

# COLLEGE BOUND

Helpful tips for getting into college and the smartest ways to pay for it.

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## What to Do if You're Stuck on the Waiting List

*These strategies have been found to be effective*

Okay, boys and girls. This is no time to be complacent. If you really want to give yourself a chance to be on campus come September, you've got to be prepared to go to work. Senioritis is just going to have to wait.

### **Even Though it's Called Wait List DON'T Just Sit Around and Wait**

Step 1 is to demonstrate interest. Write a letter telling the dean of admissions that if admitted, you will go. This seems a little Obvious Adams. But you'd be surprised how many students-on-hold fail to take this basic step.

The number of students on waiting lists has grown in recent years. One reason: high school seniors today apply to so many colleges and universities that the admissions departments have a hard time guessing which of the applicants are serious about attending if accepted. Universities want a safety net to protect

their "yield curve."

The National Association of College Admission Counseling offers another reason: Parents who've recently lost a job may decide they can't afford their child's first-choice school. Colleges are expanding their wait lists to give themselves more options should dropouts occur.

So do yourself a favor: raise your hand and unequivocally declare your intentions to the powers that be. Also email updates on your second-semester senior grades, awards, achievements, captancy, new skill, school production, published work (even in the school newspaper or literary journal), volunteer work, internship, after-school job, graduation speech, or any other recent successes. Describe how each new credential might benefit the college.

Is there something you want to elaborate more on? Is there some credential that

you buried in your application that now merits more mention? Let them know that you're an even *better* candidate today than when you originally applied.

(You might want to FAX this information, as opposed to email, and also send a copy via snail mail. The idea is to create a paper trail. Be sure to include your full name, address, phone number and Social Security number, or application number if the college has assigned you one, so the college can easily locate your file and add the new material to the application. Also send a copy to the local recruiter to keep him/her in the loop.)

The official policy of most universities is that they do not require any additional information. Most are also quick to add that they don't penalize students who fail to follow up. "We wouldn't want to overlook a student who doesn't know she can even do that," declared Jennifer Desjarlais, dean of admission at Wellesley

# Spotlight On James Madison University



Location: Harrisonburg, VA

Undergraduates: 16,916

Male/Female: 39/61

Entrance Difficulty: Difficult

Acceptance Rate:

65% of 19,245 applicants

Avg. GPA: 3.70 (unweighted)

SAT Math Range: 530-620

SAT CR Range: 520-610

First-year students returning: 91.4%

Grad in 4 Years: 67%

Cost of Attendance: \$31,738

Avg. Percent of Need Met: 45%

Strongest Programs:

Teacher Education, Business,  
Integrated Science & Technology, Health  
Sciences, Public Policy

Fun Facts:

- Founded in 1908 as the State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Harrisonburg
- Its 472-acre campus is located 2 hours from Washington, D.C., in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley
- Undergrads in the biology department employed recombinant DNA technology to help develop organisms that produce biodegradable plastics
- Outdoor Adventures, held before classes begin, gives freshmen an opportunity to meet while hiking and mountain climbing in the Shenandoah Mountains
- 67% of JMU students come from Virginia
- Princeton Review ranked JMU as one of "America's Best Value Colleges"
- Recognized as one of 81 colleges in America "with a conscience," and ranked behind only the UVA in the number of Peace Corps volunteers
- Famous alums: Charles Haley, Scott Norwood, Leroi Moore & Butch Taylor (Dave Matthews Band)

Continued from pg. 1...

College, in an interview last year.

But like a trick SAT question, don't be fooled by the obvious answer. Off the record, most deans will admit that writing a letter about why a college is your first choice and making a promise to attend if accepted can vault you from the "maybe" camp to the "yes" camp.

"It's too bad if students don't know to follow up," said Tom Parker, dean of admission at Amherst College. "If you're going to get off the wait list, you're really going to have to demonstrate a significant interest."

