

# Going Off to College: A Journey for Students and Parents

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# Perils of Senior Year

## ➤ Make the Grade

Send a strong message to colleges that you are **READY**  
Maintains study skills and keep the brain working  
Good Senior Grades could override past performance

## ➤ Remain Involved

Don't get overwhelmed with Senior Activities  
Maintain your clubs and your involvement...senior projects  
Community Service  
Prioritize the Senior Activities in relationship to college  
Remember college search takes time

# Perils of Senior Year... *continued*

## ➤ Stay Focused

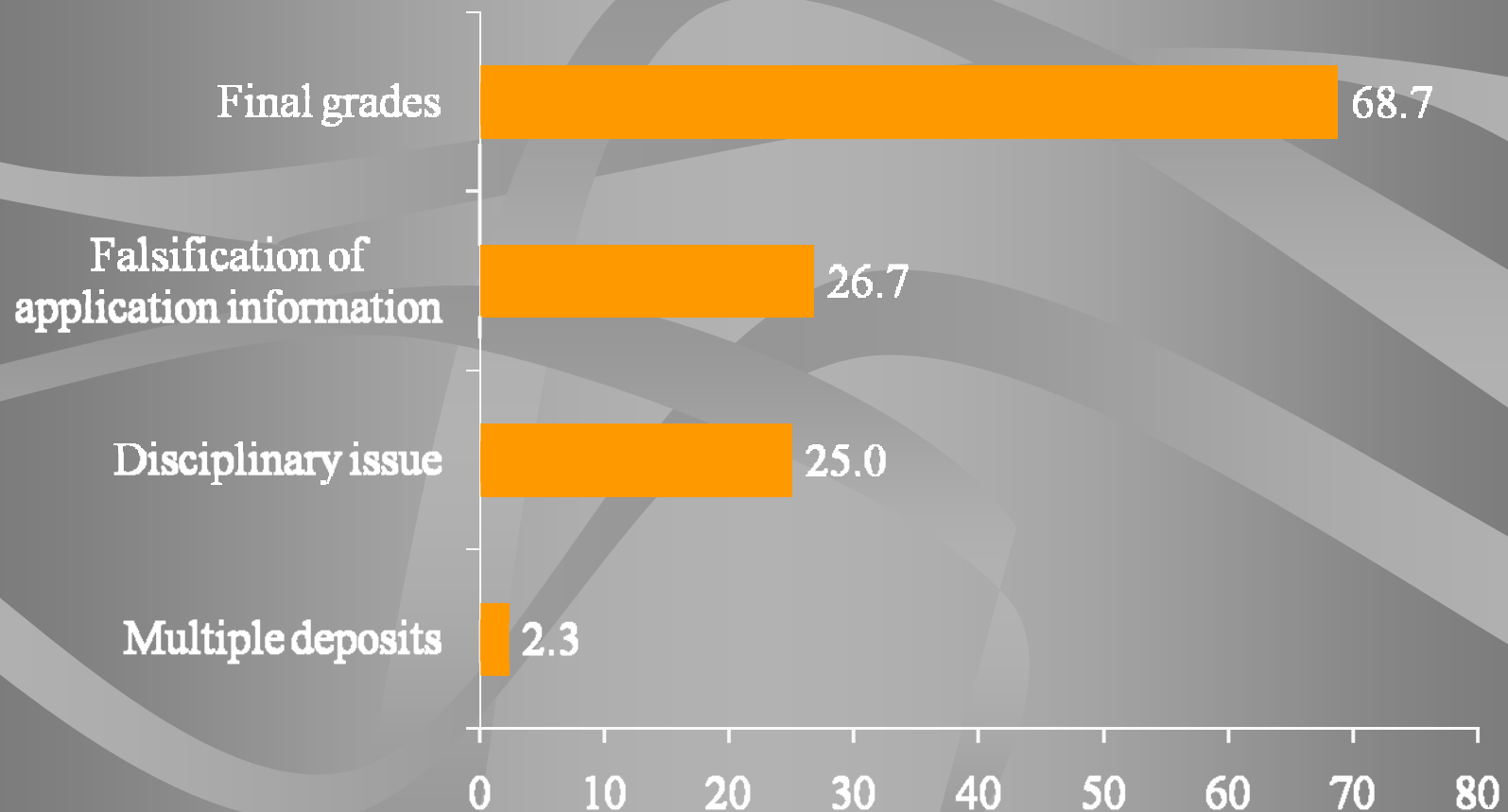
- Colleges want to see a strong senior year
- Some will send warning letters after first semester grades
- Some may rescind admission

## ➤ Enjoy the experience

- Seniors who resist senioritis will be able to balance fun and school work
- Time management will ensure a great prom and senior year activities
- Colleges look forward to welcoming a happy, well rounded, energetic student

# 35% of Colleges Revoked Admission Offers in 2007

## Percentage of Colleges that Revoked Admission Offers for Various Reasons (Among Those That Revoked Any Offers)



SOURCE: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2007.



