



COLLEGE ADMISSIONS NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2023

## THE STATE OF COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

The Supreme Court's recent decision on racial preferences in admissions, the Department of Justice's civil rights investigation into Harvard's legacy admissions policy, and the new study by Opportunity Insights about the advantages that high income students have with college admissions have everyone thinking about the state of admissions. There's little doubt that several admissions mechanisms favor students who come from high income families. Wesleyan is the latest college to end legacy admissions. Will others follow suit?

And allow me to get on my soapbox for a second... Can we talk about Early Decision (ED), the admissions strategy in which students apply early to only one college or university with the agreement that they will attend if accepted? More and more colleges, even those on solid financial footing, feel a great need to fill seats early in the process. The lift from ED is so significant that families feel forced to apply ED if they have any hope of being admitted to many top schools. In the most recent admissions cycle, Northeastern's Early Decision acceptance rate was 33%, compared to 6.8% for Regular Decision. Tulane's ED rate was 68%, while its Regular Decision rate was 11%. Early Decision benefits higher income families who, without any concerns about cost, can choose one college or university to increase their chances of admission. Middle and upper middle class families who need to wait and compare financial aid awards of their college acceptances really can't afford to apply ED.

Yet, many colleges admit more than half of their class through Early Decision. Middlebury, for example, recently admitted 63% of its class through ED. Like legacy admissions, Early Decision ensures that large numbers of upper income students receive significantly higher admissions rates.

Colleges should also think more about the impact Early Decision has on teens. Teenagers are fickle. They constantly change their minds. They develop so much in high school that they can have drastically different needs and wants in the span of just a few months. And yet ED encourages them to make a binding life decision in the fall of senior year rather than exploring and weighing all of their options when they're closest to entering college.

Virginia Tech has eliminated Early Decision for the upcoming cycle. I am hoping that other colleges make a similar bold move sooner rather than later. It's time for ED to go!

## THE COMMON APP IS OPEN!

The Common Application is now open for the 2023–2024 season! Now's the time to start filling out the application and finding the supplemental essays that you might need to complete. They're typically housed under "Writing" and "Academics," but be careful: some essays are hidden in funny places, and sometimes essays will only populate as you fill out the application.

Even if you think you know what supplements you have to write (because they don't seem to change for some colleges), please double check on the Common App today! Several colleges have, in fact, made changes as a result of the SCOTUS decision.

And don't forget my favorite Common App feature: from the College Search tab, click on "Application Requirements" to see deadlines, fees, and other requirements.

## COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

- Location: Salem, OR
- # of Undergrads: 1,585
- Acceptance Rate: 81%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 10:1
- Returning Freshmen: 86%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 94%

### INTERESTING FACTS:

- 40 minutes from Portland, close-knit, friendly Willamette has an enviable culture of support and caring
- Rigorous academics in a collaborative environment with professors who prioritize teaching; extensive class selection for a small liberal arts college
- Students have a foreign language requirement, do coursework in 6 modes of inquiry (which allows students to explore different areas of study before declaring a major), and have a culminating senior capstone project
- Popular majors are bio, politics, economics, and psychology
- Half of students go abroad; many head to a connected campus in Tokyo
- Social scene is around campus with movies, open-mic nights, and dance parties
- Greek life is available but doesn't dominate campus
- Students love hanging by Mill Stream and enjoy the Bistro, the student-run coffee shop
- Students volunteer more than 70,000 hours each year; internships abound

## RISING JUNIORS: START VISITING SOME COLLEGES!

Getting on a few college campuses at the end of the summer or in early fall (ideally when students are there so that you can get a good read on the vibe) is probably the most important thing you can do. It is very challenging to make a wise college list without having some context. So try to visit a mix of colleges (large public universities, medium-sized colleges, smaller liberal arts colleges) in a variety of locations (urban, suburban, rural). Don't worry at this point about which colleges might end up on your list. Just worry about size and location. And then start doing some real soul-searching about what you might want in a college. I find that too many students and families build their college lists based off of what colleges their friends are applying to, rather than thinking about what they want.

## RISING SENIORS: MAKE SOME REAL HEADWAY THIS SUMMER!

Most of you have a month or so before school starts again. I can't impress upon you enough how worthwhile it is to get a ton of college admissions work done before you head back for your senior year. Remember: you're probably going to be taking the most rigorous courseload you've taken so far, AND you'll have one more AP class on your schedule: AP College Applications! I'm only sort of kidding. The fall of senior year is A LOT!

Here are the key things that you should do before school starts:

- Finalize that college list. Follow the colleges on your list on Instagram; you can learn a ton from Insta Stories about how colleges welcome students back in the fall and you can get a close look at the students who attend and how they spend their time.
- Keep working on your personal statement. Tell a great, compelling story, and then explain why it matters. Finalize it before your summer ends.
- Keep working on your activities list (use a spreadsheet to lay it all out--ensuring you're within the miniscule character count--and then copy&paste it into the Common App).
- Get to work on any supplemental essays you have. Again, double check on the Common App that you're working on the latest essays.
- Will you be submitting a creative supplement (eg, a music supplement or an art portfolio)? Get that done before school starts too!

Don't underestimate how busy you'll be in the fall! What's more: you'll do better work when you're not distracted by all the school work that starts to pile up!

## SENIORS: MAKING THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

Many of you will be HEADING TO COLLEGE this month! Woohoo! It probably feels a little daunting, scary, and exciting! Let yourself feel all the feels, and work to manage your expectations. There will be hard times, but they will pass. You may feel lonely and overwhelmed at times, but know that you're not the only one. Have patience during this transition. It can take time!

Here are a few things I recommend that you do when you get to campus:

- Try to meet someone new every day. You should stay in touch with old friends, but be sure to make room and time for new ones.
- Go to the activities fair, and join clubs and organizations. Getting engaged and tied to groups from the get-go can make a huge difference!
- Go to faculty office hours regularly. Get to know your professors or TAs. DO NOT WAIT until you are struggling! Don't be shy. They want to help you!
- Find 3 places on campus that make you happy and visit them regularly.
- Find 3 people on campus who you enjoy and who make you feel comfortable. Grab meals with them. Head to the library with them.
- Resist the urge to text your parents with every problem you face. See if you can figure things out first.
- If you do reach out to your parents with a problem or issue, please remember to circle back and tell them how things resolved and how you are. We parents keep on worrying until we know we can stop!

One more thing... The book "College Success Guaranteed: 5 Rules to Make It Happen" by Malcolm Gauld has very wise advice:

- Go To Class (you'd be amazed at how many college students think they can get away with this)
- Study At Least 3 Hours a Day For 5 Days a Week
- Commit To Something
- Get a Mentor
- Procrastination Kills.
- I'll add a few others: Get Engaged and Invested and Be Open to New Friendships!

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*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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