

AMHERST

Fifty-Seventh Annual Report to Secondary Schools

A Note from the Dean on the Class of 2007

When John Adams of Braintree, Massachusetts was 15 years old, his father, also John, and his tutor, Joseph Marsh, decided that young John was sufficiently “fitted for college” and should embark upon the college application process at Harvard College. The process consisted of a single examination and, accordingly, he was to be greeted not by a smiling college admission counselor, well-schooled in the fine and gracious art of easy banter, but examined by the President of Harvard and the entire faculty, then numbering seven, who were to be wigged and robed. Joseph Marsh had agreed to accompany John to Cambridge for his examination, but on the appointed day fell ill. John “collected resolution enough to proceed,” and began “a very melancholy journey” by horseback to Cambridge which, Adams later recalled, was wrapped in threatening clouds. He did well despite all the travails of the day, however, and was not only admitted to Harvard, but was awarded a partial scholarship. As a consequence, Adams later wrote, “I was as light when I came home, as I had been heavy when I went.”

Not so fortunate was James O. Woodward who applied to Williams College, the Commonwealth’s second oldest college, in 1880. He was informed by O.M. Fernald (“for the examiners”) that “the result of the examination is that we cannot accept you. The math examination was a failure, the Latin very poor, and in the Greek, you did not attempt to do the work.” It seems superfluous for me to observe that words were not minced in that particular letter to the unfortunate young James O. Woodward.

Why do I begin this, the *Fifty-Seventh Annual Report to Secondary Schools*, with these brief sojourns into the 18th and 19th centuries? First, I find both Adams’ experience and Fernald’s letter somehow peculiarly bracing. In an era when I am, mostly by way of various harangues and editorials, reminded virtually weekly that the admission process is too “stressful,” even cruel, I cannot help but wonder whether there is something to be learned from Adams’ absolute acceptance of life’s inevitable and manifold vicissitudes and trials, as well as from Fernald’s brutal honesty. Did John Adams’ decision to sign the Declaration of Independence, for example, knowing full well that he could be hanged for having done so, owe itself in some small measure to his decision as a 15-year-old to forge on with his examination in Cambridge despite a miserable day and an arduous and lonely ride? These are mere musings, certainly, and, while thought provoking, are not at all helpful in any concrete way. I do hope, however, that my second observation and the data contained herein may be of use to you in your counseling and planning.

What also strikes me about Adams’ and Woodward’s experiences with the college admission process of the time is

its clarity and straightforward nature. One either knew one’s Latin, Greek, and Mathematics or did not and was accordingly qualified or not. That is certainly not the case at Amherst today. Virtually all of our applicants are not only qualified (although, I suspect, few could compete with John Adams’ Greek and Latin), but are more than qualified and able not only to do the work here but to do it exceedingly well. This phenomenon owes itself largely to self-selection among students applying to Amherst and similar institutions. For that reason, we have, for 57 years, presented comprehensive and detailed data on our applicant, accept, and matriculant pool with the hope that secondary school guidance counselors can make reasonable inferences about individual students’ places in Amherst’s applicant pool.

We received 5,631 applications for the Class of 2007, accepted 1001, and are matriculating 413. Women account for 48% of the Class, fully 36% are students of color, and 7% are non-U.S. citizens. Our students hail from 322 different secondary schools.

The academic credentials of the entering class are arresting indeed. Because average SAT and ACT scores, rightly or wrongly, tend to be the *lingua franca* of academic quality, or the closest thing we have to a common standard or means of comparison, I will quickly observe that the average composite SAT score for the Class of 2007 is 1422, and the average composite ACT score is 31. I urge you, however, to dig more deeply into the table, which exhibits the range of SAT scores for applicants, admits, and matriculants. I hope those data reassure you that the admission process here is far from simplistic or crudely formulaic.