# How Admissions Decisions Are Made?

# College Ratings of the Importance of Various Factors

|                              | Considerable | Moderate | Limited | None |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------|---------|------|
| Grades in college prep       | 79.9%        | 14.4%    | 2.9%    | 2.7% |
| Strength of curriculum       | 63.8         | 23.9     | 8.0     | 4.3  |
| Admission test scores        | 58.5         | 30.9     | 8.0     | 2.7  |
| Grades in all courses        | 51.6         | 40.1     | 6.1     | 2.1  |
| Essay or writing sample      | 25.8         | 37.9     | 19.9    | 16.4 |
| Class rank                   | 23.4         | 43.8     | 23.4    | 9.4  |
| Demonstrated interest        | 22.0         | 30.3     | 23.9    | 23.9 |
| Counselor recommendation     | 21.1         | 40.4     | 28.1    | 10.4 |
| Teacher recommendation       | 20.8         | 40.0     | 28.6    | 10.5 |
| Interview                    | 10.8         | 23.7     | 35.8    | 29.8 |
| Subject test scores (AP, IB) | 6.8          | 32.2     | 34.9    | 26.2 |
| Extracurricular activities   | 6.5          | 45.7     | 32.8    | 15.1 |
| SAT II scores                | 6.2          | 13.8     | 28.2    | 51.8 |
| State graduation exam scores | 4.4          | 13.7     | 28.7    | 53.3 |
| Work                         | 1.9          | 24.2     | 46.8    | 27.2 |

# Factors by Institutional Characteristics

- Public vs. Private
  - Private: essay, interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, work, extracurricular activities, demonstrated interest
  - Public: class rank
- Enrollment Size
  - Smaller: interview, counselor and teacher recommendations, demonstrated interest
- Selectivity
  - More Selective: strength of curriculum, essay, counselor and teacher recommendations, extracurricular activities, work, subject test scores, SAT II scores

# Questions & Puzzles

- Why do colleges make decisions that are sometimes hard to understand?
- Is there a perfect way to evaluate students?
- Are there admissions “hooks?”
- How do public & private colleges make decisions?
- What information do colleges want from the counselor and the school?
- Why do colleges with similar standards make different decisions?

# Acceptance Rates – Ivy League

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Harvard            | 9.1%  |
| Princeton          | 10.9% |
| Yale               | 9.7%  |
| Brown              | 14.6% |
| Dartmouth          | 16.8% |
| Columbia           | 10.4% |
| U. of Pennsylvania | 21%   |
| Cornell            | 24.3% |

# Acceptance Rates – Highly Selective

|                   |            |                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Amherst</b>    | <b>19%</b> | <b>Duke</b>       | <b>21%</b> |
| <b>Stanford</b>   | <b>12%</b> | <b>Bowdoin</b>    | <b>21%</b> |
| <b>Georgetown</b> | <b>22%</b> | <b>Swarthmore</b> | <b>19%</b> |
| <b>Williams</b>   | <b>18%</b> | <b>Pomona</b>     | <b>20%</b> |
| <b>MIT</b>        | <b>14%</b> |                   |            |

As a result of low acceptance rates...

Many applicants with strong GPAs  
and test scores feel that they have  
been treated “unfairly.”

?

# Common Beliefs

- I am the valedictorian of my high school.
- I have top SAT scores.
- I am a great athlete and musician.
- I am my high school class president.
- I can afford to pay the tuition.
- I can fill out 20 applications!
- I am a Division I or II athlete



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Student-Athletes

Parents

# Goals for Every College

The ultimate goals for every college are the same:

- Admit a freshman class with many different dimensions
- Admit students who will make good use of the available resources
- Admit students who will help meet the institution's needs.
- All schools look for a “national” student body

## “What’s the Bottom Line?”

“...Admissions decisions often reflect the effort on the part of an admissions committee to ‘build in’ this diversity, and that sometimes results in some students with better ‘numbers’ (i.e. SAT scores or class ranks) being denied in favor of students who can bring a special talent or geographic, cultural, ethnic background to campus...”

