

Published February 15th, 2023

Deferred? Now what?

By Elizabeth LaScala



Doing College and Beyond College and Graduate School Admissions Services 970 Dewing Avenue, Suite 202, Lafayette 925.385.0562 (office) 925.330.8801 (mobile) www.doingcollege.com Elizabeth@doingcollege.com Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the US. Elizabeth attends conferences, visits campuses and makes personal contacts with admissions networks to stay current on the evolving nature of college admissions. She and her professional team offer resume development, test preparation, academic tutoring, value analysis, merit and need-based scholarship search and more.

When the pandemic first hit, many worried that applications for admission would decrease in much the same way as enrollment numbers dropped. However, the opposite occurred and this past early cycle results show applications are up, in some cases dramatically so. Due to this increase in demand, many otherwise qualified students found themselves deferred to regular admissions cycle.

Why has this occurred? One expert suggests that most of the early action/early decision deferrals can be contributed to the deluge of digital recruitment strategies, including virtual information sessions, tours, and student panels. One college advisor calls colleges 'marketing machines' whose efforts to connect with students on social media resulted in unparalleled awareness of schools that students otherwise would not have thought were within their reach - in turn this stimulated greater numbers of applications.

I would amend the social media hypothesis to add that digital strategies increased the perception of college access rather than actual access and led many students and their families to overestimate their chances of admission. If schools were needier, many reasonably figured that they would be more likely to admit qualified, or even somewhat less qualified students. This assumption was most in error.

Added to this thinking was the tendency to believe that the increase in chances of admission applied across the board, even to the most selective schools. Thus, the biggest rises in applications were directly proportional to the selectivity of the colleges, and so were the deferral (and denial) rates. It seems that the most selective schools, often among the wealthiest, had the greatest resources to weather the pandemic storm, while maintaining their high standards for admission.

What should a deferred student do who still hopes to be considered during the regular admission cycle? First, remember that being deferred means the college is still interested enough in you to consider your application. If you've been working hard academically and maintained your extracurricular involvement, I recommend writing a Letter of Continued Interest. Here are some tips:

- 1) Keep your letter short, upbeat, and polite.
- 2) Focus on relevant updates to your application. Highlight specific achievements like improved test scores, better grades, or a recent award. If you applied as a finance major and you transformed a B in calculus to an A, tell them, since it is relevant to the school and your proposed major.
- 3) Send supplemental materials that support your updates only if the school accepts them.
- 4) Follow their rules. If they originally asked for two letters of recommendation, do not send them a third.

My recommended word limit for your letter is 300. By comparison, this article is 461 words. It is too long for a Letter of Continued Interest. Colleges have your application, so avoid repetition. Get your point across and be done!

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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