



# Understanding Selective College Admissions



# Defining “Selective” or “Competitive”

More academically eligible applicants than space

About 20% schools have admit rates < 50%

Selectivity does not mean quality

Average Acceptance Rate for Four-Year Colleges: 66.7 percent

Selectivity	National share of institutions	Average number of applications per institution	National share of applications	National share of full-time, freshmen undergraduates
Accept fewer than 50 percent of applicants	19.2%	12,492	36.5%	21.3%
50 to 70 percent	33.4%	6,108	31.0%	32.3%
71 to 85 percent	28.8%	5,625	24.6%	33.4%
More than 85 percent	18.6%	2,771	7.9%	13.0%

SOURCE: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017-18). Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Data Center. Washington, DC: NCES. [Includes Title-IV participating, four-year public and private not-for-profit, degree-granting (primarily baccalaureate) institutions in the US that enroll first-time freshman and are not open admission.]

# Holistic admission process

---

Human process

Looking for fit: Will the student be happy? What will they contribute? Will they graduate?

Demonstrate uniqueness beyond test scores and grades, intellectual curiosity

Each college has an application review process and institutional goals

---

## William Fitzsimmons, Harvard Dean of Admission:

*"Each year we admit about 2,100 applicants. We like to think that all of them have strong personal qualities and character, that they will educate and inspire their classmates over the four years of college, and that they will make a significant difference in the world after they leave Harvard."*

# Additional Requirements for Selective Schools

- ✓ Required Essay(s)
- ✓ Short Answer Questions
- ✓ Secondary School Report
- ✓ Counselor Recommendation
- ✓ Teacher Recommendation(s)
- ✓ Interview with alum or admission staff
- ✓ CSS Profile in addition to FAFSA

## Importance of Various Factors in the Admission Decision: First-Time Freshmen

	Percentage of Colleges Rating As:			
	Considerably Important	Moderately Important	Limited Importance	Not Important
Grades in All Courses	74.5	15.0	5.5	5.0
Grades in College Prep Courses	73.2	16.8	5.9	4.1
Strength of Curriculum	62.1	21.9	8.7	7.3
Admission Test Scores (SAT, ACT)	45.7	37.1	12.2	5.0
Essay or Writing Sample	23.2	33.2	24.1	19.5
Student's Demonstrated Interest	16.1	23.9	28.0	32.1
Counselor Recommendation	15.1	40.4	26.6	17.9
Teacher Recommendation	14.2	40.2	26.5	19.2
Class Rank	9.1	29.1	34.1	27.7
Extracurricular Activities	6.4	42.9	32.0	18.7
Portfolio	6.4	11.9	26.9	54.8
Subject Test Scores (AP, IB)	5.5	18.3	35.2	41.1
Interview	5.5	16.4	28.3	49.8
Work	4.1	28.6	36.9	30.4
State Graduation Exam Scores	2.3	8.7	18.8	70.2
SAT II Scores	1.9	5.6	14.8	77.8

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018-19.

# What's Important?

---



Orange: Academics (GPA, test scores)  
Blue: Recommendations  
Purple: Essay  
Turquoise: Activities and leadership  
Green: Other factors

Marcie Frederickson & Ujash Patel, 2018

# Grades & Strength of Curriculum

---

Core GPA vs Cumulative GPA

Take challenging courses



# Teacher & Counselor Recommendation

Packet on Counseling website

Counselor rec required - get to know us :)

Choose teachers who can speak to your character, who REALLY like you

- Choose recommenders who know you *well* and are likely to write a *strong* recommendation for you.
- Provide the attached questionnaires and a copy of your academic resume (use the attached template or your existing, updated resume from mentoring). The more information they have, the stronger the recommendation will be.
- Give your recommender **AT LEAST TWO WEEKS - PREFERABLY A MONTH (OR MORE) TO FINISH.**
- **APPROACH is everything.** Remember, it is *NOT* a requirement to write you a letter. Be sure to *ASK* if a letter can be written - and don't forget to say PLEASE and THANK YOU. Teachers, counselors, coaches, etc. all have the right to *decline* your request.
- After your letter is written, don't forget to **thank your recommender *in person***. Of course chocolate & coffee are gracious, but a simple handwritten thank you note will mean just as much.

# RECOMMENDATION MYTHS...

- The teachers/counselors have a form letter they use for all students.
  - ✓ YIKES! No Way! If this is true...run away quick! Every letter we write should be as individual as you are.
- It's one recommendation. It doesn't take much time to write!
  - ✓ Recommendations take 1-2 hours of uninterrupted time to write. We may have 6 other recommendations to write before yours and it's hard to write while teaching class. We need some time to make sure we get your recommendation written on time.
- I don't need to see my teacher in person. I'll just send a recommendation request online.
  - ✓ ALWAYS request a recommendation in person. Best plan is to ask first in person and follow up with online recommendation request as a reminder.