Princeton University

# “But I’ve Always Had Straight A’s!”

“The primary criterion for admission is academic excellence, and the most important single credential is the **transcript**. Our ablest candidates have mostly “A”s in their courses, but we do find that some students with lower grade averages may show more real promise for strong college level course work than some students with high averages. We find the same may apply with regard to test scores—very high scores, though they may in many cases confirm scholastic promise, do not guarantee admission to Stanford.”

**Stanford University**

# Perfect Test Scores?

“In each of the past few years Harvard has received more than 500 applications with double 800 scores and has accepted just under half of them.”

Harvard University

# “Why Didn’t I Send Him to Mali?”

“You’re a parent watching your child, so proud, and so worried. Your neighbors’ son was a nationally ranked swimmer, straight As, great boards, nice kid. Got rejected at his top three choices, wait-listed at two more. Who gets into Yale these days anyway? Maybe they should have sent him to Mali for the summer to dig wells, fight Malaria, give him something to write about in his essay.”

*“Who Needs Harvard?” Time Aug. 2006*

# Reality Check

- 25,000 high schools in the country, each with top ten list of students
- 250,000 students applying to the same group of 8 Ivies and highly selective schools
- Diversity is common among this group
- Perfect scores on the ACT/SAT not unusual in this group

# Admissions Index

Academic Profile:

Programs:  $9 \times 2 = 18$  possible points

Performances:  $9 \times 2 = 18$  possible points

SAT1/ACT:  $9 \times 2 = 18$  possible points

SAT IIs:  $9 \times 2 = 18$  possible points

Note: 9 is the highest possible score in one area.

# Admissions Index

## Personal Profile:

Activity List/Resume: = 9 possible points

Essays: = 9 possible points

Letters of Recommendation = 9 possible points

Total Score (Academic+Personal)=99 possible points

# Test Score Index

| <b>SAT1</b>  | <b>ACT</b> | <b>Points</b> |
|--------------|------------|---------------|
| 780+         | 36         | 9 points      |
| 750+         | 34 - 35    | 8 points      |
| 720+         | 33         | 7 points      |
| 690+         | 31 - 32    | 6 points      |
| 660+         | 30         | 5 points      |
| 640+         | 29         | 4 points      |
| 620+         | 28         | 3 points      |
| 600+         | 27         | 2 points      |
| 590 or below | 26         | 1 point       |

# How Applicants Are Evaluated?

- The Academic Performances
- The Evaluative Measures
- Personal Background
- Geographic Considerations
- Extracurricular Activities
- Extenuating Circumstances
- Recommendations
- Fit/match Considerations
- Education Environment

# “Is a ‘B’ in a Hard Course Better Than an ‘A’ in an Easy Course?”

“Be careful not to assume that the world is divided between students who take difficult courses and get Bs and the students who take easy courses and get As. Most of our applicants are able to take difficult courses and receive As.

If you can handle the work in honors and AP, take at least a few of them. If it is obvious from your transcript that you are taking a lighter load than you can handle, admissions officers at selective colleges are going to wonder about your motivation. Grades from the junior and senior year are most important.”

Stanford University

# Admitted Students: Things in Common

- **Scholars (working to the best of their ability and beyond)**
- **Sustained commitment**
- **Increased level of responsibility**
- **Leadership**
- **Sheer ability**
- **Positive image**

# Interesting Facts

Only 7 CEO's from the current top 50 Fortune 500 companies were Ivy League undergraduates.

*Who Needs Harvard?" Time Aug. 2006*

# The Reality of It All

“You are being judged according to criteria that you would never use to judge another person and which will never again be applied to you once you leave higher education...”

*Who Needs Harvard?” Time Aug. 2006*

# To Seniors & Parents

So remember, the letters you start to get in mid-December don't determine anything!



# Sound Advice

Look for a good fit

– Challenges you, makes you stretch, allows you to grow

Don't go to a place where you'll have to study

24/7 just to keep up



# Final Words of Wisdom

- Keep an open mind
- Don't take shortcuts
- Be realistic, but don't be afraid to aim high
- Don't rely on myths, rumors or anecdotes
- Don't stereotype people or colleges
- Seek advice, but make up your own mind
- Make appointments with your counselor
- Don't rule out a college because of cost
- Be yourself (ok, yourself at your best)
- Keep things in perspective
- Have a sense of humor
- Make sure your application is your own work, but seek out feedback from adults
- Read the instructions first

## And finally...

- Keep in mind that no matter which college you attend, it's a good idea to remember that “Batteries Are Not Included” and “Assembly is Required.”
- However much you sweat over the college admissions process, be sure to take the long view. *Nowhere* is it written that life begins or ends with the college admission process!

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# Good Motto to Remember

It doesn't matter where you go,  
as long as you do well!

Thank You for Coming

Q & A's