## Colleges Keep Students Guessing

Not too many colleges divulge how many students-in-limbo will get promoted off the waiting list. Last year, Amherst College announced they expected to take 35 students from its wait list of 1,000. Harvard took over 200. The majority of schools keep you guessing.

Likewise, they don't provide a "How to Get Off Our Waiting List" handy guide. You have to take your own initiative. The deadline for regularly admitted students to notify colleges of their intentions is May 1. After that, the admissions officers reconvene to determine who gets the nod.

So how does it work? You might be surprised – shocked even – at how unsophisticated the process is. For instance, few schools, even the most competitive, *rank* the wait list. The list often consists of nothing more than a pile of note cards or single sheets of paper. Where you sit in that pile is often no more than random chance. So the name of the game is getting and staying on top of the pile.

Each time you contact the college to update your information, your card is

pulled from the pile and a notation is made. The card is then put on top of the pile. The more proactive you are, the better the chances of keeping your card at or near the top. When spaces open up, the admission department fills them by taking the cards from the top of the pile and offering those candidates admission.

## WARNING – What NOT to do

While it's perfectly acceptable to demonstrate interest and provide updates, desperate efforts to stand out seldom advance your cause. One Harvard wannabe taped a pen between his toes and wrote an essay with his foot (evidently trying to get his foot in the door). It failed. As did another who sent a life-size plaster statue of herself.

And whatever you do, don't cross the boundary. Doing so immediately relegates you to NAP time (as in, Not a Prayer). For example, badgering admissions officers is a no-no. Don't call them constantly, accost them in the staff parking lot, or bombard them with daily emails.

"That's the kiss of death," offers Richard Nesbitt, director of admission at Williams College.

That bribery is also considered verboten might seem obvious to most, but there are always a few overzealous parents. Last year, a mother of a Williams' hopeful sent Nesbitt a \$2,500 check, along with a rambling letter extolling her son's virtues. Nesbitt voided the check.

Some parents have the idea of flying junior to campus and camping outside the admission director's office, insisting on an interview. This is not an effective strategy. "It's terribly, terribly awkward for everybody involved," says Parker of Amherst College.

# Student of the Month

## News You Can Use



**Allyson Brown**

*Student: Allyson Brown*  
*High School: New Providence*  
*Class: 2010*  
*GPA: 4.41*  
*Favorite Subjects: AP English, AP Biology*  
*Favorite Activities:*  
*Model U.N., YMCA Youth Conference on National Affairs, swimming, debating*  
*Favorite Book: A Farewell to Arms*  
*College acceptances:*  
*American, Boston College, Dickinson, George Washington, Lafayette, Richmond, Villanova*  
*Colleges wait listed:*  
*Emory, Johns Hopkins, Tufts, Virginia*

**Q: I understand you had an accident towards the end of your junior year.**

**A:** Yes, I was in gym class and got hit twice in the back of the head with a volleyball. The doctors said I had a concussion.

**Q: Did that slow you down in school?**

**A:** I had trouble concentrating in class and suffered headaches. I had to cut back to half days and wasn't able to take the SAT, SAT II's, or AP tests. I also had to cancel a summer trip with Habitat for Humanity because I wasn't allowed to fly. Basically I spent the summer finishing my schoolwork, and postponed the testing until fall.

**Q: I know you're a serious student, so**

**that must have been frustrating.**

**A:** True, but I learned something about myself—that I'm an unrelenting person, and I won't let outside things deter me from what I want to do. I didn't give up.

**Q: That's a wonderful thing to discover about yourself.**

**A:** Something else wonderful happened. I got an email saying a spot had opened up for the Youth Conference on National Affairs. Because it was only a bus ride away, I was able to say yes. And I got to meet the most amazing, interesting and diverse people I've ever met. That conference and attendees helped shaped the colleges I applied to and my choice of major.

