



MGS EDUCATIONAL CONSULTING

Design your path to college

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



USEFUL COLLEGE RESEARCH HACKS:

Check out the size of the programs you are interested in by going to collegenavigator.gov. Type in the college name, and then click on Programs/Majors to see how many bachelors degrees have been awarded recently. You'll quickly be able to see how big the programs you're interested in are compared to other majors.

And check out the college lists on collegexpress.com/lists. They have a ton of helpful lists, such as: hidden gems by state, large colleges that feel small, colleges that are especially welcoming to freshmen, and where "geek is chic."

Spend time doing your research. Far too often, I hear about students who don't do their research and end up at colleges that are completely and utterly wrong for them. Trust me, it is time well spent!

And please don't forget that spring is when SENIORS should do a ton of deep research to really figure out which college is right for them. Dig into majors, classes, general ed requirements, and all the logistics (eg, travel, calendar, orientations). And talk to a few current students!

COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

COLORADO COLLEGE

- Location: Colorado Springs, CO
- # of Undergrads: 2,100
- Acceptance Rate: 18%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 9:1
- Returning Freshmen: 95%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 8%

INTERESTING FACTS:

- The innovative Block Plan means that you take one course at a time for 3 1/2 weeks and then have 4 1/2 days rest between courses. Allows for great focus and depth without the stress of having to balance exams and papers for 4 or 5 classes at the end of the semester. And then you have a break!
- Block schedule allows for 4 or 5 opportunities a year for adventure. Many students plan their own hiking/skiing adventures, or they can participate in college-sponsored activities both on and off campus.
- Block schedule lets students take classes at unique times and places (ie, astronomy at midnight, or coral bio in Bermuda).
- Faculty teach at least 25 off-campus blocks (domestic or international).
- Only seniors can live off campus.
- Monthly Full Moon Cruisers: bike downtown and party!

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES VERSUS LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES:

Many students don't fully understand the difference between research universities and liberal arts colleges. The greatest difference is that professors at **research universities** are typically focused on research instead of on teaching (thus the phrase "publish or perish"). Often, graduate students teach in place of professors, and many classes are large and lecture-style. Students typically live off-campus for at least half of their time at college. Students who want the sports spirit of a large university but who also want to get to know their professors may find that honors colleges make a big university feel smaller. Research opportunities abound at these universities, but be sure to check whether undergrads have access; many times, graduate students have first dibs at research opportunities. And be sure to note the graduation rates at these big universities; 4 year rates are often 50-60%. It can be hard to get the classes you need to graduate in four years.

On the other hand, professors at **liberal arts colleges** typically are fully dedicated to teaching and make a concerted effort to build relationships with their students. Because most liberal arts colleges are focused solely on undergrads, there are no graduate students around to teach classes. Students end up living on campus much of the time (housing for upperclassmen is often apartment style). Don't think that liberal arts colleges don't offer research opportunities. Many offer robust and sometimes personalized opportunities that are solely for undergrads, and students' resumes are often full of vibrant, interesting experiences. 4 year graduation rates are typically 85-90%.

THINGS FOR JUNIORS TO THINK ABOUT:

Now's the time to be thinking about what classes you'll be taking senior year. Here are a few things to think about:

- Most colleges want to see students taking **5 core courses** every year of high school. Now is not the time to stop taking math or science, even if your school does not require them for graduation.
- **Keep taking foreign language.** Most colleges recommend 3 or 4 years of foreign language, and some require 4 years. And that's 4 years of the same language. If you haven't taken a language this year, see if you can participate in a summer language program and think about taking a language next year.
- Remember that colleges will be looking at how **rigorous** your courseload has been, so try to take the most rigorous classes that you can handle. That's the key: that you can handle.

AND ABOUT STRESS...

Hearing about seniors receiving acceptances, denials, and lots and lots of deferrals can definitely cause a lot of stress--especially knowing that it'll be your turn to go through this process next year.

Rest assured that most seniors will be just fine. They will land at the place that is right for them. They may even realize that being denied or deferred from some colleges was actually a blessing. Rejection is really an opportunity for redirection!

The key to this whole process is to figure out which colleges make sense for YOU. Not for your friend. Not for your mom or grandma. If you can make a balanced list of 10-12 colleges--some that are super highly likely that you'll get into and some that are less likely--and you know that you'd be happy to attend each and every one, you will drastically reduce the stress. What's more, you'll be likely to get into ~60% of the colleges on your list.

And remember this KEY POINT: there are about 50-100 colleges that are highly rejective or pretty darn rejective, but there are hundreds and hundreds of other fine colleges and universities that are actively looking for students! Put a few of those on your list! Please do not make the mistake of only applying to selective colleges; you will probably regret it when you get a bunch of deferrals! Speaking of...

ABOUT DEFERRALS...

There have been lots of deferrals over the past days, weeks, and months. A deferral means that you have been moved to the Regular Decision pile, and your application will be looked at again. What, you ask, brings about all of these deferrals? A few things: super high numbers of apps, institutional priorities, and yield protection. Colleges have priorities to fill, and they simply won't provide acceptances if there is a risk that students will not come. While deferrals are disappointing, there are things you can do:

- Take some time to process, and then move on and **get excited about the colleges that you've been admitted to.** But also remember that Regular Decision is when colleges look to balance their classes, so you still *might* have a shot. It's not over 'til it's over.
- Look very carefully at the messaging from the college. Follow their directions exactly. They may want you to complete a few more essays (or they may just want you to answer a few questions in bullet form), or they may accept more letters of recommendation. **If they say not to send in another letter of recommendation, do not send one! If they say not to send in a letter, do not send one!** Following their directions is important!
- If you want to give them more information that can bolster your case and explain why **YOU** are a great fit, go ahead and write a Letter of Continued Interest (do it right about now). Be honest and succinct, and show your enthusiasm if that's how you feel. If you're willing to say that you would definitely come if accepted, go ahead and say that.

Many of these deferrals have little rhyme or reason to us outsiders. **Please do not waste your time trying to figure out why Person A got in but Person B did not.** We will never, ever know. Remember, colleges need to meet their institutional priorities each year. Those priorities change each cycle, and we will never know exactly what they are!

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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