

College Quest

The path to the right-fit college



Why study in the US?

The U.S. is the most popular university destination for students all over the world.

- Holistic review process
- Less-specialized four-year degree (“liberal arts”)
- Residential life and pastoral care
- Alumni connections and international career opportunities



Trends



More applicants
than ever



Greater use
of waitlists



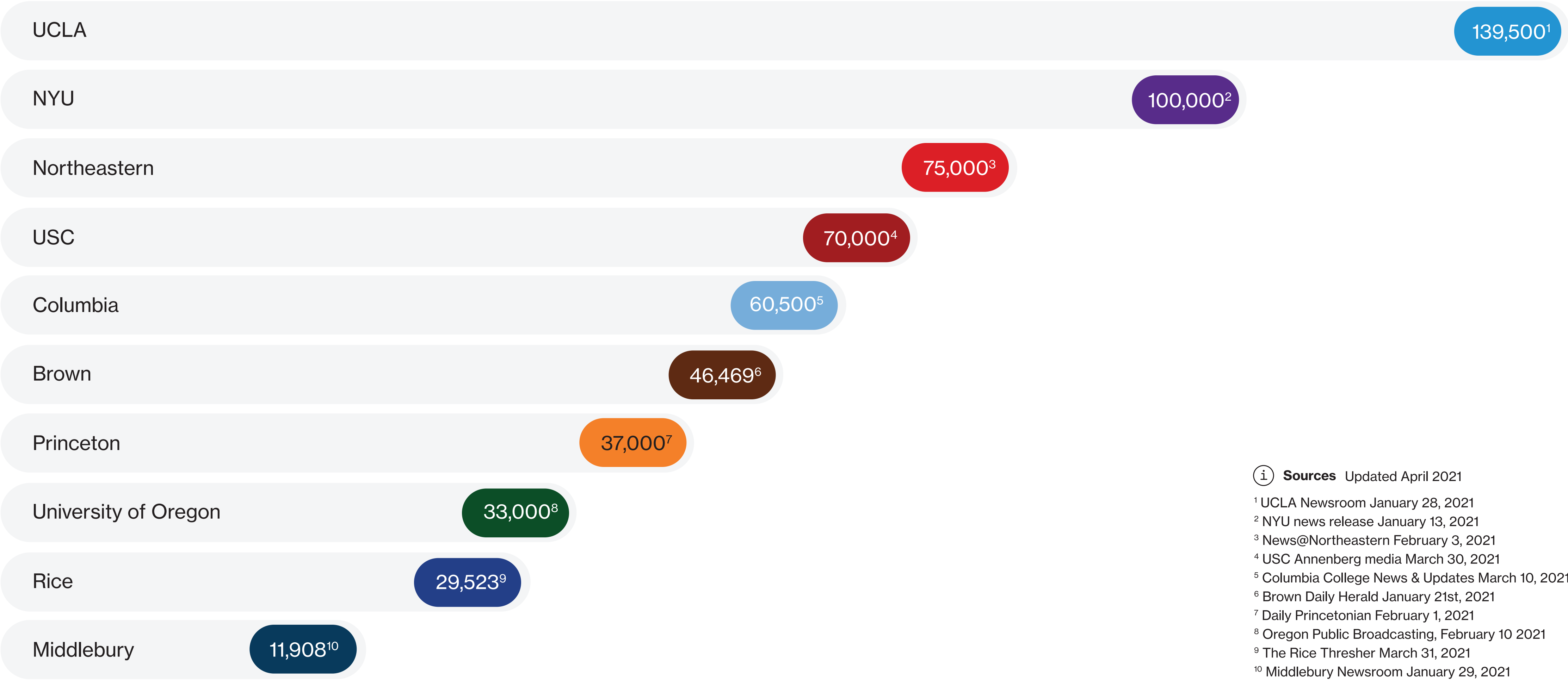
Test Optional vs
Test Blind



Higher admissions
rate for early
applications

Number of Applicants

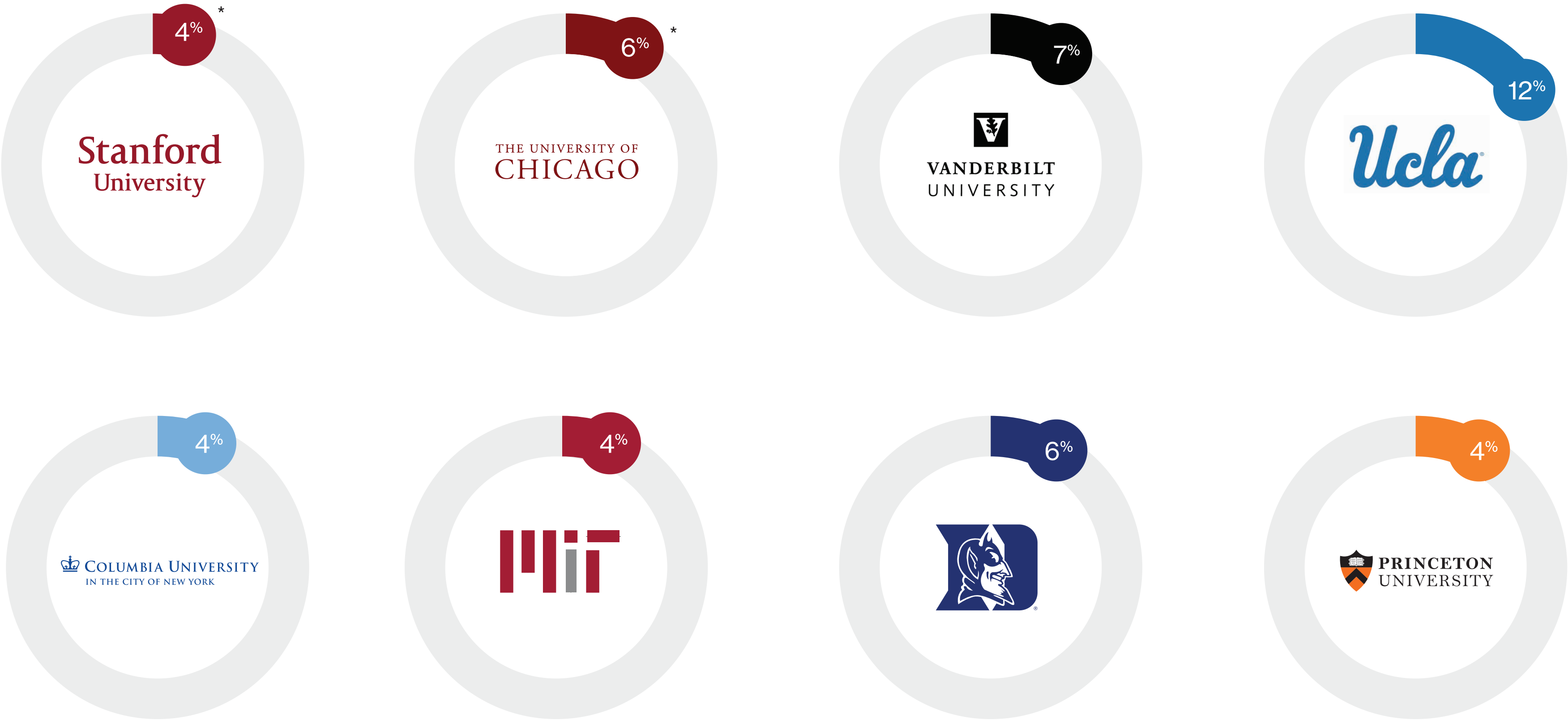
More applicants this year than ever




i Sources Updated April 2021

