

## Pay Attention When Early Plans Are Discussed

You may hear early action and early decision lumped together and discussed under the single heading of “early programs.” This is appropriate at times. For example, depending on the colleges on your list, your consideration of whether to apply early may encompass early action *and* an early decision option. But EA and ED are very different plans, with distinct rules, requirements, deadlines, and notification dates. Each has advantages or disadvantages depending on the applicant.

In addition, the schools to which you are applying may offer both EA *and* ED plans. And deadlines and notification dates can be different from school to school, with some schools offering both EA and ED or even multiple rounds of EA or ED. Pay close attention to the designation of the plan being discussed and the specific details of the decision plans at each college on your list as you consider where, when, and if you will apply under an early plan.



## Restrictive Early Action

This option is offered by only a handful of colleges, but if a school you are interested in happens to be one of them, then you need to understand it.

Restrictive early action is a nonbinding plan where students apply to a first-choice school early and receive an early decision. Students have until May 1 to respond to an offer of admission. You may apply to other colleges under regular or nonbinding rolling admission plans, but may not apply to any other school under early action, early decision, or REA. Students should check the website of any college where they are applying REA to understand if there are further restrictions.

There are three outcomes under restrictive early action: acceptance, denial, and deferral.

## You Don’t Have to Jump on the Early Bandwagon

“I want to apply early—I just don’t know where.” If that’s how you’re thinking about this, think again. Students report a lot of pressure to apply early. It comes from peers, parents, newspaper headlines—and sometimes it comes from oneself. In October of senior year, it may seem like everyone is jumping on the early bandwagon. But there is nothing wrong with sitting out this round and opting for more time and the greater choice it allows. There are distinct advantages to waiting and applying regular decision. Before you jump on the early bandwagon, seriously consider whether it’s right for *you*. We’ve provided a list of questions to help you figure that out on page 250.

## Does Applying Early Improve My Chances?

Whether applying early improves your chances is the wrong question. The better question is: “For the colleges on my list, am I a suitable candidate for an early program and do I want to take advantage of that option?” After all, it’s not really an advantage to be accepted early at a school if you haven’t decided you really want to go there.

That said, we know you would like us to try to answer this question. Unfortunately, the answer is that it’s situational and complicated—and involves a lot of inside baseball about the college admission office. Here it is:

Whether or not there is an advantage to applying early will vary from school to school and from applicant to applicant at each school. At schools that want to fill their classes with students who have made a commitment to the college through early decision or made it clear that they are sincerely interested by submitting their application through early action, there may be an advantage. But at other schools, applying early will make no difference. You just apply earlier and find out earlier. For some schools, the early plan may be the most competitive part of the admission cycle; at others, it could be the least competitive.

For example, when the admit rate for early applications is higher than the admit rate under regular decision, you can’t necessarily conclude that there is an advantage. It may be that the candidates were stronger statistically, or that they just happened to meet other institutional priorities of the college. Students who apply early are often statistically among the strongest students a college will admit—these students are not relying on first-semester senior-year grades and November scores to boost their candidacy. Also, special-circumstance groups—such as athletes or legacies—may be steered toward the early pool, which can skew the statistics in a way that is difficult to sort out without a lot of inside information.

One thing is for sure: applying early is no solution for weak grades or other problems a student may have. As Wesleyan dean of admission Nancy Meislahn has said, “Applying early does not have a Rumpelstiltskin effect: you can’t spin C’s into A’s.”

As you can see, for every generalization about applying early creating an advantage, there are many exceptions. Because of this, it’s important that students and families *not* use an early plan merely to game the system. Applying early as a strategy works only if you know it’s your first-choice school and if you definitely want to go there—and then it’s not a strategy but a natural outgrowth of your interest.

### KNOW THE JARGON . . .

#### Admit Rate

The admit rate is the percentage of applicants admitted by a college among those who applied. The admit rate is calculated by dividing the number of students admitted to a college by the number of students who applied to that college.

## **ADVANTAGES** Rolling Admission, Early Action, and Restrictive Early Action Plans Have These Advantages in Common

- An early answer without a required commitment to enroll.
- Unrestricted choice.
- Time. You have until May 1 so are able to consider all your options as decisions come in from other schools to which you have applied.
- An acceptance takes some of the pressure off and a denial allows you to move on and concentrate on the other schools on your list, any one of which you should be happy to attend.
- Students and their families have the opportunity to consider and compare financial aid awards from multiple schools and weigh that information into their choice.

