



## IN THE NEWS:

- The Common Application is now open for the 2022-2023 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 sometimes essays will only populate as you fill out the application). 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.
- The University of Washington will be using the Common App for the first time this season. Be forewarned: typically when universities start using the Common App, applications will soar 20-30%.
- Housing shortages are rampant on many college campuses right now, including Florida A&M, University of Utah, UC Berkeley, University of Arkansas, University of Miami. The list goes on. If you're applying to a larger university, please take note of how they handle housing. Applying early can make all the difference. At some places, such as the University of Florida, you can put in a deposit at the time of application.

# COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

- Location: Harrisonburg, VA
- # of Undergrads: 18,772
- Acceptance Rate: 77%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 17:1
- Returning Freshmen: 89%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 2%

## INTERESTING FACTS:

- Public university with a focus on undergraduate teaching and close student/faculty interaction; classes feel relaxed and supportive
- Strong in pre-professional programs in business, health professions, and education
- Student support services get high ratings; strong counseling center with a range of offerings
- Honors College for those looking for a more intense experience
- Freshmen required to live on campus; meal plan gets rave reviews
- Lots of school spirit and minimal Greek life.

## KEY CONCEPTS: EARLY ACTION AND EARLY DECISION

**EARLY ACTION (EA):** App strategy where you can apply early to multiple colleges and hear back early (typically in December or January). These decisions are non-binding, which means that you can compare financial aid offers and then decide where to go. Fewer colleges offer EA; those that offer both Early Action and Early Decision seem to prefer Early Decision (students who applied EA were often deferred to the Regular round).

**EARLY DECISION (ED):** App strategy where you can apply to only ONE college ED; these decisions are BINDING, which means that if you are admitted, you are expected to go, and you must withdraw all other applications. The only way that you can typically get out of an Early Decision commitment is if the financial aid award is not doable (and you have to be able to prove that often through a Net Price Calculator).

**Upside:** Higher acceptance rates. Sometimes much higher.

**Downsides:** Remember that ED is a great tool for colleges because they can effectively lock in students early (which makes their yield numbers go up). It's not a great system for most teenagers: you can't weigh financial aid offers, and you may change your mind about what you want when May comes around. (Many college consultants note that 2/3 of transfer students applied ED initially). PLEASE do not apply ED without setting foot on the campus while students are there and being sure it's the right place for you!

**EARLY DECISION II (EDII):** If you don't get into your ED college, you can apply to a different one through EDII in early January. Again, it's binding.

## WHAT RISING JUNIORS SHOULD BE DOING:

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.

## WHAT RISING SENIORS SHOULD BE DOING:

- Finalize that college list. Follow the colleges on your list on Instagram; you can learn a ton from Insta Stories about 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 into the Common App).
- Get to work on any supplemental essays you have. Don't underestimate how busy you'll be in the fall!

## WHAT RISING COLLEGE FRESHMEN SHOULD BE THINKING ABOUT:

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 few did this this past year); Study At Least 3 Hours a Day For 5 Days a Week; Commit To Something; Get a Mentor; and Procrastination Kills. I'll add a few others: Be Invested and Be Open to New Friendships.

*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!*

