

Deferred, Now What?

By Michael Clancy, Director of College Counseling

In previous *In Focus* articles, the Counseling Department has celebrated GWA's Class of 2018's numerous early acceptances. Many colleges are reporting big upsurges in applicants applying early, meaning that word has gotten out that it's "easier" to be accepted early. The result, of course, is a significant drop in the percent being accepted and an accompanying rise in competitiveness.

While Emory and Georgia Tech have always been very selective, the greatest increase in early applications has occurred at UGA. According to [UGA's Office of Admissions](#), in October 2017, 15,000 students applied early and 8,000 were accepted. While some GWA students were in that pool, some received a polite "not now," a deferral until the regular decision round in the spring.

The first thing to keep in mind is that a deferral is not a denial and there is still hope. Hard as it may be to believe, if [last year's numbers at UGA](#) are any indication, half the students admitted will not enroll, and UGA is likely to make offers to 5,000 more freshmen applicants.

Even for holistic admission universities that ask for essays, resumes and recommendations--it's more about the numbers during the Early Admission phase. The more applicants, the more decisions that have to be made. Admission offices bump up against the limit of how many students to take early. Some schools are filling more than half their classes this way, but others may not.

Maybe your grades and test scores are good, but not great. However, you have a great story. The regular application pool is where you might shine. For example, at UGA, Early Action applicants are considered for admission based solely on their grades, the rigor of their high school curriculum relative to what is available at their school, and the results of their SAT or ACT scores. Regular decision applications, which are due no later than Jan. 8, are reviewed holistically, with the core academic qualifications supplemented by factors such as a student's intellectual and creative pursuits, community involvement and leadership, and recommendations from counselors and teachers.

Perhaps you had a rocky junior year or a setback in some other area? In that case, you need to demonstrate that you've not only recovered but also significantly exceeded your previous performance. If you loved the school before, don't let a deferral turn into resentment; you're still in the mix, it's just a setback.

If your Early Action school became your paradigm for the other schools on your list, revisit them and remind yourself what put them in the plus column. Look more deeply into them and their programs.

Don't call demanding to know why you were deferred. I guarantee you'll only look bad and that the answer will be some variation of, "We just didn't have room enough at this point to take everyone we'd like to take." Instead, if you're still interested in attending your Early Action school, write a letter to your admission representative or the dean expressing your disappointment but emphasizing your enthusiasm for the school and, if you're still gung-ho, letting that person know you'll enroll if they take you. A mature response with the positive actions you have taken or will take to meet the school's criteria can be very helpful. When I say write a letter, I mean just that: paper and pen, envelope, and a stamp. Emails are too easy and ubiquitous; a letter stands out.

When your first semester grades come out, be sure to send them for your file. Send anything else that enhances your application as well. But don't inundate the admission office with extra recommendations, portfolios, or weekly contacts. Be judicious. Another note sent during reading season (usually in February-March) reiterating your devotion can bring you back to the forefront of the Admissions Officer's consciousness.

Often, the enthusiasm for your Early Action school fades after a deferral; so you can simply keep moving on to your other schools, making sure you have a good selection. I can also tell you that students are often relieved at their deferrals because during the process they've found a school they like even better or because they ended up feeling boxed in by the commitment.

I'll be honest, students deferred in the early rounds have the odds stacked against them in the regular pool. You'll be swimming with bigger, smaller and same-sized fish, so you'll have to take a dispassionate view of the process. But there's no harm in swimming as strongly as you can to reach your ideal school.