If accepted, the student has until May 1 to respond. If deferred, the student's application is moved to the regular decision pool for later consideration. If you are deferred, you should

follow the advice on page 250 for students who are deferred under early decision plans. If you are denied under REA, you cannot reapply for consideration under RD.

### **Students: Do the Right Thing**

You have applied under early action, rolling admission, or restrictive early action and you're in. Congratulations.

We now encourage you to do the right thing. If you know you will not enroll at some of the other colleges on your list, don't apply to them. Go back through that original list and cross off those schools. Or if you've already sent in your applications, let those colleges know your plans. Don't collect trophies in the form of admission letters from colleges you will never attend.

There are some exceptions to this rule. Some colleges very much want to make their case to you even if you have been admitted to another college under rolling admission, early action, or restrictive early action. If there are schools on your list you can still imagine you might attend, feel welcome to keep your options alive *provided you are open to the case those colleges will make*. And if you need to compare financial aid or merit scholarship awards, you will definitely want to proceed with applications to the other schools on your list.

As you can see, this isn't simple. But matters of integrity rarely are. Think carefully, and for any school where you would just be collecting another acceptance letter, let that college know your decision as soon as possible so they can offer your seat to another student who wants to attend.

## EARLY DECISION

Early decision plans require careful consideration, because they are binding. Students apply to one school early, are notified of a decision early, and agree to enroll if admitted. If you are applying ED, you are saying that you are positive that this school is your first choice and that you will enroll if accepted.

There are three possible outcomes in early decision: acceptance, denial, or deferral. If you are accepted ED, you must immediately withdraw any applications you have submitted to other schools. You can notify the colleges by email, but make sure your email is acknowledged. If it is not acknowledged, follow up your email with a letter and save a copy for your records. If you have been accepted at a school with rolling admission in the meantime, let that college know immediately that you will not enroll.

If you are deferred under early decision, you will be reconsidered with the regular pool of applicants. You do not have to reapply. Our best advice if you're deferred: update your application. Colleges will typically have a form that requests any new information on grades, testing, extracurricular activities, or achievements. You should also send an email or letter indicating that you are still very interested in attending the college, highlighting for the admission office anything new in your life. If the college says they will welcome additional information, consider sending in an additional essay or a class paper you're proud of.

If you are denied early decision, you will not be reconsidered. This may seem harsh,

with the denial coming right around the holidays. But accept it as valuable guidance. The school is sending you a strong signal early on that you're not in the running and will be best served by placing your attention elsewhere—on your applications to the other wonderful schools on your list.

An early decision plan is a great alternative for those students who are in a position to use it properly. Because it is binding, you will need to carefully consider the following:

- Have you fully investigated your options by researching the schools on your list early, and spent a significant amount of time on at least several of their campuses?
- Is the college to which you are applying ED your first choice? In other words, of all the places that you are applying, would you definitely enroll here even if you got in everywhere? And have you felt this way for a period of time, not just a couple of days?
- Have you visited the college, observed classes, and had an overnight stay, if possible?
- Do you change your mind easily about what you like and what is important to you?
- Do you understand how your grades and test scores fit into the college's academic profile?
- Do you understand how the college implements its ED plan? For example, of the students they are seeking who have a strong desire to attend, are they focusing on those who are the most competitive academically, or those who are at the bottom of their academic profile?

## **ADVANTAGES** Early Decision

- Colleges want students who will be thrilled to be there. Applying ED lets the college know you have decided it's the one you most want to attend.
- Cost savings. If you are accepted ED, you've filed just one application and paid only one fee (although you will want to have your other applications ready to go, just in case).
- A less stressful senior year. ED frees students from the anxiety of waiting to hear from multiple schools.
- Once you are admitted, you can start getting to know the school where you will spend the next four years—bonding and networking with the college and your classmates via social media and admitted student visits.
- You are done! Enjoy your senior year.

If you are applying early under any decision plan, you should proceed with preparing your applications to the other schools on your list as though your early application did not exist. But you may want to wait to press send on your regular decision applications until you learn whether or not you've been admitted early.

### **Does Early Decision Fill Most of the Seats in the Freshman Class?**

"The college you're applying to has filled half its freshman class with early decision applicants!" You may have heard things like this and worried there won't be enough room left if you apply under regular decision. But this is a case where the numbers are deceiving. Let's do the math.

