

3 College Admissions Trends to Look For in 2017

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Last year, we talked about three trends in college admissions to look for 2016. Now that the 2016 admissions season has come and gone, our attention here at Synocate is focused on helping our future Class of 2021 get into their dream schools. With this in mind, it's important to recognize the directions we expect to see the college admissions landscape shift towards in the upcoming 2017 season. Here are three important trends to look for as you start applying to colleges this year.

Acceptance Rates Among Elite Colleges Will Decrease (Again)

The 2016 admissions season was marked by record lows for many colleges across the nation as a signal for increasing selectivity. In particular, Stanford University announced an admissions rate of 4.69%, a record low which led to numerous responses from media outlets and parents alike and even a satirical take from the New York Times that went viral.

Nevertheless, with the number of high school graduates applying to college expected to increase once again this year, it is essentially a given that acceptance rates across the board will continue to decrease. Moreover, a greater push for diversity in higher education has led to more students from around the world vying for a limited number of spots, driving rates down further.

However, elite schools have noted their growing applicant pool and are taking steps to buck the change. For instance, schools like Stanford and Princeton have announced their intent to expand their incoming undergraduate classes by 100 students and more, committed to expanding the opportunity to attend in the face of the increasing number of applications being received.

For now, however, students are responding to the repercussions of the bigger applicant pool by applying to even more colleges in an attempt to secure multiple offers of admission. A majority of students are now applying to eight or more colleges during the admissions process, with some applying to as many as 30 or more institutions. While we don't think you'll need to apply to that many, check out this post for our tips and suggestions in curating a solid list of colleges.

Colleges Are Increasingly Valuing Demonstrated Interest

As colleges start looking at lowering their acceptance rates while at the same time increasing their yields, they are emphasizing the need for demonstrated interest from candidates. Gone are the days where writing about how a school was your dream school was enough to show interest.

Instead, colleges are now looking at quantitative data of interactions with prospective admits: filling out an information card at a college fair, making an official campus visit through the admissions office, applying Early Action, and more are playing a bigger role in determining how likely you are to attend their school.

Don't be mistaken; admissions officers are still looking closely into "Why Us?" essays and considering responses from interview questions. However, they're also looking for research to back up students' claims of interest in their schools. Specifying programs and resources unique to the school, organizations you're interested in joining, and even locations you imagine yourself studying in can help show colleges that you're interested, have done your homework, and are a good fit for their incoming class.

Holistic Admissions Will Be Even More Holistic

For many years, the Common App held a strong monopoly in how students submitted their college applications; an overwhelming majority of college applications that were sent online came through the Common App. However, with the introduction of the new Coalition App and radical changes being made to other applications, the Common App's monopoly is slowly starting to erode to the benefit of many students.

The Coalition App, created by the Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success in response to the growing amount of barriers present in the application process, debuted this year and is now accepting applications for 52 colleges and universities across America. Among its many differences with the Common App is the introduction of the Locker, an online platform for students to collect and organize essays, presentations,

projects, and more in a private location which students can use to attach supplementals to their application.

And that's not all that's changed in the college admissions sphere. One year after UC Berkeley implemented a policy collecting optional letters of recommendation from a selection of students, the University of California system has announced a redesigned essay component of their application. In place of two personal statements, prospective applicants must now respond to four of eight possible personal insight questions with a 350 word limit.

What do all these changes mean? Well, with greater flexibility in creating your application and more opportunities to show things you've done during high school, admissions office have more resources than ever to create an all-encompassing impression of who you are as a person and as a member of their incoming class. Holistic admissions are becoming, well, more holistic, to the advantage of students, parents, and counselors alike.

In the end, college admissions are set to become more competitive, but by being aware of these trends, you'll be better prepared to face these challenges head-on and set yourself up for success.

With more chances and opportunities to present yourself to colleges than ever, one can easily become dismayed at the complicated process.

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