

ADMISSION TO HIGHLY SELECTIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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What is HIGHLY SELECTIVE?

- ▣ Defined by ADMIT RATE
 - College Board: < 25% of applicants admitted (62)
 - US News & World Report: List of 100 most selective
 - Barron's Profiles of American Colleges: 1 = most competitive (82), 2 = highly competitive plus (36), 3 = highly competitive (73), 4 = very competitive plus (45)

3702 colleges and universities in the U.S. Majority admit 80%+ of their applicants.

Harvard Summer Institute on College Admissions

▣ WHO WAS THERE?

- Harvard, Claremont McKenna, U-Mass, Michigan, Dartmouth, Columbia, USMA, Brown, Yale, Princeton, MIT, Stanford, University of California, Boston University

▣ WHAT I LEARNED

- These are very real people
- Incredibly subjective process
- Transcript is the most important factor, but not really
- Students can do all the right things and still not be admitted
- “Joy” in the application process – you have to know why you are applying and why you really want to be there.

Parts of the Admission Process

- ▣ Transcript
 - Have you taken advantage of the opportunities available at your school?
 - ▣ BUT...4 out of 5 valedictorians are denied, of all applicants with 4.0+ GPA, only 10% are admitted
 - ▣ Can fill incoming class more than 3x with some version of perfect test scores
 - Do not expect you to search for things your school doesn't offer (online classes, summer programs, etc.)
 - Numbers are the starting point, not the tipping point

Parts of the Admission Process

- ▣ EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
 - Want to know what a student has CHOSEN to do. Not evaluating WHAT you chose.
 - Depth is far more important than breadth
 - Service jobs vs. Service learning
 - What would you choose if you were not afraid?

Parts of the Admission Process

▣ ESSAY

- The MOST IMPORTANT part of the application
- Use your voice to tell your story
- How would you describe yourself HONESTLY
- Can't assume you know what the admissions people want – just help them know you
- Stick with the parameters, take them seriously, give them what they are asking for
- Don't be too casual, cute or creative
- Not a place to brag
- Tragedy does not get extra points
- Write in way that prompts people to hear your voice, not make a judgment about you

Parts of the Admission Process

▣ INTERVIEW

- Don't know anything about the student before meeting.
- Why do you want to go to _____?
- Looking for depth in activities, ability to hold a conversation, personality
- Will this student take advantage of a _____ education?
- How will the student contribute to the campus?
- Would you want to be this student's roommate?

Parts of the Admission Process

▣ COUNSELOR/TEACHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Asked to evaluate: Character, Motivation, Tenacity, Maturity, Responsibility, Creativity, Intellectual Curiosity, Independence, Concern for Others, Reaction to Setbacks
- Rate in the context of the graduating class and in all the kids with whom we've ever worked. We have an obligation to be honest to protect both the student, the school and our reputation.
- Give your counselor/teacher some help! We can write a much better recommendation if you take some time to help us know you.

What are they REALLY looking for?

Some version of this:

First and foremost, colleges must select students who are academically qualified. From that point, the process is about building a class with a variety of individuals who will further the college's mission and enrich its campus.

INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

- ▣ DIVERSITY – geographic, demographic
- ▣ EXCEPTIONAL TALENT – athletics, specific academic programs or groups
- ▣ LEGACY
- ▣ FINANCIAL PROFILE
- ▣ From the Dean at Harvard:
 - 200-300 are “wicked smart”
 - 300-400 are “wicked talented”
 - Remainder are the “glue” that makes others better

School Counselor/Admissions Rep Straight Talk

- ❑ Admission to any college is a MATCH to be made, not a PRIZE to be won
- ❑ If you think of it as a reward for all of your academic and extracurricular blood, sweat and tears, then you will likely be disappointed.
- ❑ You are more selective than these schools. 3702 options and you apply to less than 10 (2 reach, 2 possible, 2 realistic)

REALITY CHECK – Less than 1% of college students at the Ivies. Less than 20% at Top 50 most selective schools. Incredible kids are not always a match. Incredible adults aren't always incredible kids. There is no such thing as the smartest person in the room. If that's what your identity is built upon, it can all come crashing down in college.

Straight Talk, cont.

- ▣ ELITE is not the same as BEST
- ▣ Suggested Reading:
 - WHERE YOU GO IS NOT WHO YOU'LL BE, Frank Bruni
 - COLLEGES THAT CHANGE LIVES, Loren Pope
 - THE GATEKEEPERS: INSIDE THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS, Jacques Steinberg
 - “Who Needs Harvard”, Nancy Gibbs and Nathan Thornburgh
 - “Twelve Steps to Conquering Your Ivy Addiction”, Jay Mathews