The question is not how many seats are being taken up in the class by applicants who applied under early decision. The question is, what percentage of the school's total admission offers is already gone? It sounds incredible, but it's true that even when half the seats are filled with ED applicants, fewer than half the acceptances have been given out.

Here's how it works. Say a highly selective college can only enroll ten students in its freshman class, and five are accepted early decision. Because the ED process required their prior commitment to attend if accepted, the college knows for sure they are coming. Yes, that leaves five spots to be filled in next year's class under regular decision. But remember that the dean of admission knows that students accepted through the regular decision process haven't precommitted to

## Does Early Decision Fill Most of the Seats in the Freshman Class? (continued)

actually attend. In fact, on average for this hypothetical but not untypical college, only about half will. The college can admit ten students under its RD process to fill the remaining five seats.

So the college will actually admit fifteen students total. When five acceptances were given early decision, that wasn't half the fat envelopes—it was only one-third. Two-thirds are still left for the regular decision process. No reason to panic.

### The Early Decision Agreement

If you apply under an early decision plan, you must submit an Early Decision Agreement. This form can be found at [www.commonapp.org](http://www.commonapp.org), with any other electronic application provider's form, or as a part of a college's unique form. The ED Agreement is a contract whereby the student agrees to enroll if accepted and to immediately withdraw all applications submitted to other colleges. The ED Agreement is signed by the student, a parent, and the high school counselor. It is submitted by the high school counselor.

Colleges take this contract seriously. Read it fully and make sure you understand what you are committing to by signing it. If you fail to abide by its terms and, for example, apply to more than one college early decision, your acceptances at both schools may be rescinded. Note that you have agreed to let the college to which you're applying share your name and ED Agreement with other institutions.

Students sign a similar agreement when applying under a restrictive early action plan.

### Financial Aid

Colleges handle financial aid differently under each type of decision plan. Some schools release financial aid decisions beginning on a specific date, typically around March 1. Other schools provide families with either a financial aid award or an estimated financial aid award with the offer of admission or shortly thereafter. This award will be updated and confirmed in the spring. If your information remains the same, you can assume the award will remain the same. Students should check each school's financial aid website carefully for deadlines and notification dates. Take advantage of any opportunities to ask questions of admission or financial aid officers at each school so you can understand how financial aid is handled under each decision plan. We've provided some questions for you on page 256. See Chapter 16 for further information on financial aid. Also, note that the early decision plan presents a special case where you will receive an award only from the ED college and there will be no opportunity to receive or compare aid packages from other colleges.

## How Do Your Grades and Scores Figure into Your Decision to Apply Under an Early Plan?

Much of the advice you will receive about applying under an early plan—early action, early decision, or restrictive early action—will be to apply *only* if your grades and test scores place you in the top half of that college’s academic profile. For many of you, this is great advice. But for some of you, it’s not. Whether or not this is good advice will depend upon the schools on your list and the goals those schools have for their early plans.

In order to understand how your grades and scores should figure into your decision to apply early, you will need to understand:

- Where your grades and scores fit into the college’s academic profile.
- The pattern of your grades. Are they going up, down, or staying the same?
- The college’s philosophy and practice with regard to its early plan.
- How your grades and test scores fit into that philosophy and practice.

What does all that mean?

Here’s an example. Every class has a bottom group of students. Some schools may want that group to be made up of the students who most want to be there, not those who would have been just as happy at another college. So applying early to such a school might make sense for a student whose grades and scores are not in the top half of that college’s academic profile. On the other hand, if the college’s approach is to select their strongest students during an early plan cycle, then you might want to wait and apply during the regular decision cycle if your grades are on an upward trajectory with your strongest marks yet to come.

You know how to evaluate your grades and scores and where you fall in the academic profile of the college (remember, it was in Chapter 8). But where do you find out how the colleges on your list implement their early plans? Your best bet is to discuss it with your high school counselor. Or call and talk to the admission officer at the college—tell her your grades and scores and ask for her best advice about applying under an early plan.

You may not be able to obtain a definitive answer. But don’t worry about this too much. There are many factors that you may want or need to take into account to determine whether or not applying early is an appropriate decision for you. This is simply *one* of those factors. This is not a way to game the system. You should do what feels right for you and what works best for your family.

## Is Applying Early a Good Idea for Me?

To help you decide what might be right for you, consider the following questions in order. The more yes answers you can give, the more applying early might be your best approach.