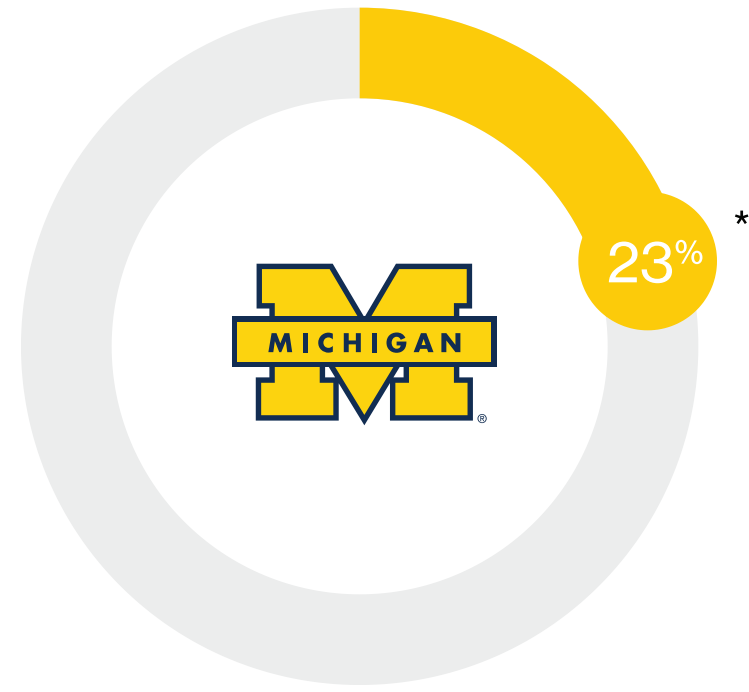
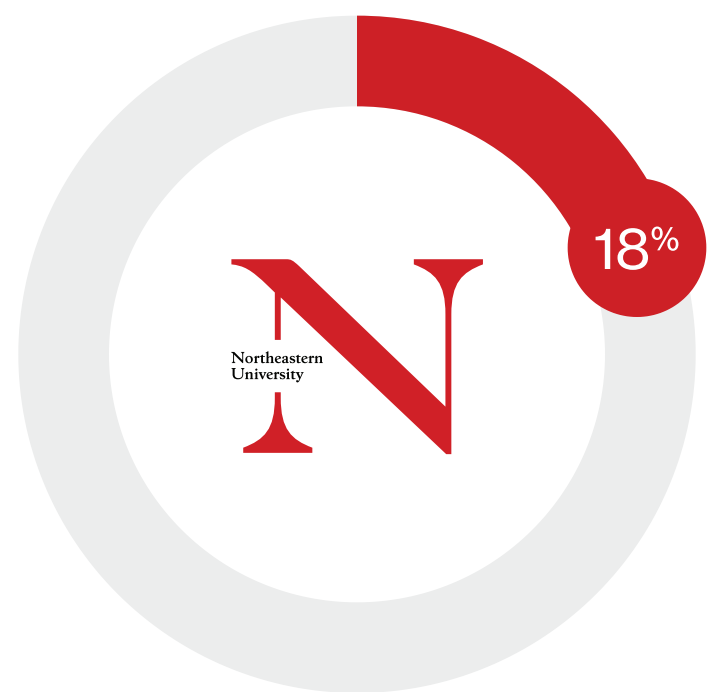
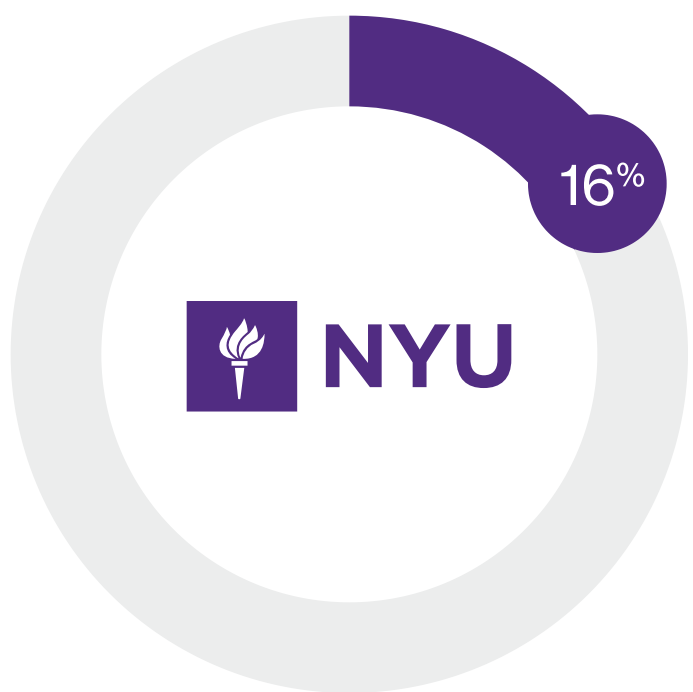
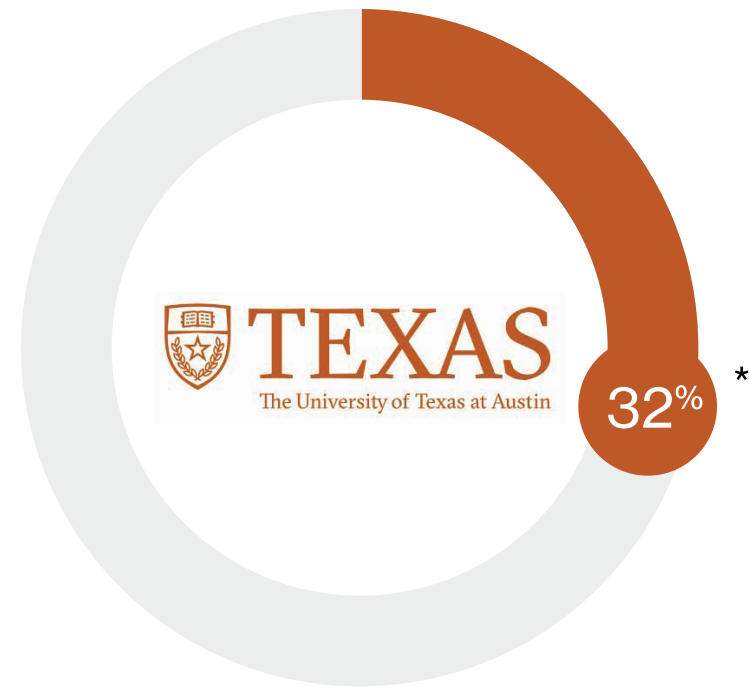
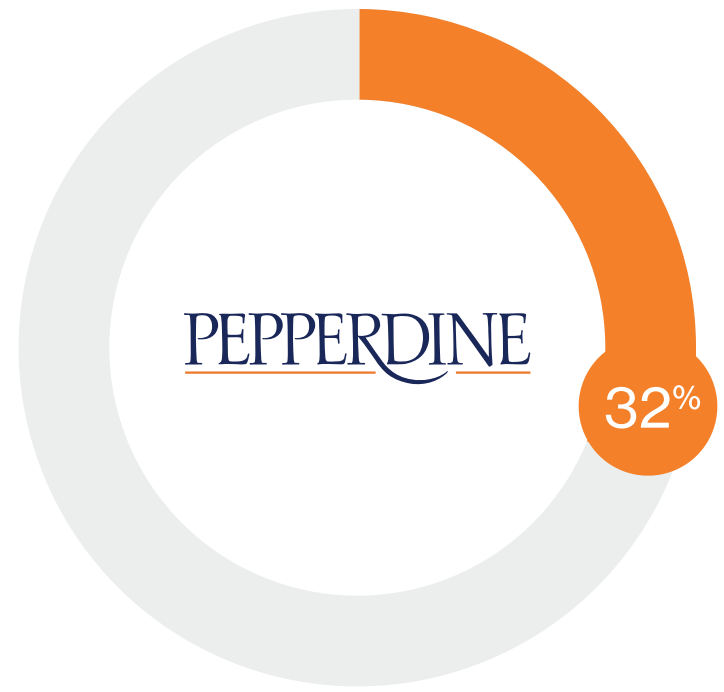
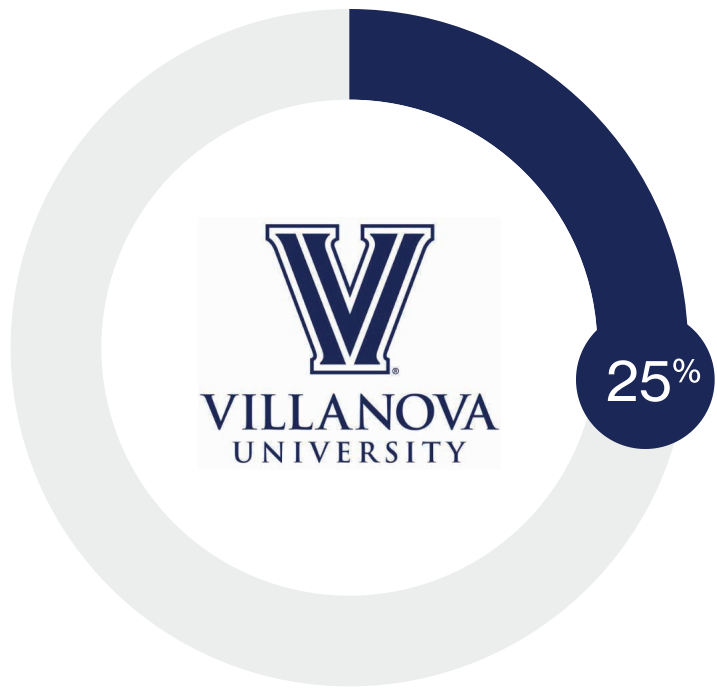
¹ UCLA Newsroom January 28, 2021
² NYU news release January 13, 2021
³ News@Northeastern February 3, 2021
⁴ USC Annenberg media March 30, 2021
⁵ Columbia College News & Updates March 10, 2021
⁶ Brown Daily Herald January 21st, 2021
⁷ Daily Princetonian February 1, 2021
⁸ Oregon Public Broadcasting, February 10 2021
⁹ The Rice Thresher March 31, 2021
¹⁰ Middlebury Newsroom January 29, 2021


