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Reject U

April 9, 2008

Admissions offices this month at the nation's colleges are sending them out in record numbers. They are called "deny letters," or sometimes a "soft deny" or a "short deny" or a "dollar deny." But the bottom line is always the same. It's "no."

Here are excerpts from some mailed out this year:

Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass.: "I am very sorry to inform you that it is not possible to offer you admission to the Class of 2012. I wish I were writing to report a different decision, but the competition was so rigorous this year that there were many outstanding young men and women to whom we could not offer places in the class.

"Over twenty-seven thousand students, a record number, applied to the entering class. ...

"Past experience suggests that the particular college a student attends is far less important than what the student does to develop his or her strengths and talents over the next four years."

The [University of Chicago](#): "After much consideration, I regret that we are unable to offer you a place in the Class of 2012. In the decision-making process, faculty and admissions counselors make every effort to determine the strength and suitability of an applicant's candidacy. Given the nature and number of applicants, some worthy prospective students must be told that there is not a place for them. ...

"I encourage you to make your future educational plans with the same enthusiasm and initiative that led you to consider us."

University of Southern [California](#) at [Los Angeles](#): "I am sorry to say that we are unable to offer you a space in this year's entering class.

"You should be proud of your accomplishments, and we encourage you to press on in your pursuit of higher education. Our decision is by no means a statement about your ability to succeed in college, nor is it any kind of judgment of you as a person. ... It may or may not comfort you to know that this has been an extraordinarily difficult year for our staff. None of us enjoys turning away capable students. ...

"We had to turn away about 80 percent of students who wanted to enroll here. Of those offered admission, most achieved nearly straight-A averages and SAT scores at or above the 95th percentile.

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"Your application was carefully, respectfully, and thoughtfully reviewed multiple times."

Earlham College, Richmond, Ind.: "After careful consideration, the Committee feels that your academic credentials do not support admission to the College. This was a very difficult decision for the Admissions Committee. We feel strongly that you have a great deal to offer the Earlham community. Your values, interests, and activities are certainly very compatible with those of the College. There are many ways in which we see you contributing to and gaining from an Earlham education. ..." [The letter then explains that the applicant might apply elsewhere and reapply to Earlham later.]

Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.: "Let me assure you that we gave your application a very careful review before making this difficult decision. ... Please know that your application received full consideration; as a result, there is no opportunity for further consideration."

[New York University](#), N.Y.C.: "This year we received over 37,000 applications for a freshman class of 4,250, making it one of the most competitive years in the history of the University. With almost nine applicants for every space in the class, we simply are not able to offer admission to every student."

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