

# Notes from the D214 Highly Selective College Night

## 3/14/19

**Introductory comments** by Anthony Miocic, College Career Counselor at Elk Grove High School

Highly Selective School Admissions is like competing at the highest level of the olympics. All the competitors are amazing, near perfect, but not all can make it to the medal stage. The typical applicant at selective schools are mostly top students, with impressive tests and activities. With selective schools there are no guarantees of admission, because you are competing against the very best. Typically, admit rates are very low (6-30% of all applicants). You need to have other options with higher admit rates.

Many people are drawn to apply to highly selective schools because they perceive them as “the best” colleges. But the truth is the best college for you are those that meet your needs/wants. We encourage students to think about what college traits are important to them. It is important to research schools, visit schools and engage with the admissions reps to determine if the school is a good fit for you. Most schools, but particularly the more selective schools look at fit to determine admission. If you can't articulate why the school fits who you are as a person and your goals, admission will be difficult.

What do highly selective admissions reviews consider:

- Grades but also the rigor of curriculum. Take the most challenging curriculum while keeping grades high and maintaining life balance.
- Test scores may be required but many of these schools are test optional. Test optional means you can submit test scores if you feel that it helps your application. If you do not submit scores, more weight will be put on the other factors.
- Involvement and leadership roles in clubs, sports, community service and other activities.
- Positive teacher recommendations about the student's academic role in the classroom.
- Application essays.
- Interviews with alumni, liason or admissions officer (if required or suggested).
- Demonstrated interest in the college exhibited by visiting the campus, attending area events and college rep visits at your high school, communicating with the admissions officers about questions and opening & replying to emails.

**Panel Discussion Featured guests:**

University of Chicago - Brandon McCallister, Admissions Counselor

Northwestern University - Jenna Sukernek, Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admissions

University of Notre Dame - Alisa Fisher, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions

**Tell us about your school's personality?**

- University of Chicago: We are a liberal arts college, looking for students who want to explore many different subjects. There is a required core curriculum in the first two years. Students who are successful want to study across disciplines. Classes are discussion based, which encourages a diversity of voices, ideas and perspectives. Students who like to participate and learn from peers enjoy this. U of C is an urban campus so it is best for students who love the city. U of C

offers quirky, fun traditions such as exercises in 20 degree weather, annual scavenger hunts, and \$1 milkshakes Wednesdays.

- Northwestern University: Students thrive are those that like “AND” not “OR”. They are students engaged both inside and outside classroom. They like combining the Liberal arts and pre-professional programs (Theatre & journalism, music & pre-med) or double majoring. 70% of students study more than one thing. NU has a large focus on research. It is the only private school in the big ten athletic conference, so it is a way to have both big ten traditions and highly selective academic community. Evanston a truly quintessential college town.
- Notre Dame: All students enter taking core requirements and then enter one of their four colleges (Arts & Letters, Science, Business, Engineering or ) or two departments (Architecture, Global Affairs). “Community-feel” is the most descriptive word for Notre Dame. There is no greek life, rather they have a robust residential life. All students feel their ‘res hall’ is best. They are striving toward doing the best for yourself, but also for your hallmates, your hall, and the school. There is great school spirit. Athletics and community service are both huge. Notre Dame is looking for people who care about each other and the world.

### **Admissions policies:**

- U of Chicago: Offers two deadlines and four decisions options. The first deadline is 11/1. Students can apply Early Action (EA) or Early Decision 1 (ED1). ED1 is a binding commitment that if admitted the student will attend and withdraw all other applications. EA is not binding, the student is admitted early but has until 5/1 to make their final decision. The second deadline is 1/1. Students can apply either Regular Decision (RD), which gives until 5/1 to make their final choice, or ED2, which is a binding commitment that if admitted the student will attend. University of Chicago accepts either the Common Application or Coalition Application, two shared application platforms. These applications will have several school specific essay prompts. In place of interviews applicants can upload a 2 minute video.
- Northwestern: NU offers two deadlines and two decisions. 11/1 in an Early Decision (ED) deadline. Students can only apply to only one school using ED deadlines. If accepted you will attend and rescind all other college applications. You will not be able to review other financial aid offers from other schools. The second deadline is 1/1 and is a Regular Decision deadline. This is nonbinding and students can apply to as many schools as you like using RD. NU accepts either the Common Application or Coalition Application. Northwestern also has two supplemental essays in addition to the Common Application essay: “Describe a favorite activity” and “Why Northwestern?”. NU does offer optional interviews with alumni.
- Notre Dame - ND offers two deadlines: November 1 and January 1. The 11/1 deadline is a Restrictive Early Action (REA) deadline. REA is a non-binding early application option for students who have completed a thorough college search and are confident Notre Dame is their first choice. Students applying REA may not apply either Early Decision or Restrictive Early Action to any other schools. Admitted students have until May 1 to respond to their admission offer, which allows them to compare financial aid awards across institutions. The 1/1 deadline is a Regular Decision but you still have until May to make a decision. Notre Dame accepts either the Coalition Application or Common Application and is indifferent between the two. In addition to the Common Application essay, Notre Dame has a supplemental essay prompt: “Why Notre Dame”? A well-researched response to the “why our school” prompt is demonstrating interest in the college. Notre Dame does not offer interviews as part of the application process.

