



MGS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

Design your path to college

APRIL 2022



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NOTES FROM MARISA

By now, many of you seniors have heard from all of the colleges you applied to, and there's a good chance that emotions are running high. Some of you are disappointed that you didn't get into your top choices. I want you to sit with that disappointment for a bit and consider what a crazy year this has been--where many very selective colleges' acceptance rates were cut in half. When thousand and thousands of top students apply to 20+ schools, there are simply not enough spaces for all of them. Also, remember that colleges have institutional priorities that we are not privy to. As a result, a denial really is not a reflection or judgment of who you are and what you have to offer.

I want you to revel in the options that you DO have. You have colleges that want you, and some want you badly! So put on some blinders, cancel the noise out there, and think deeply about which college is RIGHT FOR YOU!

KEY TOOL TO ACCESS: COMMON DATA SET

One of the most useful resources on the internet is the Common Data Set (CDS). The Common Data Set is a compilation of standards and data points as defined by the US Department of Education, and most every college posts their Common Data Set data on their website, typically under their Institutional Research page.

The CDS covers a huge amount of data, such as:

- How many students apply and are accepted
- Test data and GPA data for enrolled students
- How many are invited to be on a waitlist and then accepted
- How important certain admissions criteria are
- How many receive need-based and merit aid
- Cost of attendance

The easiest way to find the CDS is to Google "Common Data Set + Bard" (or whichever college you're looking at). Enjoy the research!!

IT'S DECISION TIME!

You've gotten some acceptances. So what process should you go through to make this big decision?

- First, think back on what you were looking for when you made your list and applied. That was a long time ago! Dig deep and fine tune your priorities!
- Create a spreadsheet where you can rate each of your priorities for each college that you were accepted to.
- Verify which majors you were either accepted into or you're interested in. Make sure that you're going to be able to study what you are most interested in!
- Check out social media posts from clubs and organizations at each college. Watch current students in action: what they're interested in, what they're passionate about. Are these people you can relate to and that you'd want to hang out with?
- Pare your choices down to a small handful and then go visit! Ideally, go to an admitted students day so that you can lay eyes on (or even meet) some students who will start college with you. Try to picture yourself on each campus you visit.
- And then you just have to decide. Look at the data you've collected. Where can you picture yourself the most? If you're still struggling to make a decision, try flipping a coin or using a magic 8 ball (I have one if you need it!); sometimes being forced into a decision will reveal how we're really feeling.
- Once you decide in your mind which college is best for you, try it on for size for about a week if you can. Tell people where you're planning to go. How does that feel?! If it doesn't feel quite right, maybe you need to go back and reconsider. If it feels great, go ahead and pay your deposit. Tell all the colleges that you're not planning to attend. And then go all in. Buy some merch, add your profile to class pages, and start thinking about your dorm room!

WHAT TO DO ABOUT WAITLISTS?

- First, review all of the colleges to which you've been admitted or waitlisted. Which ones can you eliminate because they're not the best fit for you? Would you choose the waitlisted college over ones that you've been accepted to? If that answer is no, you shouldn't bother accepting the waitlist. Please remember these three things: 1) you can only attend one college, 2) it actually feels good to narrow the options down to a few top contenders, and 3) staying on several waitlists could prevent other students from having a chance at admission. Please don't stay on waitlists for colleges that you probably wouldn't actually attend.
- If you do want to stay on a waitlist, you must accept your spot.
- Colleges really only want to offer spots to students who will actually come, so writing a solid letter of continued interest (LOCI) is super important. Spend time thinking about why this particular college is right for you, and be as specific as possible. Talking to current students can be very helpful as you think about this. What communities would you want to be part of? What organizations would you want to join? Which academic programs spark your interest? Try to explain why. What updates can you provide? Have you received any science fair awards? Are you doing anything interesting these days that shows your civic engagement? Three to four pointed sentences that are genuine and heartfelt can have a real impact. Writing a generic letter that doesn't say much about you and why this school is right for you frankly won't move the needle much.
- Think carefully about timing. How long are you willing to wait? Would you be willing to stay on a waitlist until June? How about til July? Are you willing to hear at the end of the summer when it's close to move-in time? Having a clear idea in your mind of when you want to be settled on where you are actually going to college is important. As time goes by, letting go of colleges where you're waitlisted can help you get more excited about and invested in the college where you're headed in the fall. Don't you want to start thinking about roommates and how you're going to decorate your dorm room?
- And most importantly, trust that you will land at the college that wants you and is MEANT FOR YOU!

I help students and their families navigate the college admissions process. I empower students to figure out who they are and where they belong, and I provide structure, insight, and enthusiasm as they apply to colleges that are the best fit academically, socially, and financially.

Contact me for a 30 minute complimentary session to learn more!



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