3. Getting into College (Enrolling)

**DECISIONS**

Now that the application is complete, what happens next? Colleges begin the work of reviewing the application and making an admissions decision. The admissions decision is communicated to students differently depending on the college (eg. e-mail, snail mail, online portal). Once received, here are a few terms to become familiar with:

**Accepted** – The student has met the requirements and is accepted for admission.

**Accepted for Spring Semester** – The student has been accepted to the college, not for the Fall semester, but beginning in the Spring. Some larger universities do this instead of a waitlist.

**Waitlist** – The student has been placed on the “Waitlist,” which means the student will be accepted if space in the incoming class becomes available after May or June. It is important to understand that a space in the incoming class is not guaranteed so applicants should consider other colleges in the event the space does not become available.

**Deferred** – The college needs additional materials to evaluate the submitted application (usually new SAT scores, final grades, or an additional teacher recommendation).

**Denied** – The college is unable to offer admission to the applicant at this time.

**Make sure you know the date the college is notifying students of their decisions. Some have strict deadlines, while others are rolling, which means they review applicants as they become complete on a rolling basis.**

**Early Decision:** When applying as Early Decision, the applicant may receive a letter that says admissions cannot accept the applicant as Early Decision, but will reevaluate the application for Regular Decision. This means a second decision letter will be sent at the Regular Decision notification date.

**May 1:** For students who applied Regular Decision, May 1 is the universal reply date for accepted students. Students must submit a deposit to the college of choice by May 1 to secure a spot.

**IMPORTANT!**

Don’t deposit at more than one college. Deposits are non-refundable!
WITHDRAW ACCEPTANCE

Once the student confirms he/she is going to attend the college of his/her choice, the student should also inform the other colleges to which he/she has been accepted that he/she will not attend. This can be done by letter, phone or email, and should be done as soon as the student makes his/her final decision.

SAMPLE REQUEST TO WITHDRAW ACCEPTANCE:

To the Admissions Office:

My name is [Full Name] and I was accepted for the Fall semester. Please withdraw my application - I have decided to attend [Insert College] in the Fall.

Thank you,

[Full Name]
[Full Address]
[Date of Birth]

BUT I WAS WAIT LISTED AT THE COLLEGE I WANT TO ATTEND!

You’ll have a hard decision to make, but one that many students are also facing. If you are accepted to your second choice college and put on the waitlist at your first choice, there is no guarantee that any students will get off the waitlist of your first choice. If you wait until after May 1 to deposit at your second choice college, you may lose your spot. The truth is that very few students come off the waitlist positively – seek alternatives.

Call the Admissions Office! They can guide and assist you with making this decision.

AFTER THE DECISION

Once a student is enrolled at the college of his or her choice, he or she will receive information about new student Orientation. Orientation is a time for first year students to familiarize themselves with campus before the semester begins. Some colleges host Orientation in the summer, while others hold theirs just before classes start. Activities during Orientation may include:

- Registering for classes
- Meeting with a faculty advisor
- Group Advising sessions
- Residence Hall Meetings
- Special Activities such as socials with classmates or an Honor Code Ceremony
- Technology training sessions

It’s important to note that not all colleges operate using the same Orientation schedule, so families should pay careful attention to the information received in the spring and summer before the student’s first year. Parents and guardians will also want to check and see which activities (if any) include their participation. At this stage, colleges expect students to act independently because they are first year college students. The Admissions Office can address any questions about the college’s schedule, no questions are too small.
TIPS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

- Attend parent and family orientation programs offered during new student orientation on campus.
- Listen to your student when he/she needs you, and encourage the student to solve problems and seek assistance on campus.
- Encourage your student to get involved on campus by joining a student club or organization or by getting involved in various campus activities and programs.
- If your student lives on campus, encourage him/her to stay on campus, especially on weekends.
- If a student must earn money while in college, encourage the student to limit his/her hours of work so that part-time work does not interfere with success in college. College is the student's occupation.
- Support your student in making his/her own decisions and to seek out professors, advisors, and counselors on campus for support and assistance.
- Keep the lines of communication open - through phone, email, visits home, parent/family member visits to campus, etc.
- Expect change in your student as he/she becomes more independent and grows in maturity.

