



IT'S APPLICATION TIME!

For many of you, you've submitted an Early Decision and several Early Action applications. Congratulations! It can be a grueling process for many students, and many start to feel like they are limping towards the finish line. So once you've submitted, take some time to celebrate what you've done.

And once you've reveled in this big accomplishment, plow ahead and complete the rest of your applications. Waiting until winter break in December to complete everything is often a great way to ruin your vacation. Begin thinking about whether you might want to apply Early Decision 2 in January just in case your ED college doesn't come through. Putting in the time now to complete those applications will pay off, I promise.

One more thing... As you're about to submit your applications, please try not to make last minute edits to essays. These last minute edits are often not well thought out, and the risk for typos is high!

COLLEGE IN THE SPOTLIGHT: CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIV

- Location: Cleveland, OH
- # of Undergrads: 5,286
- Acceptance Rate: 30%
- Student / Faculty Ratio: 9:1
- Returning Freshmen: 93%
- % Receiving Merit Aid: 78%

INTERESTING FACTS:

- Located in an area that's home to over 50 cultural and educational institutions
- Top programs in engineering, business mgmt, pre-architecture, and music; one of the few polymer science majors; fantastic direct admit nursing program
- No need to declare major when applying, and very easy to change majors
- "Think Box" is a 7 story state-of-the-art maker space
- Great for pre-med students with 4 hospitals nearby, including the Cleveland Clinic; research opportunities abound (81% of students conduct research)
- All schools have experiential learning opportunities, including co-ops
- Required to live on campus for first 2 years; 80% of undergrads stay on campus
- Many outdoorsy activities: hiking, mountain biking, beach on Lake Erie
- Greek life significant but focused more on philanthropy than on partying
- Showing demonstrated interest through visits is important!

KEY CONCEPT: 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 needs 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. A college may need boys from the midwest who are fullpay. 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 can make a real difference with which qualified applicants are accepted and which ones aren't. **When you hear about one kid getting into a particular college and another one who doesn't, please remember that institutional priorities could be at play.** If you'd like to understand more, I highly recommend Jeff Selingo's book [Who Gets In and Why.](#)

REVIEWING YOUR STUDENTS' ESSAYS:

I like to remind parents how important it is for kids to feel proud of the essays they've written for college. Writing solid essays can be very affirming to students who are in the midst of a process that can feel very random and even cruel.

Moreover, feeling good about their main college essays (aka personal statements) is critical as they move on to their supplemental essays.

I encourage you to read your child's essay alone (not in a room with your child) and to make sure you have the prompt with you when you are reading. The college essay is all about reflection. It provides students an opportunity to show who they are as people and as future college students. The most effective essays – the ones that stand out – share a few common features. Regardless of the prompt, an effective essay:

- Answers the prompt
- Showcases a positive trait or characteristic
- Sounds like the high school student who wrote it
- Illustrates something meaningful about the student
- Demonstrates reflection.

Please restrain yourself as best you can from editing their essays. Their essays may not be exactly what you would write or what you think they should write, but it is absolutely critical that they are authentically theirs. Trust me: admissions officers can smell the writing of a 50-something mom or dad from a mile away. You may think that you are helping their case, but it is very possible that you will end up hurting them. It is also critical that kids do their own best work; we want to make sure that the college that they end up at is the right one for them academically.

Negative feedback from parents can be incredibly demoralizing to a student who has worked so hard on an essay they are proud of. Take this advice from Alison Slater Tate, a college admissions counselor who writes for the Washington Post: "If your child asks you to read their essay, ...treat that essay like the picture they drew for you when they were 4 years old. ...Let other people give constructive criticism. Save the red ink and just tell your kid that you're proud of them." *

*Credit goes to the WOW Essay Community.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:

Colleges consider student activities for a number of reasons:

1. To see how students balance school work with their other interests
2. To see what students will bring to their college communities
3. To see how students are making an impact on their world.

It used to be that colleges wanted well-rounded students who did a smattering of different activities. This notion has evolved over time. Now colleges want to see depth over breadth. They want to bring in students who have invested time in a few activities that they are authentically passionate about. Seeing how students spend their time in high school sheds some light on applicants' values and interests; students' activities give admissions officers insight into how they will behave on campus. Remember that admissions officers are looking to admit future classmates, friends, and roommates.

When students fill out the Activities List on the Common Application, they have to indicate the amount of time that they have spent on each activity. Spending just a little time on a large number of activities is not what colleges are looking for. Colleges prefer seeing students focus on a handful of activities that are meaningful to them and that show how they may be having an impact on their world.

So find a few things that speak to you and that bring you deep satisfaction. Please do not participate in activities just for your college applications. Do them because you really want to do them! Kids who follow their passions often end up being able to tell a cohesive story about who they are.

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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