

Riley Baker Educational Consulting

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March 2021

13th – SAT

9th, 10th and 11th grade students - Make plans for a productive summer. Investigate summer programs, jobs, internships

11th grade students – Create an initial list of colleges

Prepare for spring SAT/ACT exams

April 2021

17th—ACT

Seniors should have their final letters of acceptance by the beginning of April

Juniors—Visit colleges virtually
Prepare for AP Exams

Seniors—Compare offers of admission; revisit top choices using virtual options and social media

Evaluate financial aid packages and consider college funding options

Notify the colleges that you will not attend and take some time to thank those who wrote your letters of recommendation

Handling Denials—How Parents Can Help

Parents just want to help. The natural reaction when you see your child suffering is to try and make it better. Denials are inevitable in an atmosphere of increasingly selective admissions, so how can parents help ease the pain when their child is not chosen, for many reasons relating to the college's priorities and needs?

The first step is to accept that it's complicated. It's complicated by your child's emotions, your emotions and both of your preconceived notions. It gets even more complicated when students feel pressure from their classmates. The worst is the judgment many students feel from their parents' friends, as if they disappointed their parents. Parents need to know and accept that where their child chooses to go to college is not an assessment of their parenting skills.

Everybody wants the euphoria of the thick envelope, the balloon-decorated mailbox and the sense of pride of the college sticker on the back windshield of the family car. But what happens when you have to settle for Plan B, when there are no balloons, there's just resignation. How do you help your child roll with reality?

Advice in these kinds of situations always sounds so cliché, but the truth is that, as resistant as your child may be, it can help. Ideas to share with your child:

Don't take it personally. Encourage your child to understand the big picture. If sharing stats on the number of students who applied to Stanford and were denied helps, then use them. Not being accepted is not the equivalent of "failure." Colleges are committed to fulfilling their institutional priorities by accepting students who are often underrepresented. Perhaps your child is a classic "over-represented" stu-

dent. Or the college needs to increase their population of oboe players, classics majors or women golfers.

Don't feel like this only happened to you. There are lots of other students whose dreams also weren't realized. You're not alone. Reach out to friends and commiserate together and then try to move on together. You'll all appreciate the support.

Don't get caught up with the prestige factor. It's important to recognize that a brand name doesn't equal success or, more importantly, doesn't equal happiness. Your performance during your undergraduate experience will be the biggest factor that determines your job placement opportunities.

Don't obsess about the denials and do your best to be positive about your other options. Don't spend a lot of time agonizing but, instead, use the time and your energy to identify another school that you will like as much or more. Sometimes rejections can send a student to a different school, down a different path and in line for the unexpected opportunities that can crop up. Some students think they want big schools and realize they'll have more opportunity to shine at a smaller school. Be positive about other institutions. Celebrate your acceptances!

The big picture here is that for many students the "denial letter" may be the first time they have experienced serious disappointment. Their egos are bruised and the truth is, as all adults know, they'll grow and they'll get over it. Handling this "no" will make them better prepared for future obstacles. College rejection happens to *almost all* students, but it doesn't need to define the rest of their lives.

Career Paths for Fine Arts Majors

- Advertising Photographer
- Animator
- Antiques Appraiser
- Art Conservator/Framer
- Art Critic
- Art Gallery Owner
- Art Historian
- Art Restorer
- Art Therapist
- Arts Funder
- Book Designer
- Caricaturist
- Cartoonist
- Commissioned Portrait Painter
- Courtroom Artist
- Custom Linens Designer
- Glass Blower
- Graphic Designer
- Illustrator
- Jewelry Designer
- Magazine Art Director
- Mosaic Artist
- Natural History Artist
- Packaging Design Director
- Painter
- Paper Artist
- Pencil Artist
- Photographer
- Photojournalist
- Police Artist/Fingerprint Technician
- Product Designer
- Sculptor
- Set Designer
- Stained Glass Artist
- Toy Designer
- Web Site Designer

Majoring in the Fine Arts

Students interested in the visual arts may choose to pursue their passion either at a specialized art institute or as an art major at a more comprehensive college. Art schools generally award a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.) degree, while liberal arts graduates earn a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.). The art institute is most appropriate for those students who truly wish to immerse themselves in art. Most art schools are located in big cities where students have easy access to the artistic community. B.F.A. programs train students for art-based careers; students may be preparing for a future in fashion, auto or interior design, videogame development, animation or the graphic arts. Studio classes require hours of hard work and students at art institutes have little time or opportunity to gain the breadth of education possible at a liberal arts college.

