACAC), it is unethical for you to be asking about the other colleges/universities that the student is considering.

**12. *If a parent accompanies the student to the interview and asks to sit down or be present at the interview, how should I proceed?***

We do not allow any chaperone or parent to be present while you are interviewing the student. After you have greeted the student and the parent, tell the parent that you would like to meet with the student first. Following the interview, feel free to spend some time with the parent and answer questions that they may have regarding the application or about CMC in general.

**13. *Will I be notified regarding the admission decisions of the students I interviewed?***

Of course! In summer, after the 1 May deadline for all the Admit students to commit (and pay their commitment fee), we will send you a report to let you know the admission status of every student you interviewed: Deny, Waitlist, Admit, Commit, Rescind, etc.

**14. *If I want to learn more about CMC, and the admission process & financial aid, what reference materials would you suggest?***

First of all, thank you for being a part of this very important process in Admission. Your continued support and commitment inspire us to do more at CMC. To learn more, please refer to the resources and publications below that the Admission Office has carefully put together:

**About CMC**

[Learn, Lead, Succeed](#)

[Learn to do, Do to Learn](#)

[Domestic Travel Brochure](#)

[International Travel Brochure](#)

**Academics at CMC**

[General Education \(GE\) Requirements Checklist](#)

[3/2 Engineering](#)

[Disability Support Services](#)

**Admission and Financial Aid**

[Application Instructions for First-Year Applicants](#)

[Application Instructions for Transfer Applicants](#)

[A Guide to Financial Aid 2016-2017](#)

[Transfer Credit Policy for First-Year and Transfer Applicants](#)

**CMC Opportunities and Resources**

[Silicon Valley Semester Program](#)

[Washington, D.C. Semester Program](#)

[Study Abroad - Center for Global Education](#)

[CMS Athletics Coach Roster](#)



# Staff Contact

Edna Elnar-Wicker  
Alumni Interviewer Program Manager  
(909) 607-3333/[ewicker@cmc.edu](mailto:ewicker@cmc.edu)

Jennifer Sandoval-Dancs  
Assistant Vice President for Admission  
(909) [607-753](tel:607-753)/[jsandoval@cmc.edu](mailto:jsandoval@cmc.edu)

