

# Inside the Admission Office

... What Every Family Needs to Know in an  
Increasingly Competitive Environment

Don Betterton

Betterton College Planning

Pennington, NJ

[dbett@princeton.edu](mailto:dbett@princeton.edu)

609 737 7377

# 2000 4-yr

**Competitive**  
8, 9,10

**250**

B +/A- Avg

Top 15-20%

SAT 600-700

Some Honors, AP

Good Activities/Talent,  
Personal

**1650**

C+/B Avg

Top 1/2 to 1/3

SAT 450-600

Pre-College Courses

Some participation

Good HS Citizen

**Meet Basic Standards**  
4-7

**Selective**  
11,12

**75**

A Avg

Top 5-10%

SAT 700's

Almost all Honors/AP

Strong Activities/Talent,  
Personal

**25**

A/A+ Avg Top of Class

SAT Mid /High 700's

All Hard Courses

Unusually Strong Activities,  
Talent, Personal in  
combination

No Negatives

**Most  
Selective**  
13,14

# Competitive and Selective

**Although these colleges make up about 20% of 4-yrs, more than 1/2 of college students attend one of them.**

- ❖ **They include “Flagship Publics,” (Rutgers, Penn State, Michigan, UCal system), large privates (B.U., USC, Syracuse), Ivy and similar, lots of small colleges**
- ❖ **Due to large applicant pools and detailed application requirements, careful admission planning is needed.**

# Why is harder now than when parents went to college?

## ❖ Supply is steady.

- + The number of freshman seats has remained about the same for a long time.

## ❖ Demand is growing overall.

- + The number of high school grads has never been higher.
  - × Now about 3.3M
- + The percent going to college is increasing.
  - × From 45% to nearly 2/3 since 1980's
- + More international students applying.

# Life Isn't Easy in Admissions

- ❖ **While admission offices strive to generate more applications, it does create a problem.**
- ❖ **There are more and more students to evaluate, and it is increasingly hard to choose among them.**

# Consider:

There is academic **“Bunching”**

## **Increased enrollment in hard courses**

- + Honors, AP, International Baccalaureate
- + College courses in high school, summer

## **Distinctions are blurred**

- + Grade inflation
- + Multiple valedictorians
- + SAT “super-scoring,” ACT alternative
- + Test prep courses

# And

There is personal **“Polishing”**

- ❖ **Students are more savvy about building a resume with activities and accomplishments, strategizing the essay, using summer for extra college prep**
- ❖ **High schools feel the pressure – reluctant to lessen student chances – inflation in teacher and counselor recs**

# To Complicate Matters Further ..

- ❖ **College admission offices have a split personality**
  - + They are a meritocracy
    - × Admit the best
  - + They also practice “institutional engineering”
    - × Admit to meet other objectives
- ❖ **The result is not one, but two admissions processes at top colleges**
  - + One for “Untagged” applicants
  - + One for “Tagged” applicants
- ❖ **This is where confusion increases and predictability decreases.**



# What To Do

- ❖ The most common reason a good student does not get admitted to a top college is that he is in the **Untagged** category and doesn't realize the admission standards for him are well above the published averages.
- ❖ In making college list, and estimating chances, important to know if you are **Untagged** or **Tagged**.

# Special Categories

## ❖ The 4 most common Tagged categories are:

- + Recruited athlete (+25-30%)
- + Underrepresented minority (+25-30%)
- + Early Decision (+10-15%)
- + Legacy (0-15%)

## ❖ One that is growing in popularity:

- + Disadvantaged, low income, first generation college, overcoming obstacles

# Other Tagged Categories

- ❖ **These tend to vary a great deal by institution.**
  - + **State residents**
  - + **Institutional need: arts talent, special academic ability**
  - + **Connections**
  - + **Demonstrated interest**
  - + **Misc: geographic, gender, full pay**

# Tagged Categories

## + **Level 1**

- × Div I, II schp athlete

## + **Level II**

- × Non-schp athlete
- × Affirmative action minority

## **Level IIA**

- × Low incm, disadv, obstacles
- × Inst. need – arts, academic

## + **Level III**

- × Early Decision
- × Demonstrated interest
- × State resident
- × Legacy

## + **Level IV**

- × Geography
- × Full pay
- × Gender
- × State resident
- × Legacy

# College List Making Advice

- ❖ **Untagged** – compare yourself to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the academic profile
- ❖ **Tagged** -
  - + **Recruited athlete**: The coach will tell you what your chances are. Div I and II schp athletes can have quite low standards.
  - + **Minority**: 25<sup>th</sup> - 50<sup>th</sup> percentile
  - + **Other tags**: 40<sup>th</sup> - 60<sup>th</sup> percentile

# Tagged Strategies

- ❖ **Athlete** – Apply to colleges where you will be recruited by coach
- ❖ **Minority** – Find out if they give a preference
- ❖ **Legacy** – Apply to college parents attended (check grad school, grandparents, sibs)
- ❖ **Apply early** – Early Decision (Early Action)
- ❖ **LI/Disadv/Obstacles** – Ask admission rep
- ❖ **Instit. need** – Complete Arts Supplement or make contact, demonstrate ability, request support

