



The Early Admissions Game

Christopher. Avery, Andrew. Fairbanks, Richard J. Zeckhauser

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Each year, hundreds of thousands of high school seniors compete in a game they'll play only once, whose rules they do not fully understand, yet whose consequences are enormous. The game is college admissions, and applying early to an elite school is one way to win. But the early admissions process is enigmatic and flawed. It can easily lead students toward hasty or misinformed decisions.

This book--based on the careful examination of more than 500,000 college applications to fourteen elite colleges, and hundreds of interviews with students, counselors, and admissions officers--provides an extraordinarily thorough analysis of early admissions. In clear language it details the advantages and pitfalls of applying early as it provides a map for students and parents to navigate the process. Unlike college admissions guides, *The Early Admissions Game* reveals the realities of early applications, how they work and what effects they have. The authors frankly assess early applications. Applying early is not for everyone, but it will improve--sometimes double, even triple--the chances of being admitted to a prestigious college.

An early decision program can greatly enhance a college's reputation by skewing statistics, such as selectivity, average SAT scores, or percentage of admitted applicants who matriculate. But these gains come at the expense of distorting applicants' decisions and providing disparate treatment of students who apply early and regular admissions. The system, in short, is unfair, and the authors make recommendations for improvement.

The Early Admissions Game is sure to be the definitive work on the subject. It is must reading for admissions officers, guidance counselors, and high school seniors and their parents.

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Reviews of this book:

Applying to an elite college through an early-admissions program can improve students' chances of getting in by as much as 50 percent over their odds during the regular admissions cycle, a difference that is the equivalent of scoring 100 points higher on the SAT...Based on an analysis of admission data at top colleges, as well as interviews with over 400 college freshmen [*The Early Admissions Game*] challenges the official line of college admissions deans, who have long held that applying early does not give prospective students an advantage over regular applicants. But the research confirms what many high-school counselors already suspected, and it is likely to fuel debate over whether early-admissions programs favor wealthy and well-connected students and should be eliminated or reformed.

--Jeffrey R. Young, Chronicle of Higher Education

Reviews of this book:

[This] important contribution to the college-admissions process should reduce the general anxiety that pervades today's transition to college and, in particular, help level the playing field for students who lack access to adequate college counseling. The book may also prompt needed reform of contemporary admissions practices...The authors' goal...deserves acclaim for helping inner-city and rural students and those in other understaffed districts to pursue admission on a much more even footing...There is a wealth of information in this well-organized,...

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