

A Note from the Dean on the Class of 2012

The 2007–2008 admission cycle was certainly unusual and somewhat unsettling. Because Harvard, Princeton and the University of Virginia abandoned their early decision or early action programs, there was a great deal of uncertainty in the small world of highly selective colleges and universities as to the impact of those decisions on predictions of “yield” (the percentage of students who accept offers of admission from individual colleges or universities). The collective response to this uncertainty was, as you would expect, to be conservative with the number of offers of admission made in April. It is a significantly more grievous sin to overenroll than to underenroll and subsequently make use of the wait list. Again, as you would expect, given our collective conservatism, there were substantially more offers made to wait-listed candidates than at any time in my career. Pulling together data from various sources, I estimate that 950 to 1,050 offers of admission were made to students on the wait lists of the nation’s most selective institutions. As a result, Amherst has devoted, as I am sure is the case at other highly selective institutions, considerable time and energy to recalibrating our yield projections, and I expect next year’s cycle will be more stable and predictable.

On the surface, it seems like a minor story of disruption, readjustment and anticipated stability. Why, then, would this minor story attract such attention from so many in the national media? That is the question that left me scratching my head as I fielded call after call from various media outlets last spring. And within that question is a larger question: Why has the admission of 17-year-olds to the nation’s most selective colleges and universities become front page news? Why has a quite minor rite of passage assumed such disproportionate importance? I think I know the answers to those questions, but, as the man says, that’s a story for another day, or more precisely, for another Annual Report to Secondary Schools. Instead what I will attempt to do this year in this sixty-second (think of that!) report to secondary schools is to offer some perspective to two audiences: students who are embarking on or are in the midst of this process; and college counselors who are helping them negotiate the shoals and, I hope, joining me in providing perspective.

To you students—sitting in our reception area, reading this online or wherever you may be—I offer a paradox, which I hope is an invitation for you to pause for a moment to reflect on both this process and your place in it. If this process is a race to be won, you have already won it. How can that be, you may fairly ask, when the results of the race will not be announced until April 1, 2009? The answer lies in the near inevitability of your success, not only in this process (broadly conceived and understood, of course) but also in college and beyond. You would not be reading this, would not be considering Amherst and colleges and universities like Amherst, if you did not consider yourself

an appropriate candidate for admission. Appropriate candidates for admission have worked hard in school, have assumed leadership positions, have read broadly beyond the curriculum, and are deeply curious about the world around them. These are precisely the traits that predict success in the admission process, in college, and in the years to come.

Will you, then, be accepted at Amherst? Not necessarily, as the attached data amply demonstrates. Will you be accepted at a number of superb colleges and universities? Certainly. Will you get into every college or university you apply to? No. Might you get into a college or university that sits higher than Amherst on the absolutely loony prestige hierarchy that, sadly, dominates too much of our thinking about colleges? Quite probably. I offer you my congratulations in advance.

So, what is to be gathered from grappling with this paradox? First, my hope is that you realize that things are going to be O.K.—more than O.K.—in fact. Six or twelve months from now, you will be happily pursuing your studies and making wonderful new friends at college, and this infernal process will be a distant memory, hard as that is to imagine right now. And, secondly, and certainly more importantly, I hope your grappling moves your thinking away from “getting in” to imagining what it is that college is to be for you, what you hope to accomplish, and perhaps why you want to go to college in the first place. Good luck to each one of you.

And now to you guidance counselors, if you happen to have time to read this on one of your awfully busy days, I offer these thoughts. At the precise moment that the prestige hierarchy among colleges and universities should be losing some of its rigidity, if wisdom and clear thinking were to triumph, the opposite appears to be happening. Our only hope for salvation lies, it seems to me, in collectively hammering away at the notion that the quality of a person’s life will be determined exclusively by the position of the person’s alma mater in the prestige hierarchy. We must work together to broaden the public perception, especially among those who are preoccupied with schools like Amherst, of what an acceptable college is. And, just as importantly, it is our obligation to relocate this process in the much larger context of a life lived or a life about to be lived.

