From A to Z: College Admissions Vocabulary

ACT: A standardized test that may be a required component of an admissions application. Universities will accept the ACT *or* the SAT to fulfill their standardized testing requirement, if they have one.

Application Fee: Universities charge money to process a student's application; the average application fee is $50.

Application Fee Waiver: A college may waive the application fee for a student if it will be a barrier for him applying for admission.

Bachelor's Degree: Following high school, students enroll in a four-year course of study that culminates in a Bachelor's Degree. Students can then go on and study for more advanced degrees, such as a Master's Degree or a Ph.D.

Common App: One application that students can submit to multiple universities around the world, though it is mainly an application for American universities. Over 1,000 universities accept this application.

Cost of Attendance: The yearly price to attend a university, including tuition, academic fees (books, laptops, etc.), and housing and food expenses.

CSS Profile: A form families may need to complete for certain universities if they are applying for financial aid.

Deferral Decision: If a student applies to a university during Early Decision or Early Action (*see definitions*), a student might receive a non-decision in December or January, meaning that the university will give them an actual decision of admit or deny at a later date. The university needs more time and possibly more information to make its decision.

Deferred Enrollment: When a student requests and is granted the option to start at the university a year later than the term for which he applied; this is usually to pursue a gap year (*see definition.*)

Demonstrated Interest: Some universities might consider how much interest you have shown in their school when they are making admission decisions. If this is the case, they want to see that a student has: attended events about the university (virtual, on campus, or at Haverford); written emails to the admissions office expressing their enthusiasm for the university and asking questions; and/or read and engaged with their emails, social media accounts, and such.

Demonstrated Need: A university will review a family's financial aid application and determine what the family can pay, the Expected Family Contribution (*see definition*.) They then subtract the Expected Family Contribution from the Cost of Attendance (*see definition)* to determine how much money a family needs in scholarships, grants and/or loans to meet the financial expectations of the university.

Denied: A student is not offered admission; typically, this decision is final and cannot be appealed.

Early Action: A student can apply to a university in the fall of senior year and receive a decision on his application faster than if he applied Regular Decision (*see definition)*. An admitted student then has until May 1 to accept or decline the university's offer of admission.

Early Action *Single Choice/Restrictive:* *In addition to the definition above, s*ome universities require that students only apply to one university during the early admission rounds in the fall.

Early Decision (I and II): Students can apply to a university in the fall or winter of their senior year and receive a decision faster than if they had applied Regular Decision (*see definition*.) If admitted, a student *must* attend that university, so they are required to withdraw any other applications they have submitted. A student can only apply to one university in Early Decision, and he should only apply this way if the university is his top choice. Some universities offer two rounds of Early Decision, I and II.

Expected Family Contribution: This is the amount a university determines a family can pay for the student's education based on the family's financial aid application.

Extra-Curricular Activities: What are the hobbies, interests, and pursuits of a student when he is not engaged in academics; for instance, community service, sports, summer programs, theater and more.

FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid): A form applicants for financial aid must complete to access federal financial aid.

Fastweb: An online database of scholarship opportunities.

Financial Aid: Money offered by a university to support a student in financing his university education. Financial aid can be awarded based on need and/or merit. (*Please see below for more information on need-based aid and merit-based aid.)*

"Fit": Haverford college counselors and admissions officers want to help a student find a university that meets his academic, non-academic and personal goals.

Gap Year: Taking the year between graduating from Haverford and enrolling at university to pursue a personal passion, such as travel, service, or work experience.

GPA (Grade Point Average): Universities may take the average of a student's grades each year to understand how he has performed as a student during his high school career. A GPA can be **unweighted** (just accounting for the grades earned) or **weighted** (adding numerical heft to each advanced course a student takes.)

Legacy: A student is a legacy when he applies to a university that was attended by his parents, grandparents, and/or possibly his siblings. It can be an advantage in the admissions process, depending upon the university.

Liberal Arts and Sciences: When a university encourages students to explore courses in the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences so that they receive a broad, flexible education.

Likely Choice: There is a 75% or greater chance that the student will be admitted to the university based on their academic record and historical application data.

May 1: Typically students reply to any offers of admission from universities by this date.

Merit Aid: Money awarded to a student for exceptional talents in academics, arts, athletics, leadership, etc. that can be used to pay for a student's education. A student may need to complete a separate application to be eligible for merit scholarships. The family's finances are not considered when determining these awards.

National Merit Scholarship Program: scholarship competition for students based on their PSAT (*see definition)* score and other academic and non-academic factors.

Need-Based Aid: Money awarded by a university to help the student cover the expenses of the education that their family cannot afford, their demonstrated need (*see definition*.)

Need-Aware: When a university considers a family's ability to pay for the student's education in their decision-making process.

Need-Blind: When a university considers whether or not to admit a student without regard for whether the family can pay for the education.

Personal Essay: A writing sample detailing an element of a student's life, personality, interests, etc. that is a part of the Common App and therefore sent to all universities that the student applies to with that application.

Portfolio: Students applying for visual arts, performing arts, or music courses may be asked to submit a compilation of their artistic work to the university's admissions office so that their talents can be assessed along with their applications.

PSAT/NMSQT- A practice SAT that is taken by Forms IV and V at Haverford each October. For Form V, it can qualify students for the National Merit Scholarship Program (*see definition)*.

Target Option: There is a 50/50 chance a student will be admitted to a university based on their academic profile and historical application data.

Reach Option: A university that a student has a low chance of being admitted to based on their academic profile and historical application data.

Regular Decision: An application deadline that typically falls in January of the student's senior year; students learn of their admission decision by the end of March, and then they have until May 1 to accept or decline the university's offer of admission.

Rolling Decision: When a university receives applications and starts making decisions on them immediately, not waiting until they have reviewed all of the applications they have received to decide whom to admit.

SAT: A standardized test that may be a required component of the admissions process. Most universities will accept the ACT (*see definition*) or the SAT to fulfill their standardized testing requirement.

Scholarship: *See Merit-Based Aid.*

Scholarships.com: An online database of scholarship opportunities.

SCOIR (pronounced "score.")**:** The college planning system that Haverford uses to help students manage the college search and application processes.

Supplement: In addition to the Common App, a university may have questions and/or essays that they want students to answer just for their school.

Test Blind: When a university will not evaluate a student's SAT or ACT score, even if they submit them with their application.

Test Optional: When a university does not require the SAT or ACT but will evaluate a student's score if it is submitted.

Transcript: The official school report, per academic year, of the courses a student took and the grades he earned in each.

Undergraduate: A student who is working toward his Bachelor's Degree (*see definition*.)

Unlikely Option: A university that is unreasonable for a student's college list as a student is not competitive for admission based on his academic profile and historic application data.

Wait List Decision: When a university is not able to admit a student but wants to reserve the right to possibly admit the student at a later date if more seats become available.