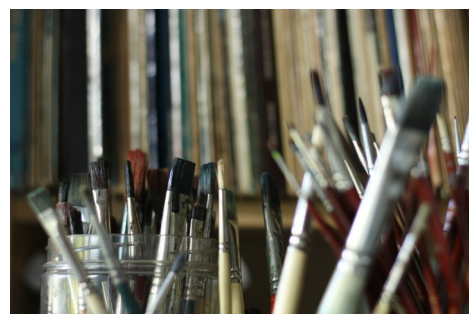
Many art institutes offer a broad, intensive introductory Foundation year of studies, including 2 and 3-dimension design studio work and some art history. You will have an opportunity to focus on your area of concentration during the later part of your studies. The emphasis of each art institute differs, even within the same medium such as painting or sculpture. You'll want to carefully check each program's philosophy before committing to attend. Art institutes do not offer the variety of extracurricular clubs, sports, and activities that most college students seek and expect. Also, dorms at some art institutes may be pretty basic. Try to arrange for an extended visit before making a final decision.

If you're more interested in focusing on art but still want to have opportunities to explore other interests, consider pursuing an art major at a liberal arts college. Often, these interests serve as an inspiration for your art work and allow you to grow from exposure to a variety of issues and ideas. Career preparation is not the primary focus of B.A. programs. Over half of your classes would be in areas other than art, with substantial study in the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences.

Typical programs for studio art majors include foundation courses in the arts, including work in sculpture, painting, drawing and photography, as well as classes in the history of art and modern art. Since upper level students will concentrate in a specific medium, you'll want to check the college catalogue to see the breadth of classes offered in your preferred field. Although students in Bachelor of Arts programs do not get the intensity of experience that B.F.A. graduates have, they do benefit from the more rounded college-life experience available at a comprehensive tertiary institution.

All fine arts majors should seek out internships in galleries or museums, apprenticeships with working artists, or employment in architectural or design firms in order to gain real-world experience. Both the B.F.A. and B.A. programs prepare students for graduate programs in the arts. A master's degree is generally required for those hoping for employment in museums and galleries or for teaching at the high school level. Museum curators and directors and college professors may have Ph.Ds.

Fine arts majors may go on to work in a variety of art-related fields. The major provides the initial preparation for careers as commercial artists, art therapists, art editors, critics, museum curators, art educators, art restorers, architects and designers. You can learn more about careers in the visual arts by using the Occupational Outlook Handbook found at www.bls.gov or by visiting the website www.collegeart.org.



Financial Matters: Appealing Financial Aid Awards



If your first choice college offers everything you want but the price tag is making you waiver, don't give up hope. Instead, consider appealing to the college's financial aid office for more money. Using their professional judgment, individual financial aid officers are empowered to make adjustments.

If you plan to pursue an appeal with the financial aid office, be prepared with the following:

First rule - if possible, try NOT to make a deposit until you've settled the financial aid discussion. Once they have your money, colleges will be less motivated to reel you in with a better deal.

Be realistic. Gail Holt, Dean of Financial Aid at Amherst College (www.amherst.edu) shares "Be realistic about what you – and the college – can contribute. Show the college that this is a partnership that you want to be part of, but need just a bit more assistance."

Know exactly what you CAN afford, but be honest here. If your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is more than the cost of tuition, then make sure that your request makes sense. Do your homework and negotiate in good faith.

Be informed. Make sure you have researched the specific financial aid policies at each college before entering into a conversation with them. Nothing would be more damaging than contacting a college, touting your child's fabulous grades, awesome SAT scores and requesting merit aid, only to find out that that school doesn't award merit aid. End of discussion.