# Standardized Tests

---

Colleges take both ACT & SAT

SAT subject tests?

SuperScore?

Fairtest.org - test optional schools - does adding a test score add value to your application?

[School Profile of last year's incoming freshman class](#) - Duke

[School Profile of last year's incoming freshman class](#) - UPenn

# Demonstrated Interest

---

Used to discern between casual and authentically interested candidates

Students should:

- Read all email and respond in a friendly, businesslike tone
- Meet admission reps at schools, regional college fairs, complete forms, shake hands, and express interest
- Initiate contact with a meaningful email question or thank you
- Make formal visits to campuses if possible

# EXPLORING COLLEGE OPTIONS: KANSAS CITY, MO

Thursday, October 5, 2023 at 6:30 PM until 8:00 PM Central Daylight Time

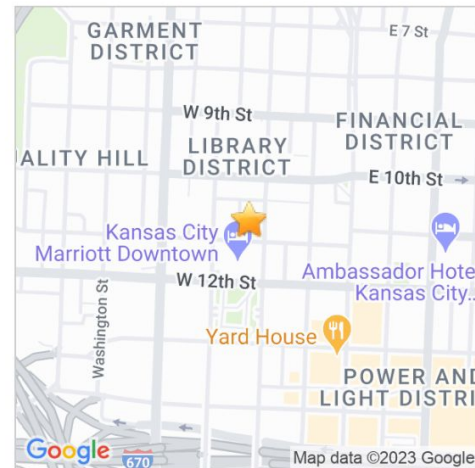
Kansas City Marriott Downtown  
200 W 12th St  
Kansas City, MO 64105  
United States



The Exploring College Options programs start promptly. We suggest arriving 15 to 20 minutes beforehand to complete the sign-in process and find a seat. Programs typically last one and a half hours. Please feel free to bring your parent or guardian to the program, and if you have any friends who you think might be interested, please direct them to this website for registration information.

If you cannot attend this event, please go to our [website](#) for a complete listing of regional Exploring College Options programs.

Registration is no longer available because the registration deadline has passed.



[Map and Directions](#)

# Extracurricular Activities

---

Meaningful involvement in a few things

Princeton's admissions office:

*"We are interested in the talents and interests you would bring to Princeton outside the classroom. We don't value one type of activity over another. Rather, we appreciate sustained commitment to the interests you have chosen to pursue."*

# Essays

---

Chance to share things about student not already included in application

Avoid:

- Sports as metaphor for life
- Talking only about admiration for someone else

Start early - Common App publishes their questions a year in advance

# Interview

---

Usually with alumnus but may be an admission representative

After application submission

Sometimes optional

Used more to boost than to hurt (What are you most proud of? Is this college a good fit? Don't be afraid to share accomplishments. Be yourself and let your personality shine. Do a mock interview first!)

Ask questions



# Timelines

## Early Decision

- Binding commitment
- Only one school
- Deadline typically November or December
- Receive results usually in January/February
- Send deposit well in advance of May 1
- Should still apply regular decision to other schools

## Early Action

- No commitment
- Deadline typically November or December
- Receive results December-February
- Should still apply regular decision to other schools

## Regular Decision

- Deadline typically early January
- Results mid-late March, April 1
- Decision May 1