OTHER SUMMER PROGRAMS

Many colleges offer summer programs or workshops for first year students. Some are referred to as summer bridge programs where first year students can get a taste of what’s in store for their freshman year. This program often includes opportunities to take some general education courses. Special programs may also be offered for multi-cultural students. For example, Meredith College hosts two Summer Symposiums for multi-cultural students, where they get to spend the night in the residence halls and participate in team building activities. College campuses are open year round, so there are typically experiences available for new students in the summer months.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF STUDENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

The college experience is an important time in the lives of students and their families. College is a time when students transition from being dependent on their families to being able to live more independently as adults.

Most colleges and universities view college students as young adults and encourage students to work on life skills and solving problems or challenges on their own. Students are expected to focus on their education and to take on tasks – in and out of the classroom – with increased responsibility. Colleges expect full-time college students to spend most of their time on college courses, homework, involvement in college life and activities, effective communication with others, and learning more about ideas, concepts, the community and the world. Attending college is a full-time job and students are expected to be involved in their own academic, social and personal development.

Having a student in college is exciting and challenging for parents and family members. While the college student is transitioning to life at a college or university, parents and family members are encouraged to transition in supporting the student’s new role and environment by allowing the student to make decisions and solve problems on his/her own, to seek and use resources and services on campus, and to ask for help when it is needed.
FERPA (THE LAW)
As students transition from high school to college, student information (such as grades, academic progress, etc.) is protected by a Federal law called FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act). This law gives the students the right to have some control over the sharing of education records and information.

While parents/guardians may have been able to receive student educational information in elementary, middle and high school, the right to this information shifts from parents to students when a student becomes 18 years of age or attends a school beyond high school. Since student and parent roles change when a student starts college, it is important that the student and parent have a conversation about how education information may be shared or discussed with each other. Many colleges and universities recommend that the student and parent establish a direct communication about the student’s progress, grades and other important educational and college experience information. Some colleges offer the opportunity for students to sign a release/waiver for the college to be able to share information with parents/guardians of students – this varies depending upon the college or university in which the student enrolls.

HELPFUL CONVERSATIONS
While the relationship between the college student and family changes, the communication pattern may also change. It is helpful for the family to have some conversations in the few months before the student begins college. These conversations help to increase the expectations and understanding between the student and family members.

CONVERSATION TOPICS
FAMILIES AND STUDENTS SHOULD DISCUSS BEFORE COLLEGE BEGINS:

- How will we communicate with each other and how often?
- What is the student most excited about when thinking about the college experience? What is the student most concerned about?
- How often will the student come home?
- How will money be managed (student checking account, parent’s account, budget plan)? What amount of spending money will the student have while in college?
- If the student plans to have a car while at college, how will the car be maintained (paying for gas, scheduling oil changes, etc.)?
- If student plans to hold a part-time job while in college, will this be on or off campus? How many hours of work are reasonable when also attending college as a full-time student?
- How will the student communicate with parents/guardians about academic grades, progress, challenges, successes, etc.?
- How will the student be involved on campus?
CAMPUS SAFETY AND SECURITY
It is very important that students have a safe place to study, learn and live. While most colleges have safety measures and plans in place, students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal safety and welfare – safety is a shared responsibility between colleges and students.

Most colleges have campus police/security forces, emergency notification systems, campus sirens, and alarms. Students on college campuses are encouraged to lock the doors to their residence hall rooms, apartments and vehicles, and to report any suspicious behavior to campus police/security. Colleges encourage students to be aware of their surroundings and to use common sense when walking on, around and traveling to and from campus. Some campuses offer safety escorts around campus or to parking lots, and students are encouraged to use the “buddy system” or to let a friend know where they are going. Campuses usually have well-equipped and well-lit buildings with fire alarms and sprinkler systems. Students living on campus are often required to attend fire and safety trainings.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE
For many students with disabilities, it can be difficult to make the transition from the laws and procedures in high school to those that apply to college students. In high school, special education and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outline how educational support and accommodations are provided. However, colleges and universities are not subject to those laws and practices. In college, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 form the legal foundation for protections to individuals with disabilities. These regulations are civil rights protections, not entitlement programs, and ensure that college students with disabilities are provided equal access. This distinction forms the basis for the legal and procedural differences that every college student with disabilities and their families should understand. Families are encouraged to contact the Disabilities Office of the college to determine what support and services may be available while enrolled.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
Health Resource Center at the National Youth Transitions Center:
http://www.heath.gwu.edu

U.S. Department of Education:
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transition.html

University of Washington:
http://www.washington.edu/doit/Student/college.html

For more information about Meredith College, visit www.meredith.edu/admissions or call us at 1-800-MEREDITH.