- If you're considering early decision, start here and work your way through all the questions below.
  - Of all the colleges on your list, is this the school where you would unquestionably enroll?
  - Is your first-choice school an environment that fits you well, but also a place where you can change and grow?
  - Have you felt the school where you are going to apply early decision is your first choice for more than a few days or weeks?
  - Do you and your parents agree that if you are given a reasonable financial aid package, you will attend the school even if other colleges were to offer you stronger financial aid packages or a merit scholarship?
- If you're considering early action or restrictive early action, start here:
  - Do your junior-year grades and classes support an early application, relative to the philosophy and practice of the college to which you're applying?
  - Have you completed all standardized testing by October of your senior year?
  - Considering your commitments to extracurricular activities or work, will you be able to complete your application by November?
  - Are you a student with a special talent, such as an athlete, or a special circumstance, such as a legacy applicant? If so, see Chapter 18 or 19.

- Do you and your parents agree that if you are given a reasonable financial aid package, you will attend the ED college even if other schools offer you a better financial aid package or a merit scholarship?

Some colleges offer two rounds of early decision. Applying to a college ED II can be a good idea for students whose performance in high school is improving and who are doing their best work in senior year. Those students are going to be stronger candidates in the second round of ED with a deadline in January or February.

## Questions You May Have

### What happens if my financial aid is not what I expected at the school where I was accepted early decision?

This is one of the few circumstances under which a student may be released from the early decision agreement. If your financial aid package from the school where you've been accepted ED is inadequate for your family, let the college know immediately. Alert both the admission office and the financial aid office. When you talk with financial aid, let them know where



## Why Colleges Offer Different Decision Plans

There are many reasons colleges employ different decision plans. A school that offers rolling admission may choose to do so because it helps them spread out the task of reviewing the thousands of applications they receive. On the other hand, a school that chooses to offer early decision might want to offer an early option but lack the staff to complete a holistic review for everyone who can get their application done by a certain deadline. So they offer an early plan *only* to students who know the school is their first choice. For everybody else, there's regular decision.

Colleges are always listening to the messages they are getting from their applicants. For example, schools that have instituted an early plan may have been hearing that students would have welcomed an option that would have allowed them to have a more fulfilling senior year in high school, with the admission process wrapped up early.

Different decision plans benefit both colleges and students. For example, early plans unclog the admission pipeline. With an early acceptance, students can withdraw applications to the schools where they know they aren't going to enroll, decreasing the number of applications filed at second-, third-, fourth-, and fourteenth-choice colleges.

Everybody gains when the number of applications is reduced, because colleges are better able to forecast how many students will enroll (admission professionals call this their "yield"). When it's more difficult for colleges to predict who may enroll, the admission office may send out fewer acceptance letters and create larger waiting lists. Then they wait until after May 1, when candidates have replied, in order to see if they came in high, low, or on target for the number of spaces available in the class. But that means the decision process for students stretches into the summer, creating more uncertainty and anxiety for both the students and colleges and potentially a good number of far more somber high school graduation ceremonies.

## Parents May Need to Weigh In on This Decision

Parents, choice of a decision plan is a step where your input may be required. The plan your child selects may influence your ability to compare financial aid packages. Be candid with your college-bound teen about your family's need for financial assistance and proactive in investigating the financial aid policies at the schools your son or daughter is considering. We have included here a list of questions you and your teenager may want to ask admission and financial aid officers.

Applying early also means completing all the necessary steps—writing multiple essays, preparing the application, requesting recommendations—within a much tighter time frame. Your teenager may need your support and advice in managing the stress and day-to-day particulars. Just remember to *offer* your help before you jump to the rescue.


## Questions to Ask Admission and Financial Aid Officers About Their Decision Plans

- Can you tell me your approach to early admission? Is it harder to get in, the same, or easier?
- What percent of your students who enrolled under early decision stayed and graduated? How does that compare to students who enrolled under regular decision?
- What is your practice on denying students versus deferring them when applying early?
- Do you award the same kind of financial aid package whether a student applies early decision or regular decision? How about merit scholarships?

you thought the package might be, and explain your current financial circumstances to see if they want you to put anything else in writing. (For some tips on how best to talk to financial aid offices, be sure to see Chapter 16.)

If the financial aid office tells you there is nothing they can do to improve your award, you must decide whether you can live with that award or let the admission office know you are regretfully withdrawing and will go elsewhere. If they tell you they may be able to make an adjustment to your award, find out what date they will be in touch with you about that adjustment, and call the admission office back to request an extension to a few days after that date. In the meantime, do not withdraw your applications from other colleges—and if you have other college deadlines coming up, be sure you are getting those applications ready to submit, just in case.