Acceptance Rates



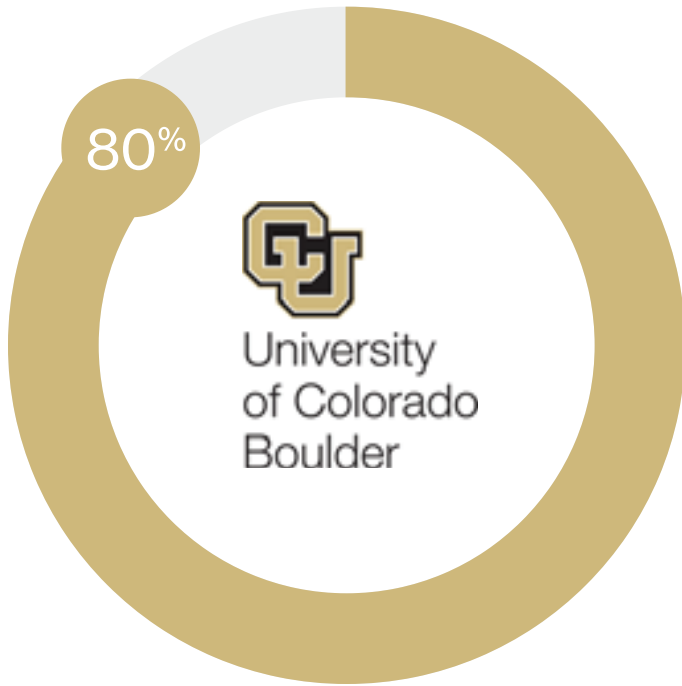
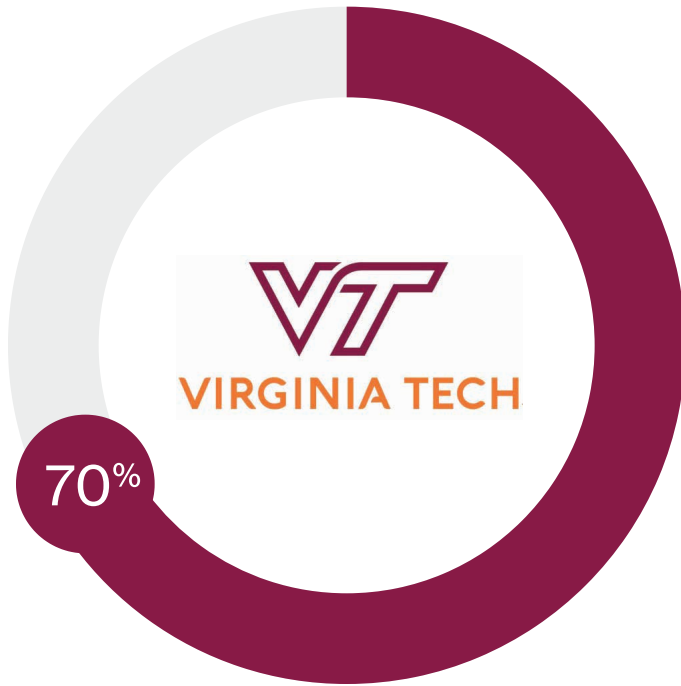
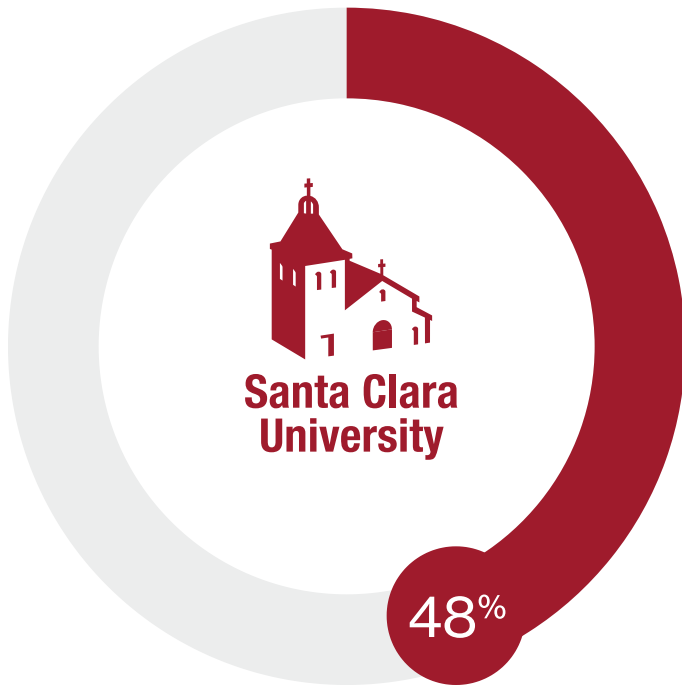
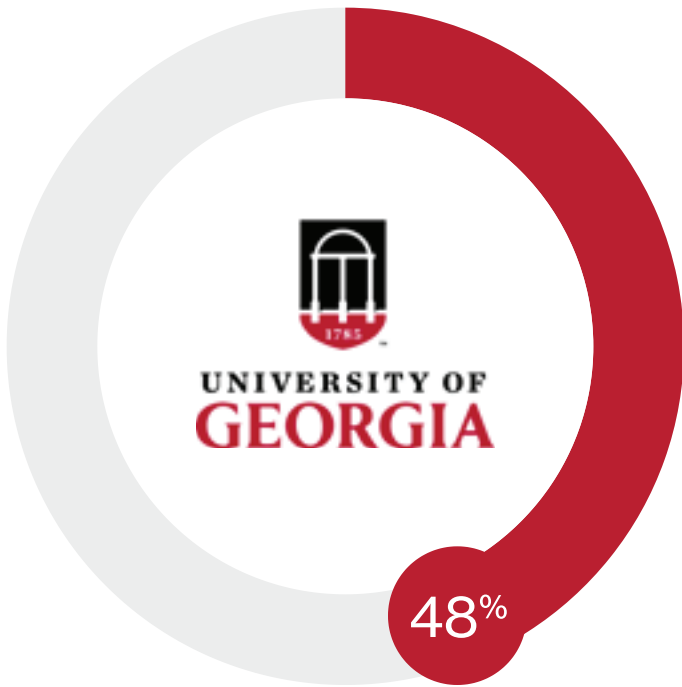
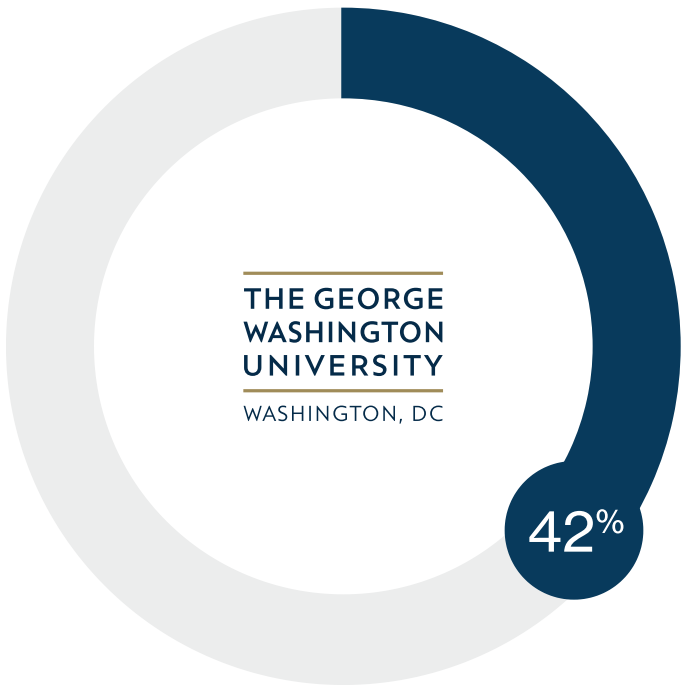
