

NEW CANAAN NEWS-REVIEW newcanaannews-review.com

On Education

Got Deferred?

By Elise Epner

Article Last Updated: 01/03/2008 06:17:53 PM EST

"What does this mean?" high school seniors asked, as they opened thin envelopes to the news that they had been deferred last month.

Neither accepted nor rejected, deferred applicants find themselves in college-admissions limbo.

About two-thirds of Yale's early applicants this year did not receive a final answer in December on their quest for early acceptance. Historically, the same two-thirds of early-decision applicants to Brown receive deferrals, too. Georgetown defers every early applicant who is not one of the lucky few to score an early acceptance. No one gets rejected from Georgetown early.

Despite finishing essays and standardized testing and sending in transcripts and recommendations before the November deadline, all these applicants are still left hanging (and hoping).

What does a deferral mean? Regardless of whether the college to which you applied is an early-action, early-decision or rolling-admissions school, the answer is pretty simple.

Colleges defer applicants who are not clear admits. Often, colleges want to see senior-year grades or test scores to determine a student's performance trend. Sometimes colleges wait to

compare the early applicant with the entire regular-decision pool or other regular-decision applicants from the same high school.

What can a deferred student do? With many colleges accepting only about 10 to 20 percent of deferred applicants in the spring, the odds are not good for students receiving a deferral letter. While I've helped deferred students beat the odds to gain admission to schools like Yale, Dartmouth and Cornell, unfortunately, I don't have any patentable formula for success. The approach is necessarily individualized, advocating each student's case based upon the strengths and weaknesses of his or her early application:

Some basic, one-size-fits-all advice:

*Don't beat yourself up about your deferrals or dwell on your disappointments.

Remember admissions decisions are not indicators of your future success and happiness. Now is a good time to redouble your research efforts to discover the wonderful attributes of other colleges on your list. You'll find plenty of new schools to love.

*Use the deferral news to reassess your college list and rethink your applications. Does your essay topic reveal enough about you? Perhaps your resume can be reorganized or condensed to elucidate your strengths? And, maybe your college list is too laden with the same unreasonable reaches that all of your classmates are targeting? Before the impending regular-decision deadlines, it might be wise to have an experienced adult or independent counselor review your application and college list.

*Make sure you get all remaining applications out on time, by regular-decision deadlines. Follow up with teachers, guidance counselors and testing

NEW CANAAN NEWS~REVIEW newcanaannews-review.com

companies to ensure that supporting documents are submitted in a timely fashion.

*Once you push the send button on your additional applications, try to find out some facts about your deferral status. High schools sometimes receive early admissions statistics from colleges. Otherwise, guidance counselors should contact admissions officers to pin down the specifics. How many kids were accepted, rejected or deferred in the early round? Were applicants deferred to ED2 or just to the regular decision? Will all deferred candidates be reviewed again? And, how many deferred kids actually received a spring acceptance in the last few years?

*Armed with a more realistic picture of your chances, decide if you're still interested in pursuing your early school. Review your early application and see what could be improved. Seek an experienced perspective; independent counselors experienced with turning deferrals into acceptances might help you strengthen your case for admission. Make a plan. Interviews, updated honors or awards, improved grades or standardized testing or additional supplementary information could help. Sometimes, doing nothing works, too; a small percentage of students who submit no additional information still get accepted come spring.

Once your applications are done and your plan is executed, enjoy the rest of senior year knowing that you did your best to gain acceptance to your top choice colleges.

Elise Epner is an educational consultant concentrating on college admissions and SAT preparation in Fairfield. She can be reached through her Web site, www.eliseepner.com, by email, eliseepner@snet.net, or by phone at 333-3549.