I don’t believe it will get any easier getting into this country’s most selective colleges and universities, nor will it be any less agonizing. There are no silver bullets, there are no easy answers, there is only the obligation for you and for me to do our best to provide students and their families with perspective and our collective wisdom. If you choose to join me in the effort, I thank you in advance.

On to a cheerier topic: We will, for the Class of 2013, be “need blind” in admitting non-U.S. citizens and will meet the

full demonstrated need of all non-U.S. citizens who are admitted. We eliminated loans for all students last year, so non-U.S. citizens will graduate with no debt, as well. 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.

Now on to the Class of 2012 at Amherst. We received 7,745 applications for the Class of 2012, the largest number the college has ever received: We accepted 1,144 and matriculated 438. Women account for 50% of the class, fully 38% are students of color, and 9% are non-U.S. citizens. Our students hail from 360 different secondary schools.

Because average SAT and ACT scores, rightly or wrongly, tend to be the shorthand for academic quality, or the closest thing we have to a common standard or means of comparison, I will quickly observe that the average composite critical reading and math SAT score for the Class of 2012 is 1415, and the average composite ACT score is 31. The academic credentials cited above are certainly arresting, but I urge you 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. In fact, I believe that the Admission Committee is at its best when it is able to recognize academic potential that is not necessarily reflected in standardized testing.

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 nine-year tenure here are the habits of mind of Amherst students: They are curious, comfortable in the world of ideas, remarkably aware of the world around them and deeply committed to the values of a diverse community.

I hope that I or a member of my staff will have the opportunity to meet you or to renew conversations on the road. 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, Dale Hendricks, Joy St. John and Cate Zolkos; Assistant Deans Eli Bromberg, Nancy Ratner and Darren Reaume; Acting Assistant Dean Eduardo Garcia; Senior Admission Fellow Keli Gunn; and Admission Fellows Ashley Armato and Ahmmad Brown.

Finally, and as always, 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
October 2008

The Admission and Financial Aid Staff for 2008-09

Tom Parker, *Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*

Admission

Katharine Fretwell, *Director of Admission/
Senior Associate Dean*

Kathleen Mayberry, *Senior Associate Director/
Associate Dean*

Michael Hawkins, *Associate Dean*

Dale Hendricks, *Associate Dean*

Joy St. John, *Associate Dean*

Cate Granger Zolkos, *Associate Dean*

Eli Bromberg, *Assistant Dean*

Eduardo Garcia, *Acting Assistant Dean*

Nancy Ratner, *Assistant Dean*

Darren Reaume, *Assistant Dean*

Ashley Armato, *Admission Fellow*

Ahmmad Brown, *Admission Fellow*

Keli Gunn, *Senior Admission Fellow*

Flora Chamlin, *Secretary to the Dean of Admission
and Financial Aid*

William Kopell, *Director of Admission Information
Systems*

Donna Eaton, *Campus Visit Coordinator*

Debbie Fuller, *Reference Secretary*

Susan Geissler, *Staff Assistant*

Marcy Gustafson, *Staff Assistant*

Linda Hibbard, *Admission Processing Assistant*

Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, *Admission
Information Coordinator*

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 of Admission
and Financial Aid*

Michael Albano, *Assistant Dean*

Kristen Fleury, *Financial Aid Counselor*

Paola Gallego, *Student Records Assistant*

Lyssbenette Ramos, *Department Secretary*

Nancy Robinson, *Student Employment
Coordinator*

First-Year Students in the Class of 2012

September 14, 2008 } A Snapshot

Student Background Profile

50% are men; 50% are women
 51% are receiving scholarship and grant aid
 38% indicated they are students of color
 (168 students)
 11% African-American (48 students)
 11% Asian-American (47 students)
 11% Latino/a (46 students)
 6% Multiracial (27 students)
 20% are from low-income families
 9% are non-U.S. citizens

Students hail from 36 states, plus D.C., PR, VI
 and 28 foreign countries

Student Academic Profile

79% finished in the top 10% of their class
 (of those with reported rank)
 16% are valedictorians
 (of those with reported rank)
 32% were admitted through Early Decision
 Mean SAT scores: critical reading 708, math 707,
 writing 706
 Mean ACT score: 31
 Secondary schools represented in the class: 360

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	3,289 (42%)	4,456 (58%)	7,745
Accepted	527 (46%)	617 (54%)	1,144
Enrolled	218 (50%)	220 (50%)	438

For the Class of 2012, 404 students applied under the Early Decision option; 138 students enrolled.