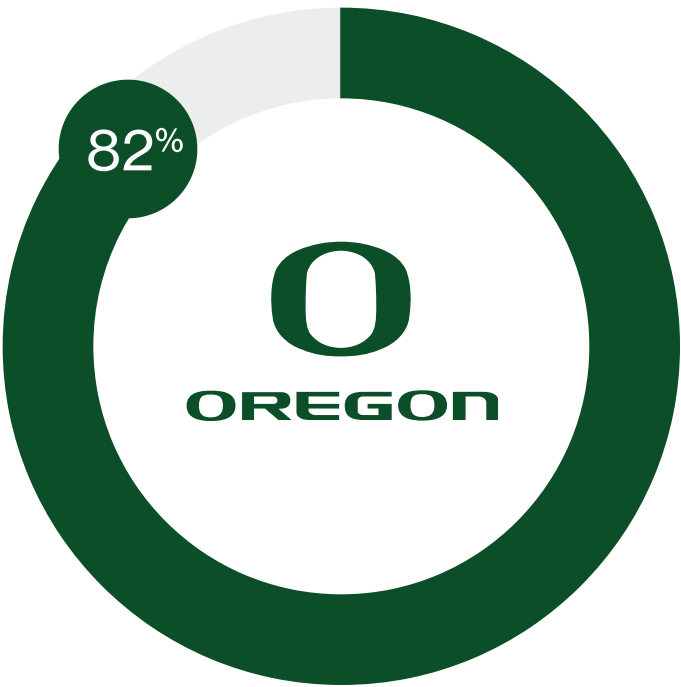
 Updated April 2021
* Data from 2020

Acceptance Rates



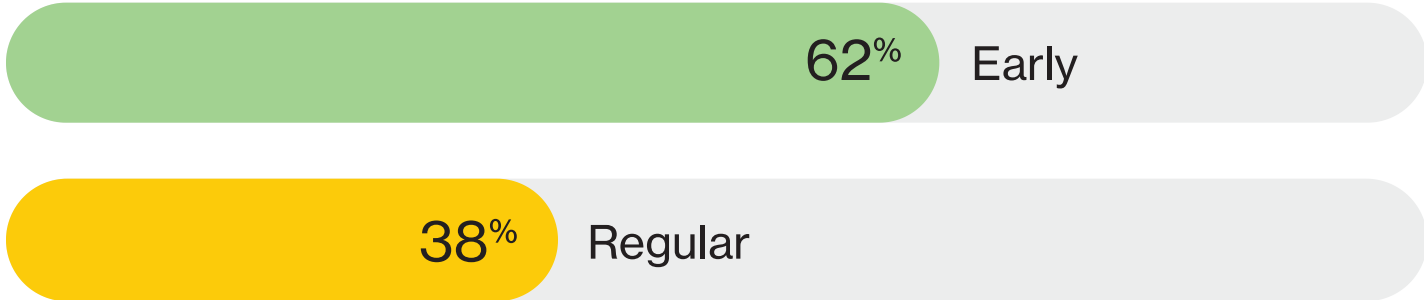
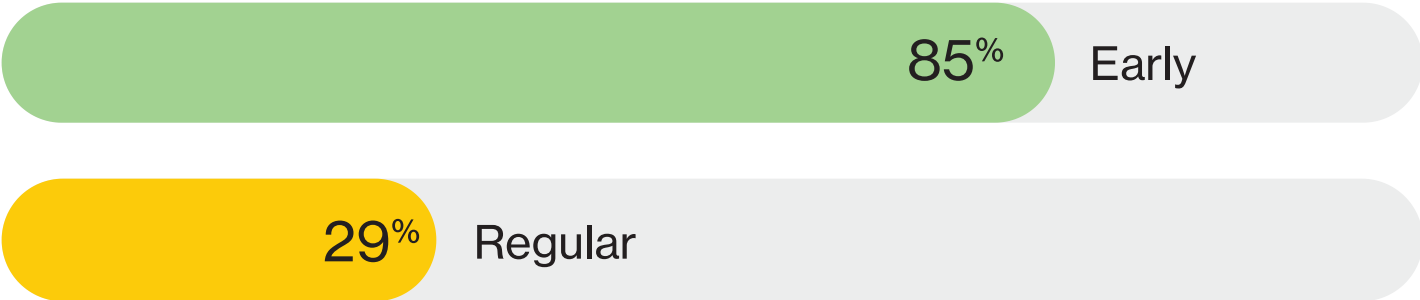
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Acceptance Rates

