Chapter 7: After the Decision
Getting In, Other Information to Consider, Getting Denied, The Wait List, and Gap Year

GETTING IN

- **Step One**: Enjoy the good news, but be sure that you are respectful that other students may not have the same good fortune.
- **Step Two**: Be sure that you let your parents know.
- **Step Three**: Notify the College Counseling Office in writing.
- **Step Four**: Accept the offer if you wish to attend, or write to the school to inform them you will not be attending.

OTHER INFORMATION TO CONSIDER

The Candidate’s Reply Date is the date by which you must say either yes or no to a college, and beyond which no extensions are possible. Most colleges have agreed on May 1 as the Candidate’s Reply Date unless you have applied and been accepted under the Early Decision plan. However, some do not observe it and will ask you to send a confirming deposit within two or three weeks. If this happens to you, and you do not want to send your money to one college until you have heard from others, you can almost always call or write the college and get an extension, usually until May 1. They may tell you they still want the deposit, but that it is refundable until that time. When in doubt, speak to one of the college counselors. Students should not, however, expect to be allowed to put off their decision until sometime after May 1. Colleges need and have the right to expect a commitment from an accepted applicant at some point, and a May 1 deadline should give most people enough time to make up their minds. Usually, “making up one’s mind” involves sending a substantial deposit—several hundred dollars—to the college one has decided to attend. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES may deposits ever be sent to more than one college! “Double-depositing” is wrong and unethical. The College Counseling Office must inform colleges that it has taken place, which may well result in the candidate’s rejection by both institutions.

Financial aid information may come with your acceptance letters. Sometimes those letters are sent separately—allow a few days before becoming too anxious. However, if it gets to be mid-April and you still have not received a financial aid package, be sure to let us know and call the college’s financial aid office.

You may want to revisit a college. Talk with your college adviser. Remember that the school allows you to miss three days to visit colleges.

Do not make quick selections if you are fortunate enough to have several college choices. Talk with your parents and college counselor.
Remember that all offers of admission are contingent on a continued strong performance. Disciplinary infractions or academic performances that are a departure from your record could put you on probation at a college freshman year or, worse, could cause the college to revoke your acceptance.

**GETTING DENIED**

It is never easy to face rejection. However, remember the reason why you created a balanced list of colleges. Most students receive acceptances and denials. You should focus on the schools that recognized you talents and celebrate your acceptance. Your success in the college process will be defined by your college experience not the decisions that you receive from the colleges in the spring of your senior year.

**THE WAIT LIST**

The waiting list is a form of “insurance policy” used by many colleges as a hedge against the possibility of unfilled places in an entering class. There is no way to predict your chances of admission from the waiting list, as circumstances and conditions vary each year. In almost all cases, wait lists are not ranked; rather, all wait-list students are reevaluated shortly after May 1. The number of wait-list candidates offered acceptance depends upon the number of places still to be filled. You should choose to remain on a college’s wait list only if you are seriously interested in attending that institution. They will have to send a deposit to another college to hold a place; doing so in this situation is not considered “double-depositing.” If interest is not strong, you should remove your name from waiting lists to give your place to someone else. We counsel wait-listed seniors carefully, suggesting specific strategies that may help their chances of admission. Below are a few steps that you should take if you want to improve your chances of getting off the wait list.

- Write to the college and let them know that you would like to remain on the wait list.
- Be sure that you have provided evidence of your potential hooks.
- Provide new grades, a letter of recommendation from a senior year teacher or evidence of recent accomplishments that might not have appeared on your initial application.
- Make sure the college knows that you are ready and willing to accept an offer of admission.
- Continue to show interest in the college, but do not be a pest.
GAP YEAR

One choice that a few students consider each year is to delay entering college after graduation from Lawrence—taking a “gap year.” Colleges and universities almost always support students who do this, because they find that when students return to academic life, they do so with renewed energy, enthusiasm and focus.

If you do consider a gap year, the first thing you must understand is that in all likelihood you will eventually go to college. Therefore, along with exploring alternative-year options, you must plan on going through the selection and application process during your senior year. Why? First, you might change your mind in May and decide you want to start college after all. Second, applying to college as a senior is buying “insurance” for the future; most colleges, once they have accepted you, will allow you to defer attendance for a year. That doesn’t mean you are forced to attend that college, but you do have the option. Third, the application process will be easier for you while you’re still at Lawrence, with the counseling staff available to help you.

Parents often fear that children who do not start college immediately after high school will never go. This fear, while understandable, is unfounded, at least in our experience. To our knowledge, every single Lawrence graduate who has taken time off in the last thirty or more years has gone on to college, usually within a year.

So if a gap year has been on your mind, talk with a counselor about it—and share your thoughts with your parents! The College Counseling Office has information on alternative programs that have been successful for Lawrence Academy students in the recent past, and we can direct you to professional consultants who help students plan such interim periods.