### **Financial Aid Policies:**

- U of Chicago - All applications are read “need blind” which means family income does not enter the admissions decision, as it does at some schools. U of C also meets 100% of financial need and they are a “no loan institution” meaning all of their financial aid are grants that do not need to be repaid. In addition to need-based financial aid, the University of Chicago is one of the few highly-selective universities in the country that also offers merit scholarships to selected admitted students. These are highly competitive and there is no separate application for these scholarships.
- Northwestern - Has a 100% policy. They are 100% need blind for admissions, so a student's ability to pay doesn't impact the admission decision. They meet 100% of family need. When a family completes the FAFSA and calculates an Expected Family Contribution, they will cover any amount above what the government calculates your family can afford with scholarships, grants and work study. They are 100% loan free financial aid packaging.
- Notre Dame - Like the others, Notre Dame meets 100% of financial need with generous financial aid packages. All D1 Sports revenue go into scholarships funding, including new merit scholarships. Students are automatically considered for merit scholarships. Don't let the sticker price discourage you from applying.

### **Can you describe the Northwestern HPME program?**

- The Honors Program in Medical Education (HPME) at Northwestern's Feinberg School of Medicine is a seven year BA/MD program. A three year undergrad program and then four years of med school. You complete the regular Northwestern University application, then request an application from the medical school. Not all students will receive an application; it is selective. A small number of students who complete the medical school application are chosen for an interview and then selections are made. There are typically 4,000 applications for the HPME program for 12 spots available each year. There are other ways to be pre-med at NU as an undergraduate.

### **How likely are you to accept transfer students to your school? If you do, will the high school record be considered?**

- Notre Dame: Every year, we accept students who transfer from community college to save money or because they were not accepted the first time around. ND considers the high school record when viewing transfer students.

### **How does the income of the parents affect the financial aid?**

- The lower the family income, the greater need based aid they are likely to receive. Families are encouraged to complete the Net Price Calculator for an estimate of what they will receive.

### **Is there a marked difference in acceptance rate based on when you apply?**

- Northwestern - The acceptance rate for our ED pool looks higher but remember it is a much smaller pool of students and all of the D1 athletes come through ED so the credentials may look lower. The caliber of the students in the ED pool overall is the same as the students in the RD pool but the acceptance rates are higher, again because of the recruited athletes.
- U of Chicago - The quality of the applicant pool for ED, EA, and RD are similar in credentials. Plus, U of C always accepts the same percentage of the class in each of these three rounds.

- Notre Dame - Society pushes students to go early. Often students really aren't ready to make the decisions. This is one reason ND offers REA rather than ED. ND encourages students to consider RD, if you are not 100% sure of the school choice, especially if you had struggle with performance in classes and there might be an academic rebound.

### **Does it look bad to apply undecided?**

- Notre Dame - Applicants who are undecided are not looked at negatively but we ask applicants to share what they may study and they do consider if the applicant is academically prepared for what they want to study. However, ND would never penalize the undecided applicant given too many of our students change their majors once in college.
- Northwestern has 6 undergraduate schools. You need to apply to a particular school and intended major. If a student is undecided, they are best placed in Liberal Arts & Sciences or Education. The academic credentials of all 6 undergraduate schools are very similar. One is not an easier admit.
- U of Chicago - many freshmen come to the University of Chicago undecided and many change their major once there. Since this is a liberal arts program where the first two years are spent exploring different fields, this does not put undecided applicants behind for graduating in four years.

### **Are there scholarships for transfer students?**

- U of Chicago transfer admit rate is under 1%. Last year there were 1,000 transfer applicants for 15 spots. This is because there is very little attrition so there is no room for new students. And there are no scholarships for transfer students.
- Notre Dame - ND has more students transfer in but has little for scholarships.
- Northwestern - NU has no merit scholarships for transfer students but has need based financial aid.

### **What kind of health services and mental health services are available on campus?**

- U of Chicago - U of C health insurance is provided to all students for a fee which can be waived if you have private insurance. Health services for physical issues are available any time you need them. They can prescribe medication. In terms of mental health, every student can see counselor weekly for free; more frequent visits will cost money. They also offer group therapy. For mental well being, they provide Well-a-palooza during finals with comfort dogs, messages, etc.
- Northwestern - NU has Searle Health Center for all students to receive either physical health and mental health services. This reduces mental health stigma as no one knows why you are going to Searle. They provide one-on-one counseling, group counseling, and a help line with trained peers. Urgent care in Evanston Hospital.
- Notre Dame - There is a University Health center for addressing physical needs. There is a separate Counseling Center. Wellness center encouraging healthy lifestyles. Disability center working with those with physical needs. In the halls, trained professionals and RAs to help with emotional issues.

### **How many years to complete a undergraduate degree and does financial aid cover all four years?**

- Notre Dame - our hope is that all students to complete a degree in 4 years. 99% do complete within 4 years. Some students have 5 year programs, such as the architecture majors.

- Northwestern - NU has a 96% four year graduation rate. Have some 5 year programs such as music. However, some students graduate early because of AP credits accumulated in high school.
- University of Chicago - U of C has 96% of all students complete their bachelors in four years. There are some students who graduate in 3 years.