**Q: Who or what else helped you in the application process?**

**A:** [My CCPS counselor] Kathi Love was amazing. Every time I talked to her she helped me in so many ways. She had 10 answers for every question, and gave me the confidence to make the best applications. She especially helped me with my essay topics.

**Q: Some college essay questions can be a little off the wall. Do you remember any that you especially liked?**

**A:** Tufts had an essay question that said, "As quoted by Kermit the Frog, 'It's not easy being green.' Assess the validity of this statement."

**Q: How did you answer it?**

**A:** I said it was true based on my experience with my concussion. Sometimes an obstacle makes your life more difficult, but if you can overcome it, you can get through anything.

**Q: Very nice. Any advice to share with other students?**

**A:** Write or at least outline your essays during the summer. It's much less stressful if you're just doing edits in the fall of senior year rather than starting from scratch.

## SAT Scores Declining in Importance at Many Schools

Did you know that hundreds of colleges have made the SAT test optional or got rid of the test entirely? Even some of the most competitive colleges such as Bates, Bowdoin, Connecticut College, Wake Forest, Union, Holy Cross, Mount Holyoke and others have stopped considering SAT and ACT scores. Middlebury College, New York University and others accept SAT subject tests or AP tests in lieu of the SAT. (To view an alphabetical listing, visit [www.fairtest.org/university/optional](http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional).)

One reason for the growing ambivalence is the score discrepancy across income levels. There is a 449-point difference between students in the lowest income bracket versus students in the highest income bracket. Many educators feel that lower-income families who cannot afford extra tutoring or prep services are at a disadvantage.

One thing to keep in mind: If your child is considering attending one of the colleges or universities that does not require SAT or ACT scores – and your child achieved excellent scores – don't hesitate to have the scores sent anyway. Admissions officers will secretly concede that good scores will generally help – even if the college's public policy is not to consider them.

## Savings Update

Here's where we've conducted workshops lately and how much money we're saving families from those towns.

Edison - \$9,339 per student per year  
Piscataway - \$15,672 per student per year

## Upcoming FREE Workshops

April 29 – 7:30 pm Parsippany Library  
May 12 – 7:30 pm Maplewood Library

**There are 2 ways to reserve a seat:**  
**Online: [www.myacfa.com](http://www.myacfa.com)**  
**Call: 1-908-857-4200**



## Ask the Professor

Q: My son was accepted to several schools and wants more time to make up his mind. Do we absolutely have to make a final decision by May 1?

A: There are a number of ways you can play this. One option is to ask the schools that accepted you to extend the deadline to hold your seat without a deposit or with a refundable deposit. If they acquiesce, you've bought a couple weeks extra time. If they say no, you still have the option to pay more than one deposit, then decide later. You may lose several hundred dollars, but that's not much when you consider the thousands of dollars you will be investing.

## Did You Know?



- ✓ In a typical year, more than 65,000 students nationwide score 700 or higher on the SAT I verbal.
- ✓ Over 90,000 score 700 or above on the SAT I math each year.
- ✓ Over 150,000 students achieve 650+ on the verbal; over 200,000 achieve 650+ on the math.

## College Match Game



Chris "Boomer" Berman attended which of the following colleges?

- A.) University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- B.) University of Connecticut
- C.) Brown University
- D.) University of Pennsylvania

Answer: C.) The ESPN sports anchor was graduated from Brown University in 1977.

## Win a \$500 to \$5,000 Scholarship



Refer a friend or family member to join our College Dream Builder™ program. Your friend or family member gets an instant \$300 discount by knowing you. And when they enroll, your student receives \$500.00 per referral. Refer 2 families, earn \$1,000.00. Refer 10 families, earn \$5,000.00!

College Dream Builder™ provides students the personal attention and help they need to find the perfect-fit school and make college the wonderful experience it should be.

For details, call 908.857.4200 or email [info@CompleteCollegePlanningSolutions.com](mailto:info@CompleteCollegePlanningSolutions.com)



**"DISCIPLINE IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS."**

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