To my way of thinking, what lies behind, or perhaps accounts for, such statistics is more important. What has struck me thus far in my tenure are the habits of mind of Amherst students: They are curious, comfortable and even joyous in the world of ideas, and deeply committed to the values of a diverse community. Fascinating to me also is the degree to which they are deeply interested in the admission process itself—an interest that I suspect grows out of their knowledge that the content and context of their education in a small community such as ours grows as much out of myriad interactions with fellow students as out of more formal classroom instruction.

While there is much to celebrate in these data, I must say that I continue to be disheartened by several trends in the profession. Because a growing number of the nation’s most competitive and prestigious colleges and universities are taking close to or more than half of their class early decision, I see enormous pressure being exerted on young people to conclude

the college search process prematurely, and with the pressure has come a concomitant tendency to strategize rather than search. I find the narrow and shallow institutional self-interest that is driving this trend genuinely galling. So what does Amherst do? We simply pledge to take no more than 30% of our class early. I was pleased to learn that Stanford, too, has chosen to swim against the tide, and I applaud their position of taking no more than 25% of their class early. I am disturbed also by an increasing tendency to “leverage” financial aid or to use it as a part of a “tuition income maximization model” of greater or lesser sophistication. To see “leveraging” replacing a focus on “access” in the distribution of financial aid is certainly disheartening. Again, what is Amherst’s stance? We continue to practice genuinely “need blind” admission and to meet the full need of all admitted students. In addition, for the last four years, we have eliminated the loan component of financial aid packages for low income students and significantly reduced it for middle income students. Of course, it is far easier for a school with Amherst’s considerable means to take the “high road” in awarding aid, but I do believe access has been one of Amherst’s core values (if not THE core value) since its founding as a college for “indigent and pious” young men.

As pervasive as the critique on the admission process as “stressful,” capricious, or confounding is the critique of the sheer cost of higher education. Before I introduce our staff, I return to John Adams for perspective. John’s father sold off 10

acres of the family farm in Braintree to help finance John’s Harvard education, and this at a time when property was treasured above all other investments!

I hope that I or a member of my staff will have the opportunity to meet you or to renew conversations this year. To that end, allow me to introduce this year’s staff: Director of Admission/Senior Associate Dean **Katie Fretwell**; Senior Associate Director/Associate **Dean Kathy Mayberry**; Associate Deans **Michael Hawkins**, **Cate Zolkos**, and **Joy St. John**; Assistant Dean **Meg Caddeau**; Admission Fellows **Chris Kuipers**, **Kimya Charles**, and **Sarah Miller**.

Finally, let me thank you for all past and future kindnesses. Should your travel bring you to Amherst, please do not hesitate to visit with us.



Tom Parker
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid

* I am indebted to David McCullough for his wonderful biography of John Adams, in particular, his account of John’s experience with Harvard; and to Madeline Cuccia of the Williams College Admission Office for O.M. Fernald’s letter.

The Admission and Financial Aid Staff for 2003-04

Tom Parker, *Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*

Admission

Katharine Fretwell, *Director of Admission/
Senior Associate Dean*
Kathy Mayberry, *Senior Associate Director/
Associate Dean*
Michael Hawkins, *Associate Dean*
Joy St. John, *Associate Dean*
Cate Zolkos, *Associate Dean*
Meg Caddeau, *Assistant Dean*
Kimya Charles, *Admission Fellow*
Chris Kuipers, *Admission Fellow*
Sarah Miller, *Admission Fellow*
Nancy Ratner, *Admission Counselor*
Constance Broughear, *Admission
Processing Assistant*
Mary Carlson, *Staff Assistant*
Jean Clark, *Director of Admission Information
Systems*
Melissa Makepeace O’Neil, *Admission
Information Coordinator*

Donna Eaton, *Campus Visit Coordinator*
Susan Geissler, *Staff Assistant*
Flora Chamlin, *Administrative Assistant to the
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*
Linda Loven, *Reference Secretary*
Linda Rodriguez, *Admission Assistant*
Judith Trzcienski, *Data Entry Coordinator*

