



The WYHS

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BRAINSTORM

It's Time To Hear What's On Your Mind

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the
COLLEGE
issue

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The WYHS **BRAINSTORM**

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Dear Reader,

There exists a certain mutual partnership between high school and its students. Every generation passes through high school, and high school “passes through” each generation. That statement is a parallelism, not a redundancy; it alludes to the idea that high school wears differently in different times, and that different times wear differently on high school. To say it more bluntly, the high school experience is conditioned by its time period. Students of the 1950s recall the grand days of records and phonographs, diners, and cars. Those of the ‘60s have more solemn memories of social injustice, protests and Dr. King’s enduring “I Have a Dream” speech. A storm cleared with the former Soviet Union’s collapse in the early 1990s, ushering in a brief era of relative tranquility and hope for peace.

Our generation is no exception to that axiom. High school now can be best characterized by one word, whose expressions and consequences in this regard are remarkably flexible: competition. At the time being, college admissions seem to be competition’s boldest manifestation in the high school atmosphere. This trend has seen college admission transform from a private and individual pursuit to a collective and still burgeoning industry. This “college commercialization”—forgive me for christening yet another term—has, quite frankly, burdened students with an undue amount of stress—stress that arises from the confluence of so many factors that to provide an exhaustive list would be exhausting. Among them are the need to work diligently to compile a strong transcript, the pressure to study for standardized tests that corroborate those assiduously earned grades, the ambition to garner positions that effect, what is in an admissions officer’s judgment, a “desirable” balance between the tangible and intangible dimensions of the application. We first analyze a trend that provides two equally valid interpretations: is the surging world of extracurricular activities for better or for worse? From there we enjoy a brief respite from the more concrete aspects of college admissions, and question the practicality of the “whetstone of the Core Curriculum”—whether or not diversity of subject matter is a practice that holds water in this day and age.

We contrast the qualities of the two most widely used standardized tests to fulfill the worthy intention of offering

Two



Letter from the Editor cont.

our reader some pragmatic advice.

Almost all high schools offer AP courses, and it's the very ubiquity of the situation that validates a strong challenge to their merit, and ironically, an equally strong affirmation of their weight. In "Conspicuous Matriculation," we urge the reader to see prestige and elitism for what it is: a shallow channel for society's fancies. Analysis adopts its perhaps broadest form (in this issue) in "Academic Epidemic," a biting criticism of how contemporary education has become so "standardized" as to blur the disparity between the qualified and the qualifiable. It's natural to inquire as to the basis for the very viability of this issue—my attempt at one proposes that society's structure has been changing, forcing the admissions process to accommodate. A trek into social terrain has been long in coming, and we hope not to disappoint when we consider that affirmative action isn't achieving the noble intention its original design fathomed. Finally, we concoct a simple panacea for competition's easily anticipated symptom: cheating.

I confess that my reservations about a "college issue" were grounded in the potentially limited range of viable topics—a concern happily voided by the rich scope of articles we have strived to offer.

So, it is with great enthusiasm that we unveil a truly applicable and pertinent issue of the *WYHS Brainstorm*.

Sincerely,

Jared Samilow

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An “Extra-”ordinary Revolution

Maya Borzak ('16)

Currently, extracurricular activities are prerequisite for college acceptance. One in four students participates in a basketball team, student newspaper, or play. However, before the twentieth century, extracurriculars (for this article, we will pretend that “extracurricular” is a noun) were not considered a necessity. The first extracurricular activities were student literary societies, established at Harvard and Yale, and subsequently, fraternities, sororities, and athletics gained popularity toward the mid-century. Some educators felt extracurriculars were a distraction from more essential responsibilities like academics. Regardless, today’s public and private high schools offer an assortment of activities, complementing the academic curriculum and the students’ interests.

A student’s GPA and standardized test scores are no longer adequate for admission at top colleges. Institutions seek students who also demonstrate commitment and interest outside the classroom. This trend goes part and parcel with the rise in number of matriculates—a rise in attendance means a rise in selectivity, which forces admissions departments to distinguish among qualified students outside the academic arena. The colleges rely on intangibles and subjective requirements, limiting the number of students coming in and dictating essential necessities for the student. Nearly 40% of the applicants are academically strong enough for acceptance; colleges therefore have a limit and thus search for qualities

Extracurriculars provide colleges with a glimpse into one’s interests and personality

beyond academics to determine the upcoming class. They are interested in creating a diverse student body, and strive to admit members who are dedicated to the pursuits of their passions.

