

THE COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCESS

Understanding College Admission Decisions

College Admission Decisions:
Defined

Choosing a College to Attend

Admission Decisions: What Does This Mean?

Once the application process has ended for students, the time to wait for colleges to review applications and make admission decisions begins. Students who apply early typically hear from colleges from December through January. Colleges with 'rolling' policies also inform students quickly, within a few weeks. Regular Decision candidates frequently begin to hear from colleges between March and April.

Once decisions are made students are notified either by mail or email. Another reason for students to use an easily accessible email account (siprep). Email has become a more efficient way of communication between colleges and students.

Please be mindful of your reactions to admission decisions around your peers. If possible, check your email at home rather than during the school day. It gives you a chance to receive the news in a comfortable space – no matter what the decisions you receive, this is all big news! Allow yourself some time to process the news and talk about your feelings with parents, your counselor and close friends.

Remember: there will be extremely happy and disappointed students throughout your senior class. Some awareness and sensitivity around this issue is always a good thing.

Acceptance: You got in!

Students who apply Early Decision are finished with their college application process. This is where the 'binding' part of the ED commitment occurs. Colleges expect that students who agreed to apply ED are ethically committed to attend. Any additional applications sent must be officially 'withdrawn' as soon as possible. Just contact each college admission office to let them know.

Early Action or Regular Decision candidates typically wait for a response from all of their colleges before making a final choice.

Deferred

Students who apply under an 'Early' plan (Early Decision or Early Action) may have their application deferred to the regular admission pool. Deferred students were neither accepted nor denied but will be considered for admission with the 'regular' applicants. This means that the particular college has not made an admission decision about the student as an early applicant and has chosen instead to consider the application with the regular decision candidates (typically March or April).

Students who apply Early Decision and are deferred are no longer considered 'bound' by the Early Decision Agreement.

Denied

Students who are denied were not accepted by the college. This means that your application will no longer be considered. Remember that being denied does not mean that you were not a strong applicant, just that you were not offered a place in the incoming freshman class. There is likely nothing you could have done differently to make the decision go your way. No matter what, this is difficult news to receive that requires time for you to process.

Wait Listed

Students placed on the wait list were not officially accepted to the college, but considered potential candidates for acceptance if space allows. After the May 1st deadline, colleges are able to determine whether or not they have space and then look to their wait list to extend additional offers of acceptance. If you do remain on a college wait list, you will need to select another college and send your NON REFUNDABLE deposit by May 1st. Students may be informed of wait list status as late as August.

Now it's your turn to make a decision! For some students, making a final college choice is simple and requires no more effort than filling out the necessary paperwork (intent to register form with a deposit). The final choice is not usually so easy for students to make. There may not be an easy first choice or if there was, it is not among the current list of options. Regardless of your specific situation, choosing a college to attend can be a major challenge.

Thoughts about making choices

If there is more than one clear choice, the information below provides some guidelines to consider as you select a college. Thinking it through is more important now than ever. The goal is for you to feel great about your decision!

Collect Your Thoughts

Think back to junior year. Remember when you filled out your college preference worksheet and created an initial list with your counselor? Move away from the specific colleges that are on your mind and recall what mattered to you in the first place. Your priorities may have changed, if so, how? Be specific. If not, what are those key factors that made the difference for you? Take notes or talk it out with someone. Whatever works best for you.

Consider the Pros/Cons

Write them all down as you think of them. Create a pros/cons list for each college based on your personal priorities. Then consider, is there an obvious match? Remember, you're supposed to look beyond the college name. Although, if prestige is something that you've identified as important to you, that could end up in the 'pro' column but should not become the deciding factor when weighing all of your options.

Visit One More Time (Road Trip!)

Get yourself back on each campus and soak in the atmosphere. Talk to as many people as you can, eat in a dining hall, check out a dorm, visit the student activities center, read a newspaper, whatever you can think of that will help you gauge whether or not you can live on campus for the next four years. "A visit can go a long way toward helping a student feel that the fit is right," Dave Fletcher, Associate Director of Admission at Barry University (FL), said. Easter break may be the best time for you to schedule a final visit. Call the admission office to find out when the campus is on break.

Review the Financial Aid Offers

Always compare Financial Aid offers from colleges with your parents. Make sure that you understand the information included in the award letter and review the numbers carefully. This is the practical side of the decision making process and an essential one to consider. Conversely, if a specific college costs a bit more but ultimately meets specific needs, it may be worth the increase in cost. The specific amount of money offered by each college varies by total amount as well as the breakdown of grants/scholarships versus loans.

Talk About Your Options

It's important to talk about it with people you trust (family, friends, your counselor, and teachers). Try to talk more than you listen to opinions: speaking your thoughts often provides clarity. Remember that any feedback you get in return is just personal opinion. Some people may be able to offer insights based on personal experience that may be valuable to you. Remember that this is your decision and you have to do what is right.

Finally, Go with Your Gut

There is no one perfect choice. It's always important to remember that as you go through the decision making process. Do your best to alleviate stress and give yourself the opportunity to consider all of the options. Then speak with your parents before making the final commitment. It is important for everyone to be comfortable with your decision. Once the decision is made, inform the other colleges that you are not accepting their offers as soon as possible.