If merit aid is available, check if the colleges you're considering offer "preferential packaging" – it's a practice whereby they will meet a larger share of financial need based on the academic stats of your child, i.e., stronger grades and test scores will receive more money. Take a look to see if your child's GPA and/or test scores are in the "middle 50" or in the "top 25." There will be more money at schools where their stats raise the school's profile. You can also check out some fascinating financial aid statistics, including what percentage of need colleges typically meet, at College Data (www.collegedata.com).

Be prepared. Colleges will generally reconsider awards for just two reasons: 1) the EFC from the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) was incorrect due to a change in the family's financial situation because of an illness, unemployment, etc., or 2) there is a competing offer from another college. If you plan to mention the competing offer, be prepared to fax a copy of the award letter to the financial aid office.

Send a letter. Put all of your reasons down in writing and ask for a follow-up meeting, in person if possible, or by phone. The college has already accepted you—now you're just asking that they help make it possible for you to attend.

Colleges are prepared for an onslaught of financial aid appeals this year. A new financial aid tool, **SwiftStudent**, is a free online service for anyone who wants to submit an appeal letter directly to their college's financial aid office. Access their website formswift.com/swiftstudent for detailed instructions on how to submit a letter of appeal and to view sample appeal letters that address a wide variety of financial circumstances.

Wallowing on the Waitlist

Adding to all the trials of the COVID-19 experience, colleges this year are expected to offer a record-number of waitlist spots to prospective applicants. While it has always been difficult for colleges to accurately estimate yield (number of students who accept an offer of admission), the number of applicants who have not visited campuses and other COVID-related issues is expected to result in huge waitlists. And so, most applicants can expect to be offered one or more waitlist opportunities. You weren't rejected, but you

weren't accepted either. The waitlist means the college likes you well enough, but they just don't love you enough to accept you at this time, or they are just not sure of how many spaces they will have filled.

They want to keep you hanging on until they find out if they're loved back by the students they did choose to accept. Now the ball is in your court—let's consider your options:

1. Hopefully you received an ac-

ceptance from another college that you like even better. Easy decision – inform the college that waitlisted you that you're no longer interested and have made other plans.

2. You were waitlisted by your first-choice school, and you'd sell your youngest sibling to go there. Easy decision – you make a deposit at one of the colleges where you were accepted and let your dream school know that you'd very much love to remain on their waitlist. Follow this up in any way they will allow. (continued on p. 4)

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Some colleges allow you to submit updates, others don't. Check the rules and follow them.

3. You can't decide. Tough decision – you want to be done with this “college stuff” and know where you're going next fall. But you'd really love to go to one or more of the colleges where you were waitlisted. You still need to make a deposit at one college where you were already accepted before May 1. You can choose to remain on one or more college waitlists.

Choosing to remove yourself or stay on a waitlist seems to be more of a psychological decision than a statistical decision. The waitlist conversion to acceptance numbers, particularly at the most selective colleges and universities, aren't very encouraging. While you can look up how many students were accepted from the waitlist last year, the past year's statistics do not predict those of the current year.

Being accepted from a waitlist is tied entirely to the yield. As an example, if a college had a yield rate of 50 percent last year and it increased to 65 percent this year, they won't be taking anyone off the waitlist; instead, they'll be hunting for beds

for freshmen. On the other hand, when the yield shrinks, the waitlist opens up; it's just too variable to be predictable. Waitlists are not generally ranked. Colleges use them to fill needed spots in their class— to make sure they have enough classics majors or journalists or oboe players, as well as full-pay students.

Students and families need to evaluate the impact of waitlist stress on the student at this point in the process. Some carefree students just want to find out and approach the decision in a matter-of-fact easy-going manner: “If I get in, great, if I don't, that's fine, too.”

But too many other students have already had their hearts broken once, or even twice, if they were first deferred and then waitlisted. Unfortunately, many students take college denials and waitlists too personally and beat themselves up over it, sadly thinking they have disappointed their parents, or that this denial defines who they are. It doesn't. For many of these students, closure is a good thing. Decide between the colleges that offered you a place and get excited about the new adventures that lie ahead.