Statistics for the Past Decade

Year	Number of Applicants	Number of Students Accepted	Number of Students Enrolled
1998	4,491	1,030 (23%)	440 (43%)
1999	5,194	997 (19%)	428 (43%)
2000	5,352	1,041 (19%)	434 (42%)
2001	5,175	973 (19%)	430 (44%)
2002	5,238	957 (18%)	412 (43%)
2003	5,631	1,001 (18%)	413 (41%)
2004	5,489	1,136 (21%)	428 (38%)
2005	6,281	1,176 (19%)	431 (37%)
2006	6,142	1,144 (19%)	433 (38%)
2007	6,680	1,175 (18%)	474 (40%)
2008	7,745	1,144 (15%)	438 (38%)

Secondary School Representation

	Public	Private	Parochial	Home School
Applied	5,373 (69%)	1,871 (24%)	466 (6%)	35 (<1%)
Accepted	713 (62%)	349 (31%)	80 (7%)	2 (%)
Enrolled	256 (58%)	147 (34%)	34 (8%)	1 (%)
Number of schools represented in the class	214	113	32	1

Distribution of College Board SAT Scores

CRITICAL READING	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1,558 (29%)	399 (45%)	104 (32%)
700-749	1,365 (25%)	204 (23%)	97 (30%)
650-699	1,073 (20%)	134 (15%)	58 (18%)
600-649	756 (14%)	99 (11%)	43 (13%)
550-599	367 (7%)	39 (4%)	14 (4%)
500-549	198 (4%)	10 (1%)	6 (2%)
450-499	84 (2%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
200-449	60 (1%)	1 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	690	722	708
Mid 50%	640-760	670-780	660-760

MATH	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1,671 (31%)	417 (47%)	121 (38%)
700-749	1,218 (22%)	176 (20%)	72 (22%)
650-699	1,197 (22%)	129 (15%)	68 (21%)
600-649	694 (13%)	94 (11%)	32 (10%)
550-599	382 (7%)	51 (6%)	23 (7%)
500-549	178 (3%)	17 (2%)	5 (2%)
450-499	86 (2%)	2 (%)	1 (%)
200-449	35 (1%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	691	718	707
Mid 50%	640-760	670-780	660-760

WRITING	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1,597 (29%)	364 (41%)	106 (33%)
700-749	1,368 (25%)	220 (25%)	87 (27%)
650-699	1,140 (21%)	148 (17%)	60 (19%)
600-649	644 (12%)	99 (11%)	43 (13%)
550-599	395 (7%)	40 (5%)	20 (6%)
500-549	201 (4%)	12 (1%)	6 (2%)
450-499	68 (1%)	3 (%)	0 (%)
200-449	43 (1%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	691	717	706
Mid 50%	650-750	670-780	660-760

Distribution of ACT Scores

ACT Composite	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
34-36	362 (21%)	95 (36%)	28 (24%)
30-33	849 (49%)	108 (41%)	57 (49%)
24-29	445 (26%)	59 (22%)	31 (26%)
21-23	54 (3%)	2 (1%)	1 (1%)
Below 21	21 (1%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	31	32	31
Mid 50%	29-33	30-35	29-33

Rank in Class

	Enrolled
Top 10th	173 (79%)
Second 10th	33 (15%)
Third 10th	8 (4%)
Top 31st-50th	3 (1%)
Top 50th-60th	2 (1%)
Total Number of Ranked Students	219 (50%)
Total Number of Unranked Students	219 (50%)