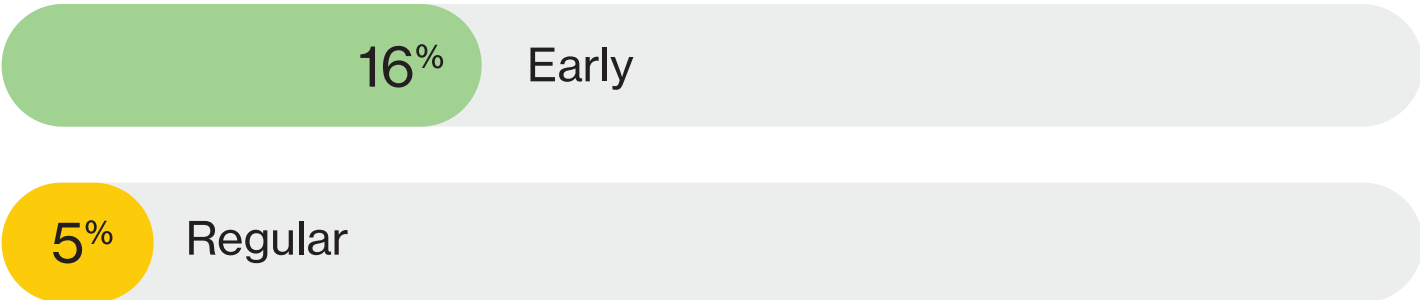
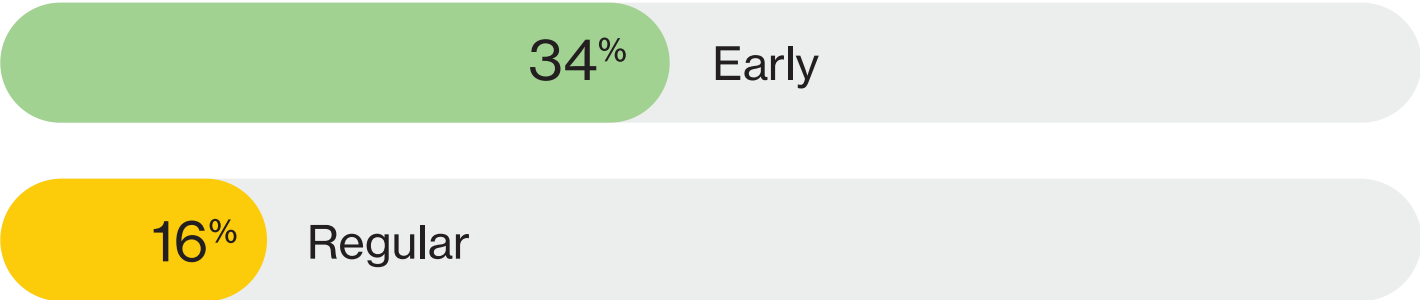


Early vs Regular Acceptance Rates

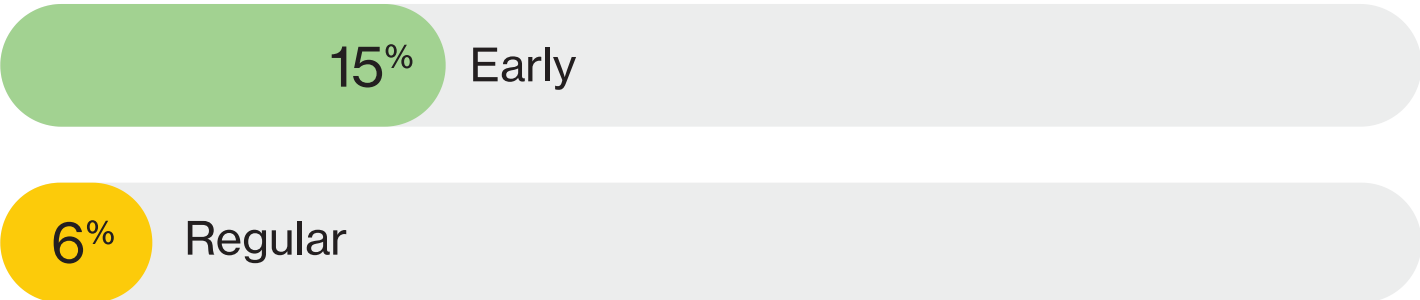
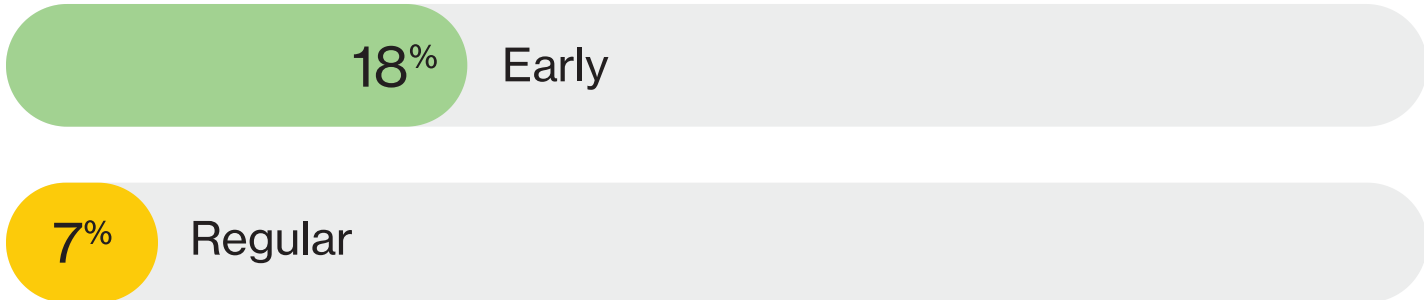
Higher admissions rate for early applications