### What is early notification?

 This is another name for a “likely letter,” in which a college lets you know before the

official notification date that you are likely, but not guaranteed, to gain admission. Recipients of early notification letters are usually strong candidates. But the operative word here is “likely”—this is not a *firm* offer of admission. Very few colleges send out likely letters.

### I was denied admission under an early decision program. If there is another school that is high on my list and offers two rounds of ED, should I apply for the second round?

It’s fine to do this, provided you meet all the other conditions we’ve outlined that show early decision is right for you. If—once you take away the ED I school from your list—you are certain of your next top choice and that school offers ED II, by all means apply. If you were deferred from your ED I school and then apply to a second school ED II, you will need to attend if you are admitted to the second school, and must then withdraw all other applications, including your application to the ED school you applied to in the first round.



## FROM THE DESK OF THE DEAN

### Decision Plans

Whether a college offers early decision, rolling admission, regular admission, early action, or some combination or iteration of any of the above depends on the college—its size, mission, philosophy, and goals. There is tremendous diversity in what colleges offer and what they think about these programs. And you will find disagreement among the deans who share their thoughts here. Why? Because each admission dean is speaking about what is best for their college and the students it serves. No one decision plan is best for every student or college in the country.

#### **KITTY McCARTHY**

*Associate vice president for enrollment management, Northern Illinois University*

➔ Northern Illinois University offers rolling admission.

The upside to rolling admission is that students learn earlier than they otherwise would that they've been admitted. They can do some more exploring, visit or revisit the campus, and just get in the mind-set of NIU. They can figure out, "What more do I need to know? What questions do I have?" They can move on from the conversation about "Can I get in?" to "What are the other opportunities I'm interested in?" At NIU, that might be honors or themed learning communities or special residence hall options, and they will have time to explore these things at leisure rather than having to pack it all into four to six weeks in the spring. With rolling, they have a little bit more time to explore and have those conversations with staff and faculty and others.

The upside of rolling admission for NIU is that it gives us an opportunity to have more contact with students before they're likely to hear from other schools they've applied to, particularly from the non-rolling-admission schools. So it gives us an opportunity to express the strongest level of interest possible—we're admitting the student—and then it lets us set up a whole path of communication to continue to reinforce that interest. Our hope is that by the time a student hears from their other schools, they feel pretty good about NIU—we want them and they want us.



## JOHN LATTING

*Dean of undergraduate admissions, The Johns Hopkins University*

➔ The Johns Hopkins University offers one round of early decision and regular decision.

We make an assumption that students who come in through the early pathway raise the bar when it comes to energy and enthusiasm, and that's a great foundation on which to build a class. I think we see it as the core of the freshman class. So there are these two pathways through which people can come to Johns Hopkins. It's not necessary for everybody to come through early decision, or even most students. And in the end it's all one freshman class.

Is there an advantage to applying early at a given school? If you haven't really been thoughtful about that, if you haven't really researched colleges and visited some and really considered the options, then all of these other strategic issues are really not that important. What's the use of getting a leg up on a school that really is not a good place for you? So let's focus on the appropriate question. Not "How can I increase my chances of getting in?"—that's not the first question. The first question is, "Where would I really like to be next year? And where am I best prepared to be? Where is it realistic for me to go?" That's the starting point.

## NANCY HARGRAVE MEISLAHN

*Dean of admission and financial aid, Wesleyan University*

➔ Wesleyan University offers two rounds of early decision and regular decision.

Even when you're looking at a place that has a pretty heavy investment in early decision, there are still lots of places open in the regular decision cycle. So the notion that if you don't apply early there are no seats left is a false assumption. At Wesleyan, even when we've taken 38–40 percent of our class early, given our yield in the spring, that's only about 15–16 percent of our total number of offers of admission.

At Wesleyan we believe early decision serves some students as well as the institution. We think of early decision as being the heart around which we build a class. In the über-competitive, highly selective admission process, we're always splitting hairs. In the regular cycle we are often making assumptions and judgments and choosing one student over another very similar student. So why wouldn't you want to maximize the process for the students who most want to be at your institution?



## STEVE THOMAS

*Director of admissions, Colby College*

- ➔ Colby College offers two rounds of early decision and regular decision.