Geographical Distribution of Those Matriculating

Alabama	2	Iowa	4	North Carolina	2	Washington	5
Arizona	1	Kentucky	3	Ohio	7	West Virginia	1
California	38	Maine	3	Oklahoma	1	Wisconsin	2
Colorado	3	Maryland	14	Oregon	5	New England	19%
Connecticut	21	Massachusetts	47	Pennsylvania	15	Mid-Atlantic	33%
D.C.	2	Michigan	7	Puerto Rico	1	Midwest	14%
Delaware	1	Minnesota	13	Rhode Island	2	South-Southeast	8%
Florida	11	Missouri	2	Tennessee	2	West-Southwest	15%
Georgia	4	New Hampshire	6	Texas	10	International	10%
Hawaii	1	New Jersey	31	Vermont	3		
Illinois	27	New Mexico	2	Virgin Islands	1		
Indiana	1	New York	82	Virginia	10		

Financial Aid

	2008 Class of 2012	2007 Class of 2011	2006 Class of 2010
Accepted students who applied for scholarship and grant aid	795 (69%)	826 (70%)	795 (70%)
Accepted students who demonstrated need for scholarship and grant aid	480	520	501
Of those, accepted students awarded scholarship and grant aid	480	520	501
Total amount offered	\$16,416,974	\$16,543,114	\$15,362,546
Average amount offered	\$34,202	\$31,814	\$30,664
Matriculating students who received scholarship and grant aid	223	239	225
Total amount	\$8,023,049	\$8,078,003	\$7,400,623
Average amount	\$35,978	\$33,799	\$32,892
Percent of class receiving scholarship and grant aid	50.9%	50.4%	52%

Fall Transfer Students

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	208 (50%)	204 (50%)	412
Accepted	15 (65%)	8 (35%)	23
Enrolled	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	14

Nine transfer students enrolled in the spring of 2008.

Senior Major Distribution for the Class of 2008

Single Majors		Computer Science and	Triple Majors
American Studies	9	Political Science	1
Anthropology	6	Computer Science and Theater	1
Art and Art History	11	and Dance	1
Asian Languages and Civilizations	5	Economics and English	2
Biology	18	Economics and French	2
Black Studies	5	Economics and History	2
Chemistry	12	Economics and Latin	1
Classics	2	Economics and Law, Jurisprudence	
Computer Science	3	and Social Thought	1
Economics	43	Economics and Mathematics	6
English	27	Economics and Neuroscience	1
European Studies	1	Economics and Philosophy	2
French	3	Economics and Political Science	2
Geology	6	Economics and Psychology	2
German	1	Economics and Religion	1
History	24	English and French	6
Interdisciplinary	7	English and Geology	2
Law, Jurisprudence and Social		English and Interdisciplinary	1
Thought	14	English and Law, Jurisprudence	
Mathematics	4	and Social Thought	1
Music	3	English and Music	2
Neuroscience	16	English and Political Science	3
Philosophy	11	English and Religion	2
Physics	8	English and Russian	1
Political Science	37	English and Spanish	2
Psychology	33	English and Theater and Dance	2
Religion	6	French and History	2
Russian	4	French and Law, Jurisprudence	
Sociology	7	and Social Thought	1
Spanish	3	French and Political Science	4
Theater and Dance	4	French and Psychology	1
Women's and Gender Studies	2	French and Sociology	1
Total Single Majors	335	French and Spanish	1
		Geology and Political Science	1
		Geology and Religion	1
		Geology and Theater and Dance	1
		German and Music	2
		German and Philosophy	1
		German and Political Science	1
		History and Music	1
		History and Spanish	2
		Mathematics and Music	1
		Mathematics and Physics	2
		Mathematics and Political Science	1
		Music and Political Science	1
		Music and Psychology	1
		Music and Religion	1
		Physics and Psychology	1
		Physics and Religion	1
		Political Science and Russian	1
		Political Science and Women's and	
		Gender Studies	2
		Psychology and Sociology	1
		Psychology and Women's and	
		Gender Studies	2
		Sociology and Spanish	1
		Total Double Majors	106

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