## Waitlist

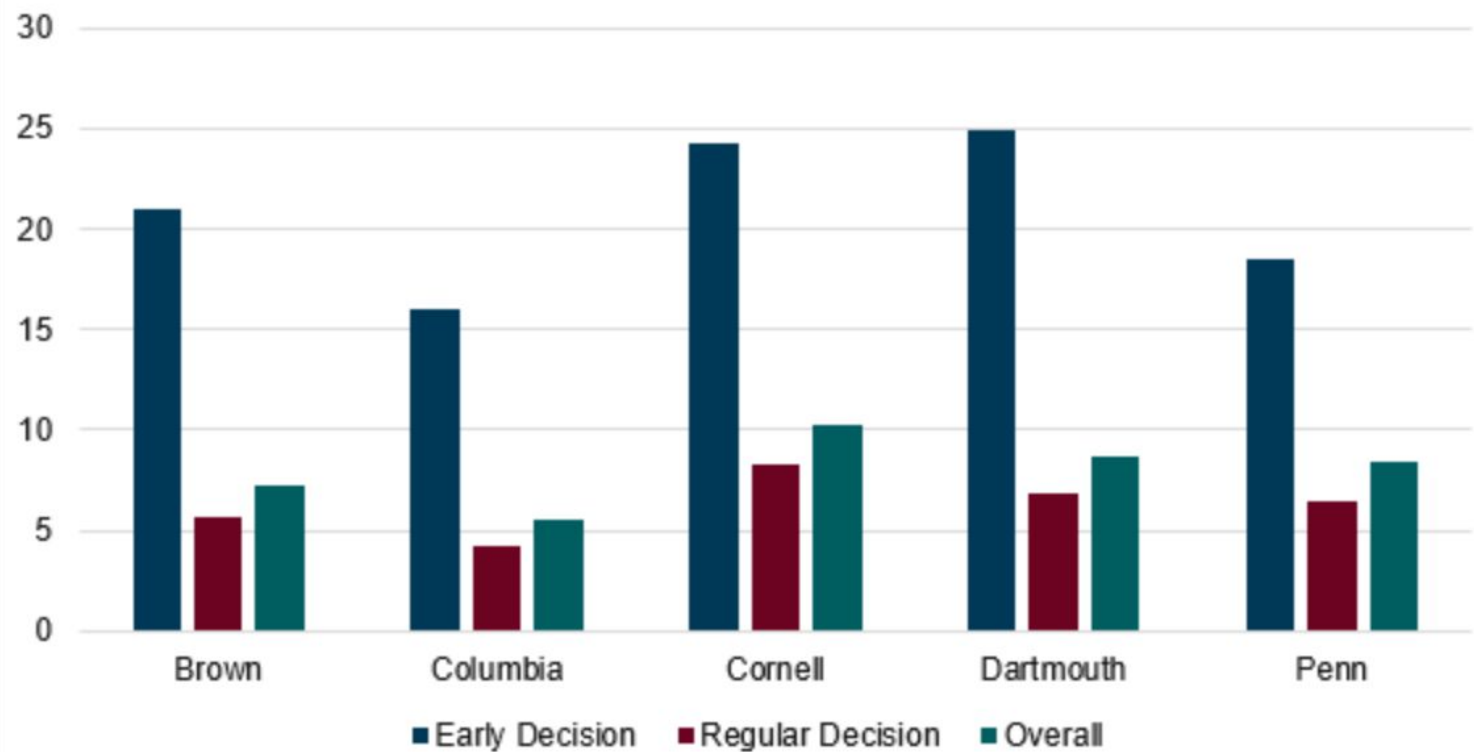
## Deferred

## Key Statistics for Early Decision (ED) Colleges, Fall 2018

	Mean
Applications Received through Early Decision	5.6%
Early Decision Selectivity Rate	61.1%
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	49.3%
Early Decision Yield Rate	89.6%
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Decision Policies	25.4%

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018-19.

## Acceptance Rates at Ivies with Early Decision



## Key Statistics for Early Action (EA) Colleges, Fall 2018

	Mean
Applications Received through Early Action	45.3%
Early Action Selectivity Rate	73.1%
Overall Selectivity Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	63.9%
Early Action Yield Rate	25.4%
Overall Yield Rate for Institutions with Early Action Policies	23.7%

Source: NACAC Admission Trends Survey, 2018-19.

# EARLY DECISION VS. EARLY ACTION

## Who should apply early?

- Has researched colleges extensively.
- Is absolutely sure that the college is the first choice.
- Has found a college that is a strong match academically, socially and geographically.
- Meets or exceeds the admission profile for the college for SAT® scores, GPA and class rank.
- Has an academic record that has been consistently solid over time

## Who should not apply early?

- Has not thoroughly researched colleges.
- Is applying early just to avoid stress and paperwork.
- Is not fully committed to attending the college.
- Is applying early only because friends are.
- Needs a strong senior fall semester to bring grades up.

# Application Platform

---

Common App

Coalition

Common Black College Application

College Website

# Cost & Aid

---

## Net price calculators

Some schools meet 100% need, are need-blind in admissions

CollegeGreenlight.com

- Colleges that meet 100% Need
- Fly-In programs

## Highly Competitive Scholarships

- Quest Bridge
- Jack Kent Cook
- Coca Cola
- Gates Millennium
- Jackie Robinson

## CSS Profile

- In addition to FAFSA
- More info about family finances
- Not free

# Other Resources

---

## [Naviance](#)

Princeton Review Student Surveys

Gladwell, M. (2011, February). The Order of Things: What College Rankings Really Tell Us. The New Yorker, 68-75. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-order-of-things>

CollegeGreenlight.com

College Board: Early Decision and Early Action <https://counselors.collegeboard.org/college-application/early-decision-action>

Insider Guide: Getting into College - Vanderbilt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKARNadxshU&t=5s>

An Introduction to the College Application Process - UPenn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07nA4UjVpn8&list=PLBr4OKx-PKLwzZNIT65RFDuxh8k2M53mw&index=17>

Application Advice: Activities and Impact - UPenn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiHV999266j&list=PLBr4OKx-PKLwzZNIT65RFDuxh8k2M53mw&index=20>

Essay Writing Workshop - UPenn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BD0BUDZqmKk&list=PLBr4OKx-PKLwzZNIT65RFDuxh8k2M53mw&index=19>

NACAC State of College Admissions Report - <https://www.nacacnet.org/2019-state-of-college-admission-report/>



# Questions?

---

Thank you for attending!!

Please don't forget to fill out our quick survey using the QR code found on the back of your program.