There's a lot of unpredictability in college admission, more so all the time, and this causes both the colleges and the students to act in their own selfish interests. And what the colleges do is take a higher percentage of their class early, because they're going to effectively get 100 percent yield, so there's less exposure in the regular round. What kids do to protect themselves is they apply to more colleges, which creates more uncertainty, which makes the colleges pick a higher percentage of the class early. So the whole thing goes back and forth, and we're kind of stuck right now. But if a student can know where he or she wants to go, they can avoid all of that back-and-forth and take advantage of it, actually. Colleges are excited to have kids who want to go there. So if you've got a student who wants to go to your school, why would you not want to take that student instead of waiting to admit one who maybe wants to go somewhere else?

## ALTON NEWELL


*Vice president for enrollment, Washington & Jefferson College*

- ➔ Washington and Jefferson College offers early decision, early action, and regular decision.

The single greatest mistake I see students making is applying early decision because they think it's going to enhance their chances of gaining admission. This leads some of them to apply early, even though they really haven't worked through whether or not this is the place they should be. If I sense that a student is applying early simply because she wants a slot, not because she really wants to be at Washington & Jefferson, I'm not going to be favorably inclined toward her. Now, can she fool me? Of course she can! I'm not clairvoyant.

And people can game the system; there's no question about that. But I think they do so at their own peril. At student/parent nights at schools all over the country I get the question "If it enhances my chances for admission"—which is an urban myth that's out there—"then why shouldn't I do it?" You shouldn't do it because come March or April when your friends are sitting with multiple options and are choosing from among a wide group of schools—each one of which they're excited about—if you've applied early for the wrong reasons, you're going to feel left out. Now, if you've applied early for the right reasons, all the better. Then you can enjoy your senior year a little bit more.

This is where early action has helped. I think it gives people an alternative to early



decision. Do they know as quickly where they will be attending college? Not at Washington & Jefferson. But do they know quicker than if they were applying for regular admission whether or not they are able to include W&J in their final selection process? Yes. The vast majority of our students apply early action. The earlier offer of admission puts them in control of making any commitment to the college on their timetable, as they decide if W&J is the best place for them to be over the next four years. I've kept early decision for one reason, and that is for students who desperately want to be with us. I want them to have the opportunity to make that statement.

## NANCY BENEDICT

*Vice president for enrollment, Beloit College*

⇒ Beloit College offers two rounds of early action and regular decision.

Early admission programs that place restrictions on the student do a disservice to the student. The time between October and May of the senior year is transformative. There are experiences and opportunities students will have in those very short months that didn't happen when they were in 9th, 10th, or 11th grade. Their thinking becomes more mature, they're informed by close friends who have graduated and return over winter break to share their experiences at their own institutions. That, in combination with many other factors, may influence the way an applicant thinks about making a final college choice.

If a student commits to a college early in the senior year and has an "aha!" moment in March, the admission process has become unnecessarily complicated. Certainly, there are some students who do have a mature level of thinking and decision making by October of their senior year, but in my experience, it's not true for the majority of students. This is one of the most important decisions a student will make. I advocate for using those months after the application has been submitted to take a deep breath, reflect carefully on one's aspirations, and be well prepared to make a commitment by May 1.

## TOM DELAHUNT

*Vice president for admission, Drake*

⇒ Drake University offers rolling admission.

Early decision programs work great for institutions, but we do not think they work so well for the students. The pressure to apply early is just too intense for the sixteen-, seventeen-, and eighteen-year-olds that we're working with, and that's really who we're sup-



posed to serve. The students are pushed to make decisions earlier about what they want to study and where they want to pursue it. We know that many students change majors once they get to college, which often leads to extending the length of time toward their undergraduate degree, and we think one of the reasons is that they're making their college decisions without fully considering all their options. Early decision essentially eliminates any college and career exploration from taking place in the senior year and pushes it into the junior and even sophomore years. We're asking them to make enormous financial and educational decisions that have an effect on their lives without really having all the information. At Drake, we have opted to give students and their families an opportunity to fully investigate their options and we believe it is one of the reasons we have so few students transfer.

**What does it mean for me if I'm applying to a college that denies a significant portion of its early applicants?**

If you are an "improving" student, you may want to wait and apply during the regular decision cycle. If you apply and are denied, you will not have the opportunity to present

your (stronger) senior-year grades. The same holds true if you plan to retake the SAT/ACT and get stronger scores. Once you are denied, that's it. Our best advice? Call the admission office and ask to speak with an admission counselor, who can help you understand your options.