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## Is Early Acceptance Right for You?

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to strong parental and counselor support systems that permit identification of a first choice school and facilitate an efficient assembly of all materials necessary to meet early application deadlines. Students with limited financial means, and those who attend poorly funded and overcrowded public schools, do not enjoy these advantages. Due to these concerns as well as because the sheer number of early applicants has increased dramatically, some schools are reducing the number of students admitted through the early cycle. Others, like Princeton and Harvard, have ended these programs altogether.

Early action gives the student an early response without a binding commitment. Students accepted through early action enjoy the benefit of knowing that they have been accepted by one or more of the schools on their list, but they can wait until the spring to decide what school to attend. The student is also free to apply to other schools using the regular admission cycle and make a decision once all admission offers and financial aid awards are on the table. A few early action schools do place restrictions. The most restrictive is "single choice early action." Under this program a student may not apply early decision or early action to any other school. At the present time Yale and Stanford use this policy. Schools can and do change their policies unexpectedly, so be sure to obtain the most current policy information.

Here are a few guidelines to help you decide if an early acceptance option is right for you:

Start early. Juniors and even sophomores can begin to research and visit colleges during school breaks and learn about early options and deadlines. Hasty decisions made in your senior year may lead to disappointment.

You must be totally confident that your first choice school is right for you.

Assess your academic and extracurricular profile; bear in mind that early acceptance is a good choice for students who would be

October is an especially busy month for seniors who choose to apply early to one of the hundreds of colleges and universities that welcome early applicants. These schools set application deadlines typically between Nov. 1 and Nov. 15 and offer a quick response, usually by mid-December. How do you know if an early option is right for you? This article describes the differences between the two major early admission plans to help you decide.

Early decision is a binding agreement between the college and applicant. You may only use early decision for one school. If accepted, you are obligated to attend, if the school offers you a satisfactory financial aid package. The college can also deny your application or defer it to the regular admissions cycle. If denial or deferment occurs, you can apply to other colleges to meet their regular admission deadlines.

Early decision programs have become more popular over the past decade. There are some clear advantages to both the college and the student. The college gets a head start assembling a fall freshman class. Students admitted under early decision are certain to enroll. In college admissions talk, the "yield" from the early decision pool is 100%. This permits schools to more efficiently manage enrollment and, from a competitive standpoint, gives the college the opportunity to admit desirable students who might have attended rival institutions.

The advantages to students include ending the uncertainty of the college admissions process so they can relax and enjoy their senior year. Also, it is generally believed that applying early decision can increase chances of admission. Historically, the acceptance rate for early decision applicants is higher than the rate for regular admissions. This is particularly true for legacy applicants and recruited athletes. The downside is that students who are accepted early are limited in their financial aid options. Early decision removes the opportunity to compare financial aid offers from several schools, or negotiate for a better package between schools. This makes early decision a good business decision for the college, but not necessarily for the student. The family may feel pressured to accept an offer that is not as affordable as that from another school which could provide the student a similarly good education.

Early decision is one of the most hotly debated topics in college admissions. Critics point out that early decision is increasingly being used as an admissions strategy. They note that early decision favors students who do not need financial assistance and who have access

competitive applicants for regular admissions.

Be certain that you do not need your fall semester grades to boost chances for admission.

Talk with your parents about the importance of maintaining the ability to compare financial aid offers.

Make certain you have the support from your parents and high school counselor to submit a strong, cohesive application by the early deadline.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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