

Application ethics: What students need to consider

In recent years, college admissions officers and college counselors have seen a growing number of students and parents who, in an attempt to manipulate the system in their favor, are crossing the boundary between helping ensure a desired outcome and taking inappropriate actions.

The admission process is not a game to be won at any cost. It is a complex process that demands a great deal of integrity on everyone's part, especially the school's. Here are some examples of what we consider crossing the boundary:

- Applying to binding Early Decision programs at more than one college or university. The whole point of a binding ED program is to make a contract: "If you accept me, I will withdraw all my other applications and attend your university." Many colleges now require that the college adviser sign the application along with the student and parents. The school will not send transcripts to more than one ED school or to any other schools once a student has been admitted under a binding ED program.
- Failing to withdraw your applications to other colleges when you have been admitted under a binding ED program. It isn't fair to those colleges or to the students who have applied to them for you to continue in the process just to see what happens.
- Attempting to gain release from an ED decision because you have changed your mind. The only acceptable reason for requesting release from your contract with your ED college is the inability to work out appropriate financial aid. You and your parents should discuss the cost factor when you are deciding whether to apply for ED in the first place.
- Having someone else write or heavily edit your essays. When you sign an application, you are indicating it is your work. If it is not, then you may be subject to the school's honor code.
- Submitting deposits to more than one college. If you are admitted to a college that requires a deposit by May 1 and wait-listed at your favorite college, call the college that admitted you and discuss the matter before you send your check. Your counselor can advise you how to conduct this conversation and what the appropriate behavior is.
- Stating an intended major that you have no intention of pursuing, because you think it might help your admission chances.
- Inaccurately describing your activities and accomplishments. Putting things in the best light is one thing; fabrication is something else.
- Stating to more than one college that it is your first choice.

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