



April 8, 2010

And The Winner Is? How to Choose from the Finalists.

The results are in. There is joy and disappointment. Hopes were either realized or perceptively crushed. Regardless of the final results, you came out a winner in one way or another. While it is easy to get caught up in the “Ivy do or die” mania, realize that you have gone through an amazing maturation process.

Let me explain. Applying to college is most likely the very first time you have applied for something that really matters to you. Though you may have applied to a select summer program and not gotten in, applying to university is a unique experience. It has long-range impact; after all you will most likely attend that university for four years. In addition, you have been working most of your life for this opportunity.

While rejection is not a pleasant experience, being denied to a university the first of many such experiences you will have in your lifetime. As you move through the painful experience, you come to realize that what you have earned is better than expected. It is important to remember that admission decisions are NOT a reflection of you as a person. It is, however, a reflection of the competition at each particular school and how you were evaluated in that context. There is nothing personal in a denial. It is just a fact. What is more important is how you handle the next phase.

Pinning for something that did not materialize is not going to serve you well at all. It is important to take a real accounting of the choices you have and move forward. If you did your research correctly and applied to appropriate schools, no doubt you have some fine institutions from which to select.

Now that you are the pointing of choosing where you will go next year, it is time to return to the beginning of the process you started one year ago. Return to the list of reasons why you chose to apply to those schools in the first place. This is important because it is easy to get lost in the Name Brand choice and forget that the choice you do make is about your education and that name brand school may not provide you with the best education, the right environment or the best overall opportunities.

So return to the beginning. Create a spreadsheet of all the most important considerations on the left hand side: size of school, location, possible majors, your interests (both in school and outside), financial considerations, Honors Programs (if offered), What do you want to accomplish, in what environment will you feel most able to reach your goals? etc... Then create a numerical rank of each of these factors. At the top of the spreadsheet, place the names of the schools to which you were accepted. Complete the spreadsheet by placing the appropriate rank number in the columns under each criteria for each school. Then add up each column. If you have been completely honest in this process, you should have a clear winner.

It is very important that you remain true to your educational priorities. Remember that it is YOU who is going to school. Everyone will have an opinion about where you should finally go, just like they had an opinion on where you should apply. The best school is the one which fits you best.

Once you make your final decision, don't look back. The grass is always greener on the other side, until you get to the other side. Make sure that you fully commit to your choice and make the most of the experiences offered by that institution. If you are half way out the door before you even get to the school, you will always be unhappy. And then you have to go through the application process all over again. So make the right choice, for the right reasons. So stay focused, be true to yourself and become a real fan of the school you choose.

One Last Word: What About Waitlists:

If you find that one of your top choices waitlisted you, add that school to the mix on your spreadsheet. If you are not really interested, let them know that you are not interested. But, if you are, then add your name to the List. BE SURE TO SEND A DEPOSIT TO ONE OF THE SCHOOLS TO WHICH YOU WERE ACCEPTED.

If you decide to stay on the list, you should send any new information – especially any new academic information. This might be Third Quarter Results, Mock Results (hopefully these are better or consistent with Semester results) etc... If anything new and interesting happened to you in the last several months, which you think the school, should know: awards, recognitions, programs that you are involved in etc... Then update the school in the form of a

letter stating the XX School is still your first choice and that you are updating them on your current academic and extra-curricular achievements.

What happens next?

Each school has a different plan on how they work with Waitlists. Some are currently in the process of re-ranking the waitlist students. Others are waiting to see who will wish to remain on the waitlist, the rank and others still will return to the admission process all over again for those students on the Waitlist.

Regardless of what system the school uses, if you come off the waitlist you need to make a decision. Will you stay with the school you made the deposit to or will you choose the new place? Sometimes students do not hear from schools about Waitlist until the summer. By that time you may be totally excited about your previous choice.

It is hard to know if a school will even go to the Waitlist. There are so many factors, with the first being are there any places left after all the accepted students reply. If they have places, they go to their waitlist. There is something called Summer Melt. Summer Melt is the chain reaction of students who are accepted to schools, get into their waitlist in May or even June and decide to go that school, thus creating a new opening at the school they deposited with. It is called Summer Melt because it happens – In the summer.

As mentioned previously remember a few things:

1. You need to make one choice, and only one choice by May 1. You can choose multiple Waitlists options.
2. Once you make that final choice be prepared to go. You never know if you will come off the Waitlist.
3. If you do come off the Waitlist, re-evaluate your educational priorities and make sure you are making the best overall choice for your educational needs.

Good Luck.