

College Admissions Trends

College acceptance notifications started arriving last week and will continue to over the next several days. This year, several trends established during previous years are continuing:

- **A steady rise in the number of applicants:** even though the number of US college students applying to college has dipped slightly from previous years, the number of applications continues to rise. This increase is due primarily to two factors. First, students continue to apply to an increased number of colleges. A major contributor to this increase is the ease with which students can complete the Common Application. Additionally, many colleges are accepting an increased number of international students. This helps improve the diversity at the campus and more importantly, attracts students who typically pay full fare. Since the number of colleges is not increasing and since colleges are not getting any larger, something has to give. What gives is the acceptance rate, which once again is down at many top colleges.
- **An increased use of waitlists:** with more applicants, an increased number of students will be put on a waitlist. Colleges are looking to make sure they fill their freshman class. Since students are applied to an increased number of colleges, many colleges now face additional uncertainty. To protect themselves, colleges have grown the size of their waitlists. In fact, at least two of the top 20 colleges in the country routinely put more students on their waitlist than the number of students accepted.
- **A growing significance of the college essay:** with “fit” playing an increasing importance in the acceptance game, colleges are putting an increased emphasis on essay(s). Your essays must “bring to life” who you are in the mind of the admissions counselors. The essay can communicate who you are and what is important to you in ways that your grades and test scores cannot. When a particular college requires more than one essay, each of your essays must weave together into a cohesive whole. In effect, you are telling the college, through all of your essays, this is who I am.
- **An increased importance of the “interest factor”:** I am not talking about telling the college that you wanted to attend since you were in 2nd grade. I am talking about showing genuine interest in learning more about the college. For instance, if the college is within a 4-hour drive, did you visit the campus? Did you meet with an admissions counselor when they visited your high school, at a college fair or a regional road show? Did you meet with a professor or a coach? How about an alumnus? Many colleges are paying increased attention to

your interest in attending their college. They want to feel reasonably comfortable that if they extend an offer to their institution that you will attend.

With a deeper understanding of these factors, you will be better positioned to develop your college admissions game plan.