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September 7, 2026

Ms. Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Acting Comptroller General Brown:

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools continue to improve, some institutions of higher education have begun to use these tools in their admissions and institutional scholarship selection processes. To assess this use, the Committee on Education and Workforce (Committee) seeks information from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO).

Media reports have described how some colleges are using chatbots to provide information to prospective students and for tasks such as reviewing admissions essays, transcripts, or recommendation letters.¹ Additionally, research has shown that applicants are increasingly using AI tools to assist in writing applications and preparing essays, including those submitted to obtain institutional scholarships, which could lead to an increase in the number of applications schools receive.² AI may be able to help schools operate more efficiently at a time when many schools are receiving a high volume of applications. For example, the Common Application, which allows students to apply to participating institutions through a shared application platform, reported that 9.4 million first-year applications were submitted through the platform in the 2025-2026 application season, a 5 percent increase from the prior year.³

At the same time, media reports indicate that some applicants, students, and parents have expressed concerns about the use of AI in admissions, particularly about whether applications are

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/ai-chatgpt-college-admissions-essays-87802788683ca4831bf1390078147a6f>.

² <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2602.17791>.

³ Walter Herring, Rodney Hughes, Mark Freeman, Trent Kajikawa, Sarah Nolan, and Song Park. *Deadline Update, 2025–2026: First-year Application Trends through March 1* (Common App, March 2026), <https://www.commonapp.org/reports/march-2026-deadline-update>.

being considered fairly when AI tools are used. While some schools have made public statements emphasizing that their use of AI only supplements human review of applications and that AI does not make admissions decisions, other reports suggest that some schools use, or are considering using, AI tools to make final admissions decisions.

The Committee requests GAO's assistance in answering the following questions:

1. How do colleges use AI in their admissions and institutional scholarship selection processes, and how widespread are these uses?
2. How do colleges monitor AI use in the admissions and institutional scholarship selection processes to ensure AI outputs are accurate and treat applicants impartially?
3. How do selected colleges identify and address applicants' potential use of AI in admissions and institutional scholarship application processes, and how effective have they found these efforts to be?

Should you have any questions, please contact Kent Talbert of the Committee staff at kent.talbert@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4527. The Committee looks forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Walberg", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim Walberg
Chairman
Committee on Education and Workforce