# An Admission Exercise

- ❖ **Top colleges rate applicants on academic and personal scales.**
- ❖ **Because colleges have to sort through so many apps, they use a number system.**
- ❖ **My system goes from 1 (low) to 8 (high) on both academic and personal scales.**
- ❖ **Academics are weighted more heavily than personal, on average 3:1.**

# ACADEMIC RATING TABLE™

	Average GPA (UW)	Rank	Courses (5 solids)	SAT (M+CR/2)	ACT (Comp)	SAT Subject	Acad Awards
<b>8</b>	A+ 4.0 97-100	1-2%	Most Demanding**	750-800	35-36	780-800	Intern/ National
<b>7</b>	A 3.9 94-96	3-5%	Most Demanding	710-740	33-34	760-770	Region/ State
<b>6</b>	A- 3.7-3.8 90-93	6-14%	Very Demanding	680-700	32	730-750	County
<b>5</b>	B+ 3.3-3.6 87-89	15-20%	Demanding	650-670	29-31	680-720	School
<b>4</b>	B/B- 2.7-3.2 80-86	25%	Demanding	600-640	26-28	630-670	None
<b>3</b>	C 2.3-2.6 77-79	33%	Average	550-590	23-25	590-620	None
<b>2</b>	C 2.0-2.2 74-76	50%	Below Average	470-540	19-22	500-580	None
<b>1</b>	C- Below 2.0 Below 74	Below 50%	Below Average	Below 470	Below 19	Below 500	None



# Personal Ratings

- × The personal rating is based on a combination of attributes in different areas. They typically include:
  - × Achievement
  - × Talent
  - × Leadership/positions of responsibility
  - × How you are revealed in the application, interview, essay
  - × Service to others
  - × Overcoming obstacles
  - × Personal attributes
- × Personal attributes primarily come from school and teacher reports and required interviews. The categories are:
  - × Respect accorded by faculty
  - × Class participation
  - × Academic achievement
  - × Intellectual promise
  - × Writing quality
  - × Creativity
  - × Work habits
  - × Maturity
  - × Motivation
  - × Leadership
  - × Integrity
  - × Reaction to setbacks
  - × Concern for others
  - × Self-confidence
  - × Initiative
  - × Independence

## PERSONAL RATING TABLE™

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	Non-Academic Achievement	Talent	Other Achievement	Service to Others	Leadership	Personal Characteristics
8	International/ National	Rare in Major	Rare for High School Student	Extraordinary Contribution	Quite Extraordinary	
7	Regional/ State	Unusual in Major	Unusually Strong	Significant Role in Important Service	Extremely Strong	One of Top Few in My Career
6	County League	Quite Strong in Important	Important	Well Beyond Typical Service	Widely Respected	Outstanding Top 1-4%
5	Major School	Very Good	Above Average	Well Meaning Service	Very Good	Excellent Top 5-10%
4	Minor School Good Class	Good	Typical	Typical Contribution	Good	Very Good
3	Class	Average	Minimal	Only What is Required	Average	Good/Average
2	Very little /None	Minimal/None	Very Little/None	Very little/None	None to Speak of	Below Average

Non-Academic Achievement: School related group activities such as government, newspaper, debate, theater, music, athletics

Talent: Individual achievement in areas such as music, art, theater, dance, creative writing, athletics

Other Achievement: Outside of school) such as scouting, religious, club sports, employment

Services to Others: Volunteer work to disadvantaged, elderly, hospital, etc.

Leadership: Positions of responsibility such as elected or appointed positions

Personal Characteristics: Your guess of how your teachers and counselor would rate you on traits like: respect accorded by faculty, work habits, maturity, motivation, integrity, concern for others, self-confidence, initiative, and independence

## STUDENT RATINGS COMPARED TO COLLEGE RATINGS™

<b>14</b>	<b>Super Selective</b>	<b>Princeton</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Most Selective</b>	<b>Penn</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Most Selective/Selective</b>	<b>Georgetown</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Selective</b>	<b>Rochester</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Competitive</b>	<b>SUNY Binghamton</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Competitive</b>	<b>Boston University</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Lightly Competitive</b>	<b>UConn</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Lightly Comp/Meet Basic Standards</b>	<b>SUNY Purchase</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Meet Basic Standards</b>	<b>Hofstra</b>

# Betterton College Planning EVALUATOR™

Name **John**

Rating **5/4**

Date

Here are your admission prospects comparing your credentials with those of each college's most recent freshman man class. **Green shading indicates Core colleges.**

Very Difficult (10-30%)	Difficult (20-40%)	Somewhat Difficult (30-50%)	Good Choice (40-60%)	Solid Chance (50-70%)	Strong Chance (60-80%)	V.G. to Excellent Chance (70-90%)
Gtown (12)	Rochester (11)	SUNY Binghamton (10)	B.U. (9)	UConn (8)	SUNY Purchase (7)	Hofstra (6)
Notes:						

# Tags

- ❖ **Strong Tags, e.g., Minorities and Athletes, might add 2 points to rating**
- ❖ **ED, (Legacy) might add 1 point**

**For example, if John, a 5/4, is an affirmative action minority, he would have the same admission chance as a Untagged 11.**

# Betterton College Planning EVALUATOR™ w/ TAG

Name John

Rating 5/4 **MIN 11**

Date

Here are your admission prospects comparing your credentials with those of each college's most recent freshman man class. Green shading indicates Core colleges.