Financial Aid

Joe Paul Case, *Dean/Director*
Kathleen Gentile, *Senior Associate Dean*
Michael Ellison, *Associate Dean*
Joan Millett, *Financial Aid Counselor*
Nancy Robinson, *Student Employment
Coordinator*
Pamela Crouse, *Department Secretary*
Kelly Martula, *Student Records Assistant*

First-Year Students in the Class of 2007

September 15, 2003

A Snapshot

Student Background Profile

52% are men; 48% women
45% are receiving scholarship and grant aid
36% indicated they are students of color
(150 students)
12% Asian-American (51 students)
12% African-American (49 students)
6% Latino/a (26 students)
< 1% Native American (2 students)
5% multi-ethnic (22 students)
10% are first-generation college students
10% are children of alumni
7% are non-US citizens
Students hail from 37 states, DC, and 20 countries

Student Academic Profile

86% finished in the top 10% of their class
(of those with reported rank)
17% are valedictorians
(of those with reported rank)
31% of the class were admitted through
Early Decision
Mean SAT scores: verbal 713, math 709
Mean ACT score: 31
Secondary schools represented in the class: 322

| | Men | Women | Total |
|----------|------------|------------|-------|
| Applied | 2657 (47%) | 2974 (53%) | 5631 |
| Accepted | 486 (48%) | 515 (52%) | 1001 |
| Enrolled | 216 (52%) | 197 (48%) | 413 |

For the Class of 2007, 374 students applied under the Early Decision option; 130 students were offered admission.

Statistics for the Past Decade

| Year | Number of Applicants | Number of Students Accepted | Number of Students Enrolled |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1993 | 4302 | 991 (23%) | 423 (43%) |
| 1994 | 4823 | 976 (20%) | 418 (43%) |
| 1995 | 4836 | 943 (19%) | 422 (45%) |
| 1996 | 4682 | 922 (20%) | 431 (47%) |
| 1997 | 5210 | 1039 (20%) | 434 (42%) |
| 1998 | 4491 | 1030 (23%) | 440 (43%) |
| 1999 | 5194 | 997 (19%) | 428 (43%) |
| 2000 | 5352 | 1041 (19%) | 434 (42%) |
| 2001 | 5175 | 973 (19%) | 430 (44%) |
| 2002 | 5238 | 957 (18%) | 412 (43%) |
| 2003 | 5631 | 1001 (18%) | 413 (41%) |

Rank in Class

| | Applied | Accepted | Enrolled |
|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Top 10th | 2263 (74%) | 482 (90%) | 167 (86%) |
| Second 10th | 448 (15%) | 42 (8%) | 19 (10%) |
| Third 10th | 169 (6%) | 10 (2%) | 7 (4%) |
| Top 31-50th | 124 (4%) | 2 (%) | 2 (1%) |
| Total Number of Ranked Students | 3046 (54%) | 537 (54%) | 195 (47%) |
| Total Number of Unranked Students | 2585 (46%) | 464 (46%) | 218 (53%) |

Distribution of College Board SAT I Scores

| VERBAL | Applied | Accepted | Enrolled |
|---------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 750-800 | 1263 (29%) | 433 (50%) | 141 (40%) |
| 700-749 | 1066 (24%) | 189 (22%) | 83 (24%) |
| 650-699 | 924 (21%) | 133 (15%) | 56 (16%) |
| 600-649 | 587 (13%) | 75 (9%) | 45 (13%) |
| 550-599 | 302 (7%) | 33 (4%) | 20 (6%) |
| 500-549 | 140 (3%) | 8 (1%) | 4 (1%) |
| 450-499 | 59 (1%) | 0 (%) | 0 (%) |
| 200-449 | 39 (1%) | 0 (%) | 0 (%) |
| Mean | 689 | 727 | 713 |
| Mid 50% | 640-750 | 690-780 | 660-770 |
| MATH | Applied | Accepted | Enrolled |
| 750-800 | 1100 (25%) | 388 (45%) | 121 (35%) |
| 700-749 | 1234 (28%) | 234 (27%) | 105 (30%) |
| 650-699 | 1077 (25%) | 123 (14%) | 63 (18%) |
| 600-649 | 569 (13%) | 80 (9%) | 36 (10%) |
| 550-599 | 262 (6%) | 35 (4%) | 16 (5%) |
| 500-549 | 84 (2%) | 10 (1%) | 8 (2%) |
| 450-499 | 34 (1%) | 1 (%) | 0 (%) |
| 200-449 | 20 (1%) | 0 (%) | 0 (%) |
| Mean | 694 | 723 | 709 |
| Mid 50% | 650-750 | 680-780 | 660-770 |