Middlebury



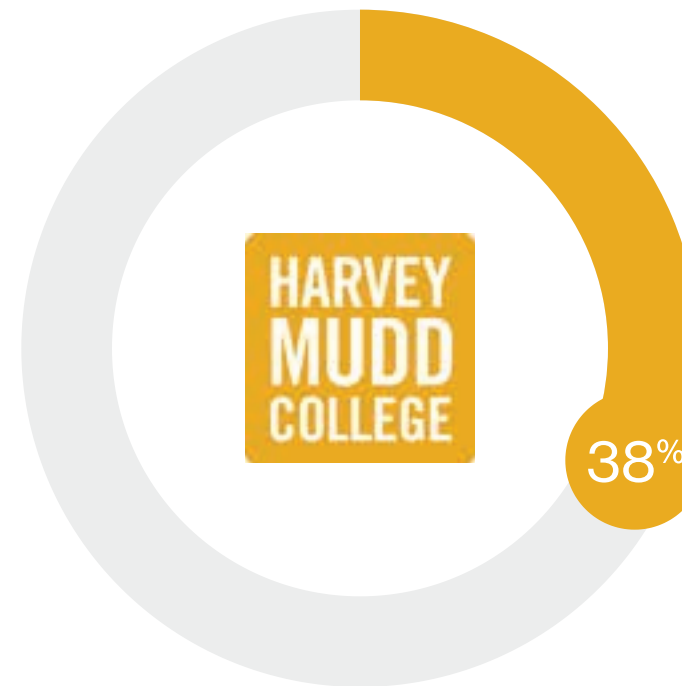
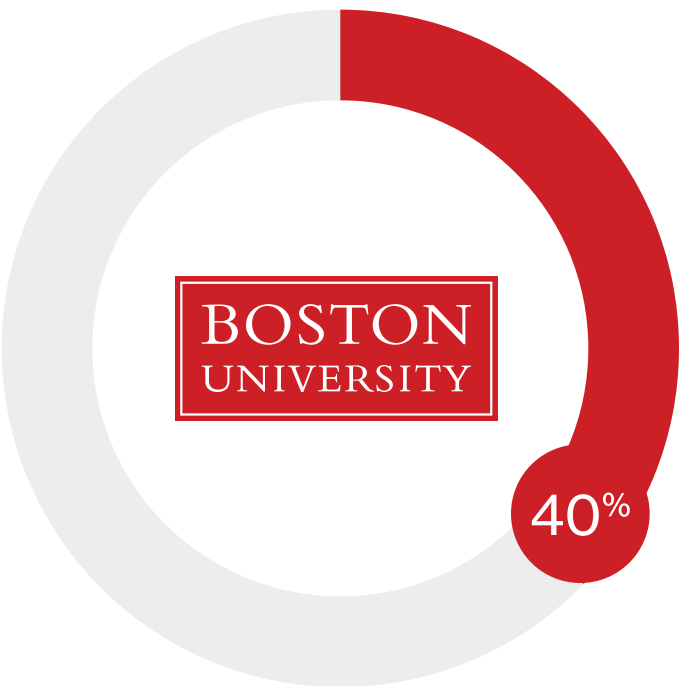
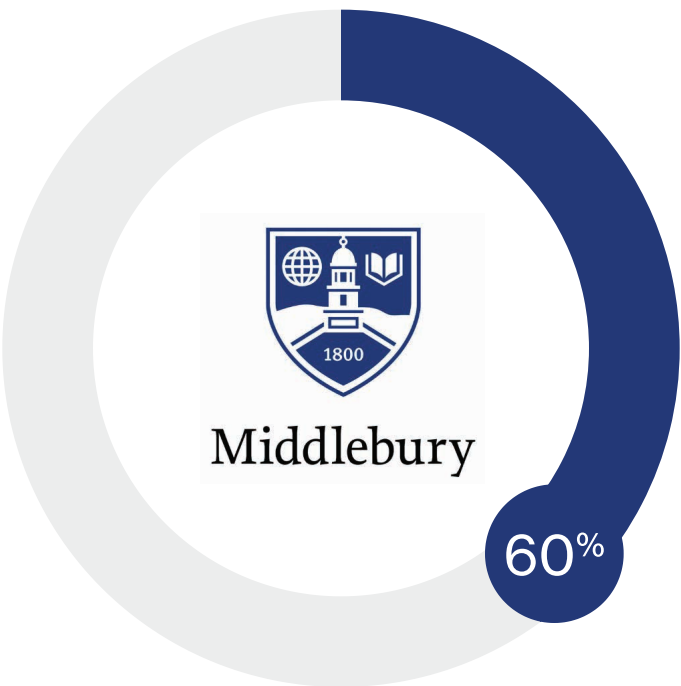
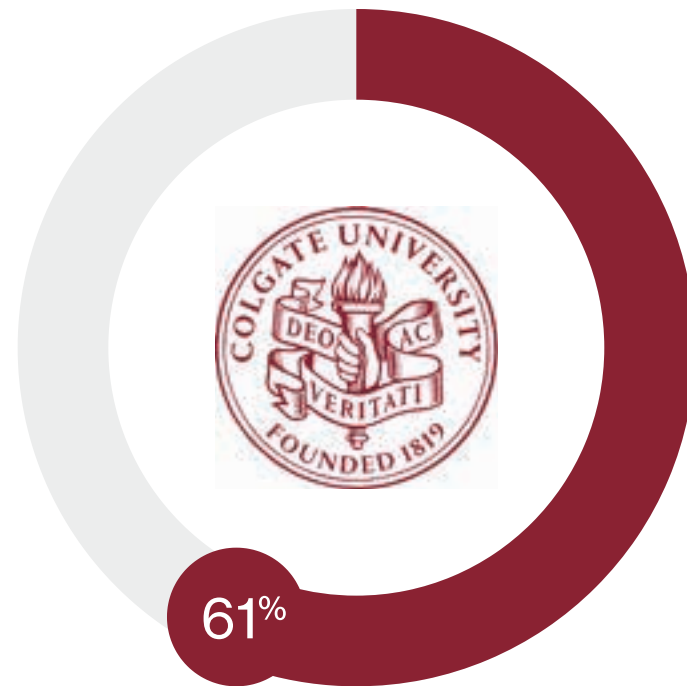
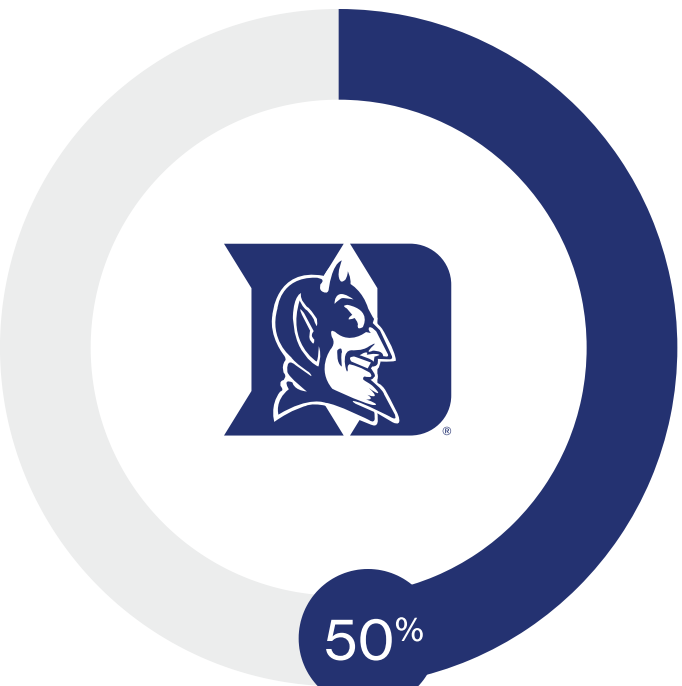
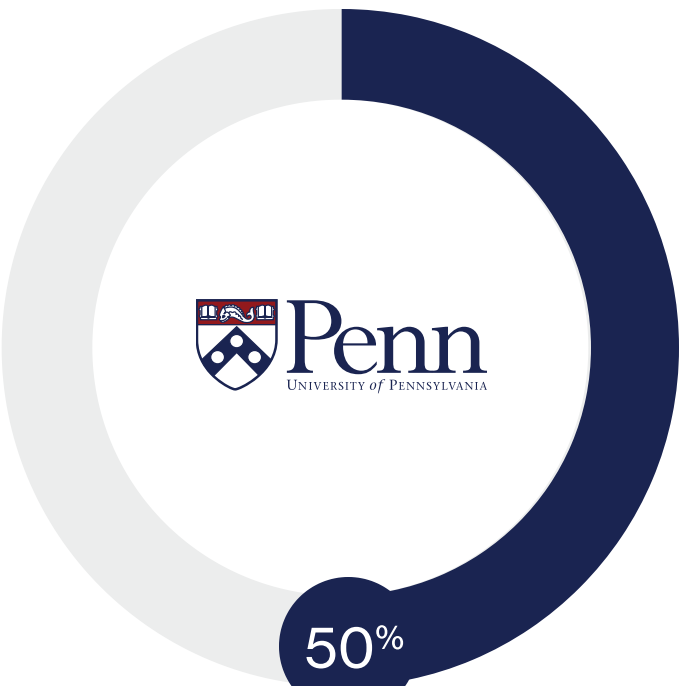
VANDERBILT
UNIVERSITY