Very Difficult (10-30%)	Difficult (20-40%)	Somewhat Difficult (30-50%)	Good Choice (40-60%)	Solid Chance (50-70%)	Strong Chance (60-80%)	V.G. to Excellent Chance (70-90%)
Princeton (14)	Penn (13)	Gtown (12)	Rochester (11)	SUNY Binghamton (10)	B.U. (9)	UConn (8)
						SUNY Purchase (7)
						Hofstra (6)
Notes:						

# Factors That Limit the College Evaluator

- ❖ **Data for freshman class two years ago**
- ❖ **Some missing factors like essay, interview**
- ❖ **Publics can have different resident, non-resident selection standards**
- ❖ **Within a college, some schools/majors can be more competitive**
- ❖ **Admission ratings are objective for sorting groups of students, become more subjective in individual decisions\***
- ❖ **Nevertheless, the Evaluator is a good system for making a realistic list and showing where improvement is needed**

# Do the Student Ratings and College Matching Make Sense?

<b>Kerry</b>	<b>5+/5+</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>top 15%</b>	<b>670 SAT</b>	<b>3AP, 2H</b>	<b>Dance, obstacles: 4 high schools, type 1 diabetes</b> <b>NYU (11) W/L JHU (12), reject Penn (13)</b>
<b>Alex</b>	<b>3/3+</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>top 30%</b>	<b>510 SAT</b>	<b>regular courses</b>	<b>Swimmer, but not recruited</b> <b>UNH (6), reject Chapman (9)</b>
<b>Addie</b>	<b>7+/6+</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>top 3%</b>	<b>760 SAT</b>	<b>3AP, 2H</b>	<b>V.G. school activities and leadership, national level speaker</b> <b>Princeton (14) ED, legacy</b>
<b>Emily</b>	<b>7/5+</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>top 3%</b>	<b>750 SAT</b>	<b>IB program</b>	<b>V.G. school activities and leadership, circus performer</b> <b>Princeton (14) legacy</b>



# More Examples

**Eric**    **6/5**            **3.7**    **32 ACT (710)**            **AP/IB**            **5's on 2 APs**  
State ranked fencer, music, lots of service – Kids Rock, Emory Schp  
**Emory (12) ED**

**Jason**    **5/4**            **3.3**            **670 SAT**                            **2AP 1H**  
Tennis and soccer, sports editor of newspaper, v.g. essay,  
Demonstrated interest, visits , interviews, regional admission rep  
**Syracuse Newhouse (10) ED**

**Katie**    **6+/5+**            **4.0 top 5%**            **680 SAT**            **1AP 3H**  
School activities, national level competitive dancer  
**Richmond (10) ED**    \$10,000 Richmond Scholar

**Joshua**    **7/4**            **3.6 top 20%**            **750 SAT**            **800 3 SAT Subj**            **4AP**  
National Chem, Math, Physics awards, routine activities  
**RPI (10)** \$8000 schp.    Full schp Rutgers (8), Stevens (9)

**No:**            MIT, Harv, Stan, Cal Tech, Col, Rice, Cornell, Prin  
**Wait List:**    Wash U, Carnegie Mellon

# The Essay

## First rule – Do No Harm

25%

**Pulls you down**

poorly written, too long, doesn't answer question

25 % to 50%

**Disappointing**

good story, but doesn't say anything about you

50% to 75%

**Neutral**

20%

**Positive impression**

5%

**Big help**

**Write with a conversational tone, avoid grand topics like hunger, peace, and global warming**

**Answer the question, make it about you and something you care about. Show attractive quality, endearing flaw better than bragging**

# How To Improve Your Chances

- ❖ **Make a realistic list:**
  - + Concentrate on Core, perhaps add others on either side
  - + Be enthusiastic about **Good Choice, Solid Chance** colleges
- ❖ **Take good courses**
- ❖ **Plan test taking strategy**
- ❖ **Add colleges where you might be Tagged**
- ❖ **Look at personal side. Avoid resume fillers, try to distinguish yourself. The “2 strong” profile is appealing**
- ❖ **Pay attention to teacher recs, essay, evaluative interview**
- ❖ **Below top-level demonstrated interest can be important**

# Conclusion

- ❖ **Plan ahead to present the best version of who you are, not a makeover. Look for polish, not plastic surgery.**
- ❖ **Finding a college that fulfills your academic potential and is a good fit personally is more important than attending the “better” school.**