Distribution of ACT Scores

| ACT Composite | Applied | Accepted | Enrolled |
|---------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| 34-36 | 134 (16%) | 40 (29%) | 18 (26%) |
| 30-33 | 360 (43%) | 54 (39%) | 30 (44%) |
| 24-29 | 306 (37%) | 44 (32%) | 19 (28%) |
| 21-23 | 31 (4%) | 1 (1%) | 1 (1%) |
| Below 23 | 7 (1%) | 0 (%) | |
| Mean | 30 | 31 | 31 |
| Mid 50% | 28-33 | 29-34 | 29-34 |

Secondary School Representation

| | Public | Private | Parochial | Home School |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| Applied | 3662 (65%) | 1615 (29%) | 335 (6%) | 19 (%) |
| Accepted | 596 (60%) | 353 (35%) | 48 (5%) | 4 (%) |
| Enrolled | 231 (56%) | 155 (38%) | 24 (6%) | 3 (1%) |
| Number of Schools Represented in the Class | 197 (61%) | 102 (32%) | 20 (6%) | 3 (1%) |

Geographical Distribution of Those Matriculating

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----------------|---|------------------------|-----|
| New York | 70 | Georgia | 5 | Rhode Island | 2 |
| Massachusetts | 54 | Indiana | 5 | South Carolina | 2 |
| California | 40 | New Hampshire | 5 | Wisconsin | 2 |
| New Jersey | 24 | DC | 4 | Alaska | 1 |
| Connecticut | 19 | Maine | 4 | Mississippi | 1 |
| Illinois | 17 | Michigan | 4 | Nevada | 1 |
| Pennsylvania | 16 | North Carolina | 4 | South Dakota | 1 |
| Florida | 15 | Vermont | 4 | West Virginia | 1 |
| Texas | 14 | Arizona | 3 | | |
| Maryland | 11 | Missouri | 3 | International Students | 8% |
| Colorado | 8 | Oregon | 3 | New England | 21% |
| Minnesota | 8 | Hawaii | 2 | Middle Atlantic | 30% |
| Ohio | 7 | Iowa | 2 | Midwest | 12% |
| Virginia | 6 | Louisiana | 2 | South-Southeast | 9% |
| Washington | 6 | New Mexico | 2 | West-Southwest | 19% |

Financial Aid

| | 2003 (Class of 2007) | 2002 (Class of 2006) |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Accepted students who applied for scholarship and grant aid | 638 (67%) | 636 (67%) |
| Accepted students who demonstrated need for scholarship and grant aid | 397 | 391 |
| Of those, accepted students awarded scholarship and grant aid | 397 | 391 |
| Total amount offered | \$9,070,300 | \$10,235,633 |
| Average amount offered | \$22,847 | \$26,178 |
| Matriculating students who received scholarship and grant aid | 204 | 179 |
| Total amount | \$4,970,700 | \$4,777,793 |
| Average amount | \$24,366 | \$26,691 |
| Percent of class receiving scholarship and grant aid | 45% | 43% |

Fall Transfer Students

| | Men | Women | Total |
|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Applied | 101 (55%) | 81 (45%) | 182 |
| Accepted | 10 (63%) | 6 (38%) | 16 |
| Enrolled | 8 (80%) | 2 (20%) | 10 |

Twelve transfer students enrolled in the Spring of 2003; five transfer students enrolled in the Fall of 2002.

