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Trends for the Class of 2020 to consider

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Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; or Call: 925.385.0562.

Understanding the reality of today's college application process is an important element in managing expectations. One trend that we advisors have observed has made an even greater impact on this past admission cycle. Great grades and top test scores will not guarantee entrance into top colleges. These credentials will certainly open the doors at the vast majority of schools, but colleges ranked in the top 25 or even 50 expect more: a compelling uniqueness as well as a true connection to their mission. So you need the numbers and the other factors to boost your chances.

Below are other trends worth mentioning, as they will impact your experience applying to college this fall:

- Applying early action is losing some of its luster. Whereas in the past students were given a significant advantage if they applied this way, quite a few schools this year elected to defer students into the regular pool instead of making a quick decision. If you lack top grades and test scores or the 'uniqueness' referred to above, early action may not buy you as much as it did in past cycles.
- More colleges are going to allow self-reported grades and test scores, only asking for an 'official' report if you choose to attend. While this will require more effort on the student's part, it will also save the family money.
- Offering a student admission in the spring instead of the fall is gaining momentum as an enrollment management tool for colleges. This option comes as a surprise to most students who never knew it was a choice. Don't let the possibility throw you. Instead, look at the advantages of taking a break between high school and colleges. Think about advantages associated with planning a trip or securing a job or an internship.

- The list of test optional schools is growing. With 1,000 schools on board, it is possible to apply to college without ever taking an ACT or SAT. (Visit www.fairtest.org to see colleges on the list.)

- Colleges that offer merit aid tend to award money to students who take advantage of the early action and priority dates. Research each college website carefully to find these dates and then adhere to them; be sure to complete any required financial aid materials by the colleges' deadlines.

- The University of California campuses now routinely deny or waitlist smart and highly qualified California students. If you need public in-state options, be sure you apply broadly to UCs and California State Universities. In addition, expand your college list to include public out-of-state choices for lower price tags. You will still pay out of state tuition and fees, but these are still likely to be lower than some private college options.

Every college admission cycle is different and having an experienced college advisor in your corner who knows the trends can be very beneficial. I hope the Class of 2019 benefits from reading and adhering to these important trends and tips for success.

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