Harvard Math: Reframing the College List

Presented by:
Ian Harkness, Malvern Preparatory School
Joanna Newton, The Princeton Review

*Additional Credit to Steve Frappier - The Westminster Schools, Atlanta, GA (ACCIS 2017)
THE BIGGEST MISTAKE WE SEE STUDENTS AND PARENTS MAKE IS APPROACHING COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AS A GAME OF WINNERS OR LOSERS
FACT #1

It has never been easier to get into college than it is now.
FACT #2

It’s never been more difficult to get into college than it is now.
SO WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?
WHAT IS A SELECTIVE COLLEGE?

• A selective college is one that admits some students and rejects others
WHY ARE COLLEGES SELECTIVE?

• Many schools have the luxury of choosing a small class from a large group of quality applications
Regular admit qty $\times$ %background $\times$ %gender $\times$ %non-FirstGen $\times$ %major = "people like you admitted"
## Why Harvard?

The World of highly selective college admission has changed drastically in the last two decades (Admission Rates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>50%+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanova</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Harvard Math (Case Study)

Regular admit qty x %background x %gender x %non-FirstGen x %major = "people like you admitted"

Early Action: (LINK - Harvard Crimson)
Applicants: 6,473
938 admitted
14.5% admit rate

Regular Decision: LINK - Harvard Crimson)
Applicants: 33,033
Admitted: 1,118
3.4% admit rate

Total
Applicants: 39,506
2,056 admitted
5.2% admit rate
People Like You Admitted

Regular admit qty x %background x %gender x %non-FirstGen x %major = "people like you admitted"

• 12.7% Latinx (261 admits = 83 Early + 178 Regular)
  *special attention paid to Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, and Other Latinx

• 22.2% Asian and Asian-American (456 admits = 204 Early + 252 Regular)
  *South Asian, East Asian, and other Asian combined

• 14.6% African and African-American (300 admits = 118 Early + 182 Regular)

• 1.9% Native American/Hawaiian (39 admits = 10 Early + 29 Regular)

• 11.4% International = (234 admits) ***no ascertainable Early/Regular breakdown

• by subtraction, this leaves 37.2% Caucasian/Other/Unreported = (766 admits)
Early Action

Applicants: 6,473
938 admitted
14.5% admit rate

45.6% of total admits
16% of the total applications

Key Information:
- 150-200 of these would be recruited athletes - received “likely letters” (meaning non-athlete admit rate 11-12%)
- Since 415 admits among domestic minorities are reported that means 523 admits for all other groups (International, Caucasian, Other, Unreported)
- Legacy students encouraged to apply early
Applicants: 33,033
Admitted: 1,118
3.4% admit rate

Key Information
- Since 641 admits among domestic minorities are reported that means 477 admits for all other groups (International, Caucasian, Other, Unreported)
- The data seem to confirm the long-held hunch that Caucasian and international candidates who satisfy institutional needs (legacies, athletes) benefit from being in the Early round, compared to in Regular
Gender

Regular admit qty x %background x %gender x %non-FirstGen x %major = "people like you admitted"

Total Admitted Pool:

49.2% Women (450 Early + 562 Regular)

50.8% Men (488 Early + 556 regular)
First Generation

Regular admit qty x %background x %gender x %non-FirstGen x %major = "people like you admitted"

Total Admitted Pool:

15.1% First-Generation = (2,056 x .151% = 310 total admitted)
Early Action - 8.7% of admits (82 admitted)

That means Regular Decision - 228 admits

Key Information:
- if 228 RD admits were FirstGen among 1,118 total RD admits, that means 20% of Regular Admits were FirstGen
- Opinion: serve legacies and other priorities in Early, then serve socioeconomic priorities in regular
Academic Concentration

Regular admit qty $\times$ %background $\times$ %gender $\times$ %non-FirstGen $\times$ %major = "people like you admitted"

Harvard's application still lists Concentration clusters as "A" through "H," which is why these data points are trackable:

**Admitted pool by concentration:**
- Humanities = 15.5% (319 admits)
- Social Sciences = 26.5% (545 admits)
- Computer Science & Engineering 19.3% (397 admits)

*These fields were formerly separated in previous years, now public data is combined*
- Therefore, it looks like 38.7% for "other concentrations" (mathematics, biological sciences, physical sciences, and undecided) (796 admits)
Hypothetical Situation

We have an upset parent of a perfect regular decision Chinese-American Male, non-FirstGen student, wishing to major in Engineering.

We can't assume every concentration admits this proportionally, but let's say they do. We apply the mathematical filters that the article provides:

Regular admit quantity x %background x %gender x %non-FirstGen x %major = "people like you admitted"

1,118 admits x 22.2% x 50.8% x 80% x 19.3% = "Nationwide, about 19 young men like your son were admitted in regular decision"

*****and that 19 number includes additional attention that might be paid to public vs. independent school background, sub-fields of engineering, and competition versus RD-round legacies and recruited athletes.
HOW ARE STUDENTS CHOOSING THEIR SCHOOLS?
THE #1 GOAL OF COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS TODAY IS TO FIND A SCHOOL THAT WILL TRULY BE THE BEST FIT FOR THEM.
WE RECOMMEND STUDENTS APPLY TO 8-10 SCHOOLS

- 3-4 Dream Schools
- 3-4 Match Schools
- 3-4 Likely Schools
TOOLS TO HELP IDENTIFY BEST FIT SCHOOLS
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