Extracurriculars provide colleges with a glimpse into one’s interests and one’s personality. Being involved in a sport for all four years displays commitment, while being editor of a publication demonstrates leadership and practical application of academic skills. Demonstrating motivation and delayed gratification in one’s non-academic activities boosts college admission chances; colleges love passionate students because passion guarantees an enthusiastic and eager class. One who is not involved in any extracurriculars and shows only interest in academics and exceptional grades is guaranteed a spot in the Ivy League or top university of one’s choice. The top colleges particularly prefer students involved in extracurricular activities because such involvement shows that the student is not only capable of excelling in school, but also able to excel in “real life” and can contribute to the college. Students’ overall contributions and involvement in their high schools and communities can predict how involved they will be on campus, and how their particular skills will assist the university in cultivating a diverse and energetic atmosphere.

Although necessary for college acceptance or fulfillment of parents’ dream of an Ivy League son, daughter, or acquaintance, extracurriculars are an imperative for any student’s development as a person. They open the student up to opportunities and various social groups, help distinguish one amongst hundreds of others, and highlight individuality. Ultimately, however, it is what the student thinks of himself as a person, not what the colleges believe. Developing the perfect resume shouldn’t be one’s primary high school ambition; the goal of high school is to achieve growth in all areas, linking academic knowledge with practical experience. No two students have the same

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The Core Curriculum: *The Keystone of an Educated Citizenry*

Ari Mazor ('14)

I can count on one hand the number of middle school teachers who told me the following: “We learn history in order to learn from the mistakes of the past.” The answer: three. Simply said, it has become accepted in education today that students must follow a “core curriculum,” a system in which the student learns his or her basic subjects of math, science, English, history, and a foreign language.

American education is at an all-time high; researchers have recently ranked America as having the 13th best education system in the world. Yet, to confer ranks based on test results is simply unfair because such methodology fails to reflect American prowess in multiple subjects, and instead limits the research to reading and math skills. Disciplines such as history, and often even science, are conveniently left out, in an attempt to hide true American skill and the general knowledge of our citizenry. America is great, and both its developments and struggles are greater. Other countries want to produce. America wants to gain. Other countries choose to promote those who can change the world. America chooses to promote the world that can change those students. Other countries seek achievement. America seeks consistency of the greater population.

The core curriculum is the application of the dream, the crystal that focuses our light. Students that learn math, English, science, history, and a foreign language are prepared to take on the world upon graduation. Now, they may not be able to compete in any markets, or actually do anything significant, but if people were tested worldwide in their mid-thirties,

America would easily jump up to 12th, right past Greece. In fact, we may even be 9th in a research project that tested 70 year olds, assuming that people in countries like Cuba failed to live that long.

And since modern American researchers now apply ancient history to their studies, I expect a study to come out soon, proving that American education is #1, at least by 12th century B.C.E standards

The other major benefit of the core curriculum is that it exposes students to subjects they already had experience with in elementary school, with a greater out-of-school approach that students refer to as homework. While this surrounds the student with subjects he considers when choosing to pursue a higher education, it also succeeds in making sure he remains on that path, by traumatizing the student with experiences that

took place in despised, and often feared, subjects.

America’s victory in its crusade to improve national averages is secure. While these techniques may be practically failing, they compute on paper. And since modern American researchers will now apply ancient history to their studies, I expect a study to come out soon, proving that American education is #1, at least by 12th century B.C.E. standards.

By non-applicable standards, we will succeed. As we are stupid enough to believe in this success, we will truly succeed in our own minds. Our minds, sharpened by the whetstone of the core curriculum. Impressing those is definitely an achievement.





Standardized Acronyms

Aaron Zimmerman ('13)

The first and foremost question of high school standardized testing: ACT or SAT? For practically every high school junior, either the SAT or ACT is required in order to apply and gain admission to college. The two assessments are equally accepted, yet many students see a large disparity

Another important distinction between the two lies in the essence of what each exam is testing.

between their SAT and ACT scores. So, what distinguishes these two tests?

Let's start with the actual subject matter that each tests. The SAT consists of three core subjects: mathematics, critical reading, and the newest of the three, writing. On the SAT, math material ranges from pre-algebra to geometry in the form of both multiple choice and fill-in sections. Critical reading measures students' mastery of high-level vocabulary and reading analysis techniques. Finally, writing assesses test-takers' ability to recognize English grammar—via multiple choice—and write coherently and persuasively; this section consists of a mandatory essay that makes up thirty percent of the total writing score. In all sections of the SAT, incorrect answers result in the deduction of a quarter point, while omissions do not result in point deductions.

In contrast, on the ACT, no points are deducted for wrong answers, so always guess! The ACT is made up of four sections: English, mathematics, reading, and science. English tests grammar comprehension and knowledge of sentence structure and flow, Mathematics covers the foundations of pre-algebra through trigonometry. On the ACT, a calculator is required to solve certain questions, while very SAT

question can be done with a paper and pencil. Reading challenges testers to assess four passages, and science presents various graphs and data. Required by most colleges, the optional writing section of the ACT consists of an essay graded on a scale of 2-12, as on the SAT.

