



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

MARISA'S RECENT COLLEGE TOUR

Visiting colleges across the country is an important part of my job. I returned yesterday from a six day tour through North Carolina and South Carolina with the Higher Education Consultants Association (HECA) where we visited 11 colleges. Nothing is better than getting on campuses, talking with current students, and thinking about which campuses could be great for students I work with: Davidson for curious students who want deep relationships with professors, Clemson for students who want big spirit but a family-like community, Furman for students who want a 100% residential experience and want to be part of a busy, involved community. I look forward to sharing more about what I learned with my students!

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS NEWS

- The Common App released the Personal Statement prompts this week. They are staying the same. My college tour showed that admissions offices are thinking about essays differently these days; some still take them seriously, others recognize that AI is having a real influence. While ChatGPT is quite capable of spitting out competent essays of all types, it is not able to do more than pretty superficial, predictable reflection. In my mind, writing a personal statement is an opportunity for great personal growth. Not only are you helping colleges understand who you are, but you are **helping yourself understand who you are**. Please do not deprive yourself of this opportunity! Write with great detail and careful, specific, authentic introspection--which are things that AI simply cannot do!
- Confusion and angst continue around delays with the "simplified" FAFSA. Some colleges, who use the CSS profile, are moving ahead with releasing financial aid awards; others are creating their own forms, hoping their awards will be in sync with the FAFSA. Many are pushing back their decision day to June 1; others are pushing it to May 15. There will be many consequences, including shorter waitlist/appeals windows; my biggest concern is around low income students who could feel that they are not able to head off to college.

COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: DAVIDSON COLLEGE

- Location: Davidson, NC
- # of Undergrads: 1,983
- Acceptance Rate: 14%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 9:1
- Returning Freshmen: 95%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 10%

INTERESTING FACTS:

- Supportive, friendly, tight-knit community with intense academics. 20 min from Charlotte. 2/3 of students come from outside of the southeast. Draws curious, hardworking students.
- Known as *the* liberal arts college of the South and for its Center for Interdisciplinary Studies
- Honor code is the cornerstone and breeds trust, respect, and collaboration; tests are un-proctored and self-scheduled. Students embrace the idea of learning for learning's sake, and many highlight the depth and diversity of intellectual discourse
- Professors want to develop personal relationships with students (many students have coffee or dinner with professors)
- Most students engage in community service through the Center for Civic Engagement
- Social life takes place "down the hill" where senior apts, frats, and eating houses (sororities without any "rush") are located. Work hard, play hard culture, but parties are open to all.
- Students feel affection for caring townspeople
- Freshmen live together and are matched by personality type.

COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: FURMAN UNIVERSITY

- Location: Greenville, SC
- # of Undergrads: 2,283
- Acceptance Rate: 67%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 9:1
- Returning Freshmen: 88%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 84%

INTERESTING FACTS:

- Beautiful campus on 750 acres outside of Greenville, a fast growing city
- Liberal arts college with Div 1 sports teams with a real sense of community
- Strong in business and health sciences; rigorous academics with real opportunities to get to know your professors; 44% participate in research
- Two year Pathways program helps students acclimate to campus and foster connections
- First years live together, sophomores live together, juniors & seniors live together in apartment style housing
- Greek life is not exclusive; 26% involved
- 3 week May Experience for travel
- 3/4 of students are from Southeastern states
- Efforts to increase diversity on campus

UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES:

Each year, every college and university determines various goals--geographic, demographic, curricular, or extra-curricular--that drive admissions decisions. For example, large state schools may determine that they need to admit more out-of-staters. A liberal arts school may be losing oboe and viola players in the college orchestra and need to replace those musicians. A college may have a new data science major and is keen on recruiting students who have expressed interest or shown experience in data science. We are not privy, unfortunately, to what these institutional priorities are, and what may be important to one college one year could drastically vary the following year.

Institutional priorities are at play when it comes to which qualified applicants are accepted and which ones aren't. When you hear about one kid getting into a particular college and another one that doesn't, please remember about institutional priorities. If you'd like to understand more, I highly recommend Jeff Selingo's book "Who Gets In and Why."

THOUGHTS FOR JUNIORS...

You are midway through your junior year. Let's think about your time in high school so far:

- How are you spending your time? Are you spending it on things you love doing or on things you think you *should* be doing? Being authentic to who you are pays off: you'll feel more satisfied when you're participating AND you'll be better able to write about your experiences in your college applications. Authenticity always shines through.
- Are there ways to have even more impact on your community? Are there ways to show even more leadership? Showing that you are a consistent, thoughtful, and committed member of your community will help admissions officers picture you as a productive member of their college community.
- Can you keep building relationships with your teachers? Go after school for extra help. Let them get to know you as a student and as a person. With lots of grade inflation out there in a test optional world, letters of recommendation help admissions officers get a sense of who you are as a student and how you'd be on their college campus.
- Keep working at your classes. See if you can bring that C to a B or that B to an A. The time and effort you put in right now will pay off.
- And make sure that you have a productive (and fun) summer coming up. Follow your interests. Solidify the story you plan to tell in your applications. And plan to dedicate some real time to personal statements and college applications. I promise that front-loading the work will make your senior year way less stressful.

THOUGHTS FOR SENIORS...

This month will be a busy and intense one, with many colleges releasing their decisions. As you hear from the colleges you applied to, be careful about just going on the name or ranking (remember that rankings have nothing to do with the quality of the education. Really!). Let yourself take the time to make an informed decision; there's no rush! Think about what you want in your college because things might be different from the fall when you applied. Create a spreadsheet where you can compare certain factors that are important to you (eg, how collaborative it is, opportunities for research or internships, your financial awards). The more deliberate you can be with your decision making, the more informed your decision will be, AND the more likely you will end up at the right place FOR YOU. Remember that come February of your freshman year in college, you will be there on your own. We want you to be somewhere WHERE YOU BELONG, not somewhere where your parents or friends thought you should go.

Take advantage of admitted student days that will come up in April. Narrowing down your choices and attending admitted student days at a few colleges can give you important information, namely about the other students who were accepted. Can you see yourself being friends with who you meet? What is the college's vibe like when you're on campus?

If you're waitlisted, I strongly suggest heading to the Common Data Set first (google it with the college name). You can look at the past few years to see how many students were put on a waitlist and how many were eventually admitted. Note any trends. If only a few dozen have gotten in off waitlists, it's probably best to move on and select another college. If you accept a waitlist, be sure to place a deposit at your current top choice. And remember, it feels great to be wanted! Spending too much time hoping and waiting for a pie in the sky keeps you from delving into what could be great options for you!

**PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO OTHER FAMILIES WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM MY APPROACH AND PERSPECTIVE!
(They can subscribe on my website)**

I help students and their families navigate the college admissions process while decreasing confusion and stress. 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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