Senior Major Distribution for the Class of 2003

| | | | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|--|------------|
| Single Majors | | Black Studies and Psychology | 1 | Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Psychology | 5 |
| American Studies | 8 | Chemistry and Computer Science | 1 | Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Russian | 1 |
| Anthropology | 3 | Chemistry and Music | 2 | Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Spanish | 3 |
| Asian Languages & Civilizations | 3 | Chemistry and Russian | 1 | Mathematics and Philosophy | 1 |
| Biology | 22 | Chemistry and Spanish | 1 | Music and Physics | 1 |
| Black Studies | 1 | Computer Science and Economics | 4 | Philosophy and Psychology | 2 |
| Chemistry | 9 | Computer Science and Mathematics | 2 | Philosophy and Religion | 1 |
| Classics | 6 | Computer Science and Psychology | 1 | Physics and Religion | 1 |
| Computer Science | 6 | Economics and English | 1 | Political Science and Psychology | 1 |
| Economics | 26 | Economics and Fine Arts | 1 | Political Science and Russian | 1 |
| English | 36 | Economics and German | 1 | Political Science and Sociology | 1 |
| Fine Arts | 10 | Economics and History | 2 | Political Science and Spanish | 3 |
| French | 5 | Economics and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought | 2 | Political Science and Women's & Gender Studies | 1 |
| Geology | 1 | Economics and Mathematics | 3 | Psychology and Sociology | 1 |
| History | 23 | Economics and Political Science | 4 | Psychology and Spanish | 4 |
| Interdisciplinary | 7 | Economics and Psychology | 7 | Psychology and Women's & Gender Studies | 1 |
| Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought | 28 | Economics and Spanish | 3 | Religion and Women's & Gender Studies | 1 |
| Mathematics | 1 | English and Fine Arts | 4 | Sociology and Spanish | 1 |
| Music | 4 | English and French | 4 | Total Double Majors | 130 |
| Neuroscience | 3 | English and History | 1 | | |
| Philosophy | 4 | English and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought | 2 | Triple Majors | |
| Physics | 4 | English and Mathematics | 2 | Economics, French and Political Science | 1 |
| Political Science | 21 | English and Music | 1 | Economics, German and Political Science | 1 |
| Psychology | 29 | English and Neuroscience | 1 | English, French and Political Science | 1 |
| Religion | 7 | English and Political Science | 1 | Total Triple Majors | 3 |
| Russian | 1 | English and Psychology | 2 | | |
| Sociology | 5 | English and Religion | 1 | Total | |
| Spanish | 6 | English and Spanish | 4 | Class of 2003 Graduates | 415 |
| Theater & Dance | 3 | English and Theater & Dance | 1 | | |
| Total Single Majors | 282 | English and Women's & Gender Studies | 1 | | |
| | | European Studies and French | 1 | | |
| Double Majors | | European Studies and History | 1 | | |
| American Studies and French | 1 | Fine Arts and French | 3 | | |
| Anthropology and Psychology | 1 | Fine Arts and Philosophy | 1 | | |
| Anthropology and Sociology | 1 | Fine Arts and Spanish | 1 | | |
| Asian Languages & Civilizations and Economics | 2 | French and Interdisciplinary | 1 | | |
| Asian Languages & Civilizations and English | 1 | French and Political Science | 3 | | |
| Asian Languages & Civilizations and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought | 1 | French and Psychology | 1 | | |
| Asian Languages & Civilizations and Political Science | 1 | History and Political Science | 1 | | |
| Astronomy and Physics | 1 | History and Religion | 1 | | |
| Biology and Chemistry | 1 | History and Russian | 1 | | |
| Biology and Computer Science | 1 | History and Spanish | 2 | | |
| Biology and English | 2 | Interdisciplinary and Music | 1 | | |
| Biology and Geology | 1 | Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Music | 1 | | |
| Biology and Music | 1 | Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Political Science | 1 | | |
| Biology and Psychology | 1 | | | | |
| Black Studies and Political Science | 1 | | | | |

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