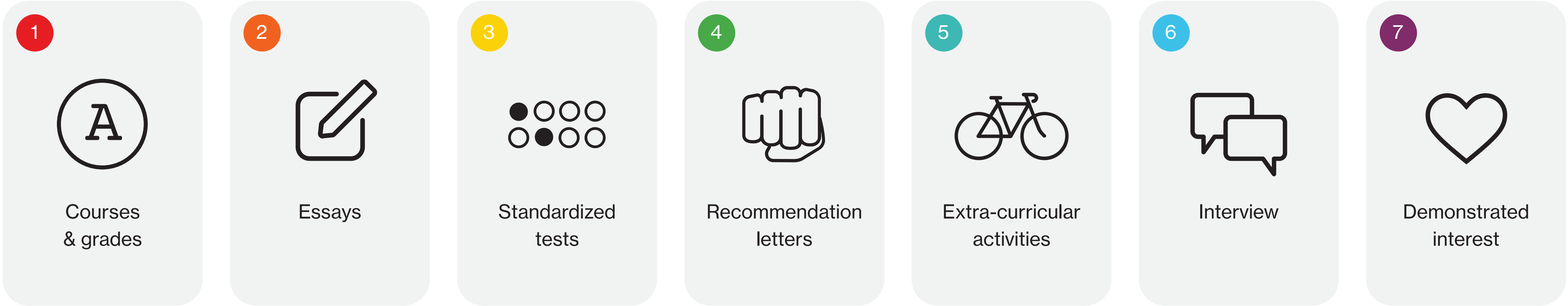
Updated April 2021
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Fill percentage for early admissions

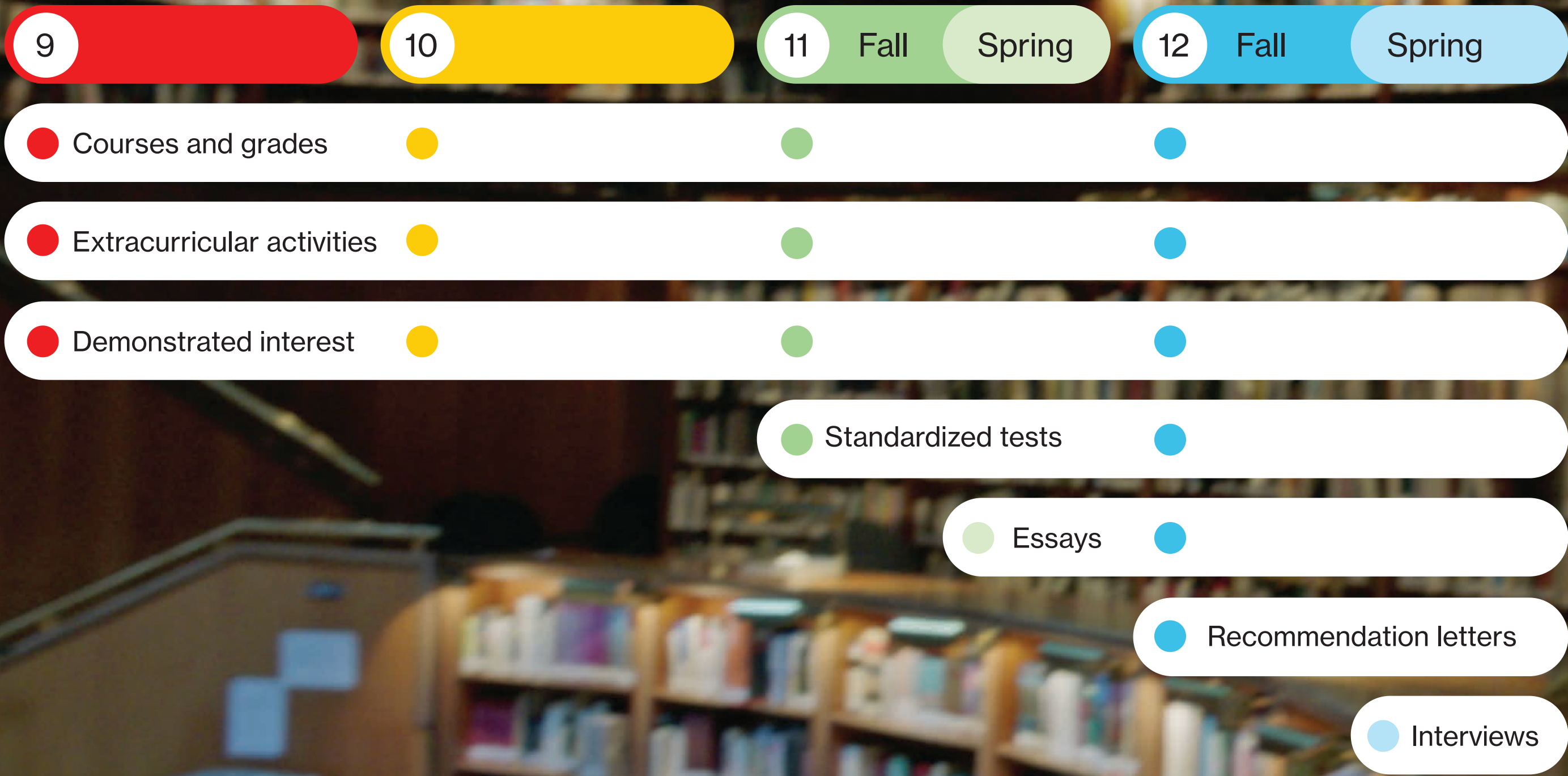
% of freshman class filled



7 Application Components



Application Timeline



Creating the College List

A well-rounded list is ideal.

Reach

You have average or slightly below average academic credentials, *and/or* the school has a lower admission rate. Very selective colleges are reach schools for *everyone*

Target

Your academic credentials are solidly average for an admitted student, and the admission rate is lower than safety but higher than reach

Safety

You have competitive academic credentials (e.g. GPA and test scores), and the school has a higher admission rate

Creating the College List

Fit is the most important.

