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Early Decision Notifications: Tips for Students When They're Deferred



Students (and their families) often feel all kinds of emotions after they receive Early Decision/Early Action notifications. The Common Application recently asked our colleagues at the Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools (ACCIS) to share some key tips for those students who are deferred. Here's what they had to say.

*** Stay positive.** Deferral means that you may still be competitive, and that the admissions committee wants to learn more information. You're now a regular decision applicant to that college and are free to apply to other schools. Even though it may be disappointing news to you, remember that you're still in the applicant pool.

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*** Know that colleges can't accept every compelling candidate who applies early.** At some colleges, they often need to see what the regular decision pool looks like before making final decisions on many applicants.

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*** Most colleges send or post instructions about what they encourage** – or, more specifically, discourage – in terms of sending additional information such as recommendation letters or supplements. *Read that information!*

*** If this information is not shared, ask:** "In past years, how many deferred students were eventually admitted? Should I visit (or re-visit) campus to express my interest? If interviews are offered, should I request one?" This information can help you determine reasonable next steps to take.

*** Resist reaching out to anyone at the college right away.** Take several days to digest and collect your thoughts. Colleges are not rank-ordering who called or emailed first – and impulsively communicating could send the wrong message.

*** Take your upcoming assignments seriously,** whether these are projects or end-of-term exams. Most colleges that extend an offer of deferral will want to see an updated set of official grades from first semester or the first marking period of senior year.

*** Find out if another round of standardized testing would be accepted or even beneficial** for that particular school. Some colleges might accept the January 2017 SAT or Subject Tests or the February 2017 ACT, but check before you register.

*** Be confident in your original application.** If the college encourages submission of new information, then consider doing so. But that doesn't mean that there was anything "wrong" with your application. Resist the urge to blame your essay and spend hours you don't have writing a new one for your regular decision colleges. You could spend that time instead on your senior year coursework, other applications, and with family and friends.

This post is shared in collaboration with the Association of College Counselors in Independent Schools (ACCIS), an organization of more than 1500 college counselors in nearly 550 independent schools, supporting the essential work of college counselors to serve the students in their care.

Special thanks to Steve Frappier, Director of College Counseling, The Westminster Schools; Deputy Executive Director of ACCIS and Emmi Harward, Director of College Counseling, The Bishop's School; Executive Director of ACCIS.

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