Fit Over Everything

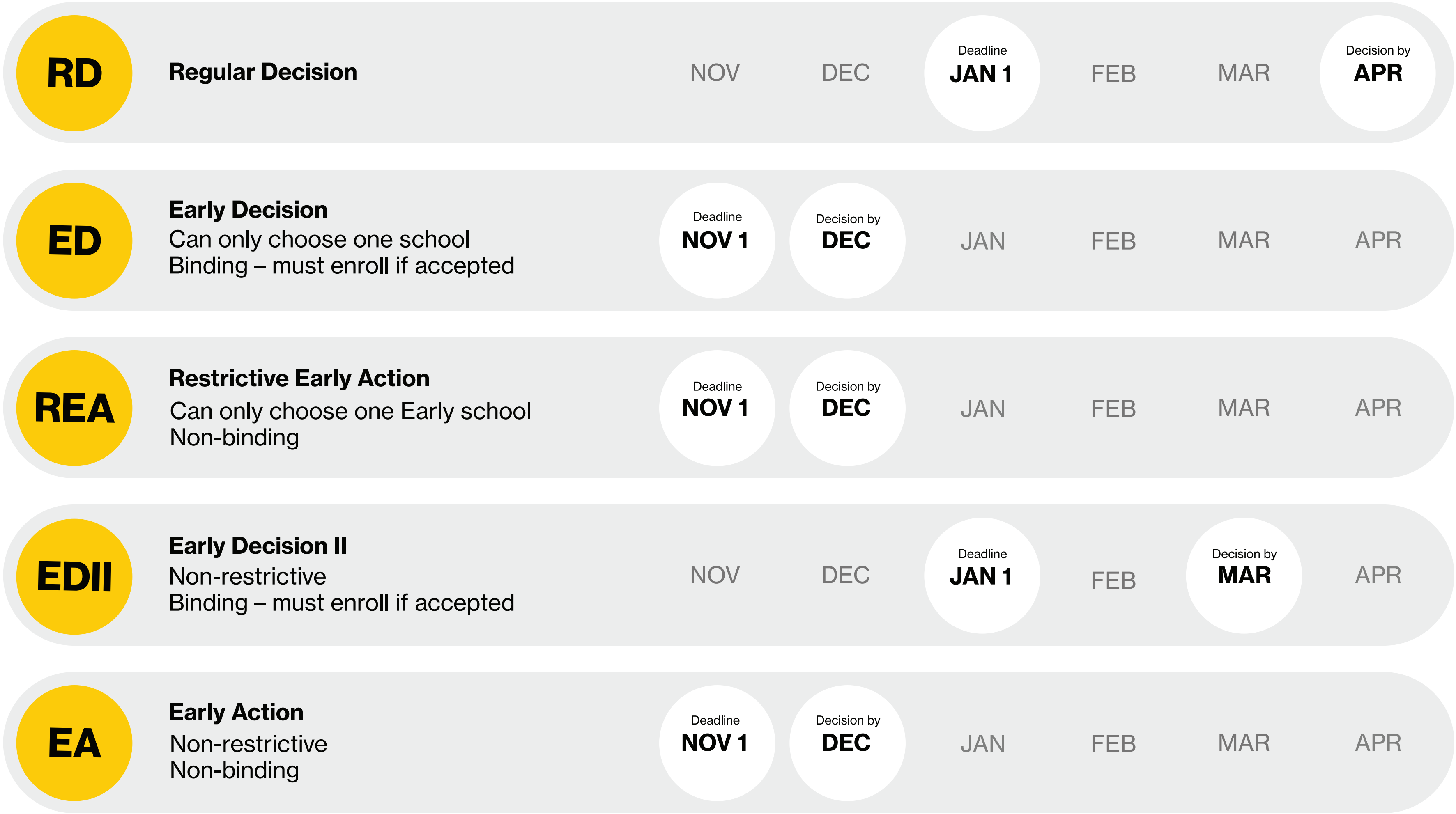
- Not just about “brand names”
- Academic interests and social life
- Tours and info sessions

Things to consider:

- Learning style
- Curriculum
- School culture
- Size and location
- Affordability



Admissions Deadline



The Hook

- Universities want varied campuses, not varied individuals
 - Avoid being a jack of all trades, master of none
- Having a hook helps admissions officers advocate for you
- Can be academic, intellectual, athletic, or service-oriented
- Demonstrates leadership, creativity, initiative, or connection to a wider community



1 A Courses and Grades

Courses

- No perfect formula, although some subject variety is generally preferred
- Take advanced classes (e.g. Further Maths or Higher Level IB) if you can
- Four years of a language – either in class or outside of school

Grades

- Balance between doing well and challenging yourself
- Slightly lower marks in harder classes is preferable to high marks in all easy classes



2 Essays

Personal Statement (Common/Coalition App)

- Creative writing exercise – not a cover letter like UCAS
- Who are you as a person?
- Convey essential qualities through reflection
- Authentic voice – sound like you!
- Avoid clichés

Supplemental essays

- Specific to each university
- Why this school is a good fit from both of your perspectives
- Common prompts: “Why us?” and “Elaborate on an extracurricular”
- Balance elements of yourself across all essays



3



Standardized Tests

SAT/ACT

- Universities have no preference
- Take a diagnostic of both to find right fit test
- “Test optional”

SAT vs ACT

I typically...

Read by skimming quickly

ACT

Read slowly and notice details

SAT

Have a deep understanding of algebra

SAT

Have a broad familiarity of all levels of math

ACT

Comfortable with science and graphs

ACT

Prefer math over verbal subjects

SAT

Standardized Tests

SAT

3

Hours

67

Seconds per question

1600

Highest Score

1060

Median Score

Reading
Writing and Language
Math – No Calculator
Math – Calculator

ACT

2:55

Hours Minutes

48

Seconds per question

36

Highest Score

21

Median Score

English
Math
Reading
Science

4



Recommendation Letters

- Holistic descriptions of the applicant as a student and as an individual
- One 'counselor' and two teachers
 - Can provide personal context to your application
 - Will say how exceptional you are compared to other students

Counselor can be anyone in a pastoral role

- e.g. Form Tutor or Head of Sixth Form
- Teacher describes you in a classroom setting
- Counsellor describes you in a wider school setting



5



Extra-curricular Activities

- How will this student contribute to campus?
- Can be independent activities (not related to your school)
- Examples: sports, languages, music, volunteering, part-time jobs, taking care of a family member, etc.
- Freshman year (Year 10): try everything that interests you
- Sophomore year (Year 11): focus on your passions
- Junior/Senior Years (Years 12-13): demonstrate leadership or initiative
- Quality over quantity



6 Interviews

- Not subject-specific
- Informal conversation with alumni and/or admissions office staff
- Remember: you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you!



7



Demonstrated Interest

- Visit campus if possible
- Most universities offer virtual tours on their websites
- Join schools' admission's email list
- Follow schools' social media accounts



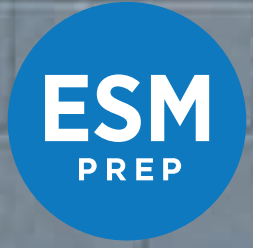
FAQ

- Is it possible to apply to international and US universities at the same time?
- How many schools should I apply to?
- Is it worth attending a university that isn't an Ivy League?
- Do I need perfect grades and test scores?
- How many extracurricular activities should I do?



Final Thoughts

- Know your target schools' median test scores – but higher is always better.
- Apply to a range of schools – Fit Over Everything.
- Take chances – unusual passions attract admissions' interest.
- Admissions is a numbers game. There are no perfect formulas.
- Finally, enjoy the process! You are shaping the beginning of the rest of your life.



Thank you!

**A mentor can
change everything.**

ESMprep.com