Aside from the subject material, a major distinction between the two tests lies in how each test divides its sections. The SAT is composed of 10 small segments, with three sections for each subject and one superfluous segment that does not count toward the student's score. Ranging from ten to twenty-five minutes, each segment presents a fraction of the total questions for each section. So for those who choose the SAT, be prepared to skip from math to reading to writing several times before completing the test. On the other hand, the ACT tests each section in its entirety before moving on to the next. A forty-five minute English section and an hour-long math section come first, which are followed by a five-minute break. After, two thirty-five minute sections, reading and science, are tested. Though the ACT tests each subject once and in one section, the longer duration of each part can drain a tester's stamina.

Another important difference between the two lies in the essence of what each exam is testing. The ACT is designed to test students on what they have learned in the classroom, while the SAT focuses more on applying knowledge by using higher cognitive reasoning. Consequentially, this leads to a difference in how each exam presents challenges to its test takers. The SAT is notorious for being "harder," as questions on this test seem more confounding and cryptic. Nevertheless, the SAT is substantially more generous with timing. The ACT itself is not difficult; however, the speed at which students must pace themselves on the ACT often generates challenges. Doing a simple algebra or geometry problem seems simple, but to do one per minute is often harder than it appears. To



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simplify, many maintain the ACT is more “education” based while the SAT is more “natural ability” based.

As for which test is actually easier...well...that’s for the individual tester to decide.

For some students, this final distinction can make all the difference: the superscore. The concept of “superscoring” applies only to those who test on more than one occasion. This practice allows test takers to “cherry pick” their highest scores from each section of different test dates and combine them to create, as the name appropriately indicates, a super score. That means: if a student took the SAT three different times, scoring an 800 on math in March, in reading in May, and writing in June, most colleges will award him or her a perfect 2400. Virtually every college in America will superscore the SAT, yet very few will superscore the ACT. Nonetheless, there are exceptions: the University of Maryland, New York University, and Florida Atlantic University will gladly superscore both the SAT and the ACT. For those who already have their goal set on a particular college, be sure to look up that school’s testing policy when considering which assessment to take since requirements often differ.

The SAT and ACT both have their advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences. Some possess the higher thinking requisite for the SAT, while others maintain the alacrity necessary for the ACT. In the end, only the individual can determine his/her preference regarding these two tests. What most guidance counselors will recommend is that one should take both and see which is a better fit. After all, everyone knows that a wise tester will always weigh his options...

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exact test score and equal interests combined. The combination of a student’s test scores, extracurricular interests, and individuality help achieve success in college and beyond.

With a trend as powerful and extensive as the “extracurricular revolution,” you would expect to hear arguments against its ascension—which compels a presentation of such. For starters, not everyone can boast a top extracurricular position on his or her application—and the appointment of positions isn’t always fair or rational. As such, many would argue that it isn’t fair to discriminate against an application based on extracurricular achievements

The combination of a student’s test scores, extracurricular interests, and individuality help achieve success in college and beyond.

(or lack thereof). The more clichéd argument that can be raised is that non-academic pursuits should remain separate from school, where they function as undue burdens upon students and direct focus away from schoolwork.

Whether you embrace the idealism of “extracurricularism” or adopt a more traditional stance, being active and decisive about one’s interests is proving to be a key trait that America’s top colleges are seeking.

AP Classes: 5, 4, 3, 2, NONE!

Danielle Sobol ('13)

Before entering high school, most of us probably thought “AP” was just two random letters from the English alphabet strung together by older kids as some kind of slang. As a freshman, you realize “AP” is the title all the honors kids put in front of their classes. It’s only once you become a sophomore, you realize what taking an AP, or advanced placement, class really is: an excuse for teachers to increase your workload and stress level, all in the name of preparing for the dreaded AP test at the end of the year.

According to the College Board, through “AP’s, college-level courses, and exams, you can earn college credit and advanced placement, stand out in the admission process, and learn from some of the most skilled, dedicated, and inspiring teachers in the world.” The website emphasizes the difference in teaching and learning approaches, the variety of courses and the college credit that students will benefit from by taking AP classes, along with an added ability to succeed in college. However, although AP classes have become increasingly popular with many students as the race to get into the best colleges has become more and more competitive, many schools have come to question the long accepted practice of offering AP classes. A prep school in Brooklyn called Berkley-Carroll decided to completely get rid of AP courses by the 2011-2012 school year, because, as the head of school, Robert Vitalo put it, “our major complaint with AP courses was they put more of an emphasis on breadth than on depth.” To replace AP courses, Berkley-Carroll created inter-disciplinary courses that combine different topics, as

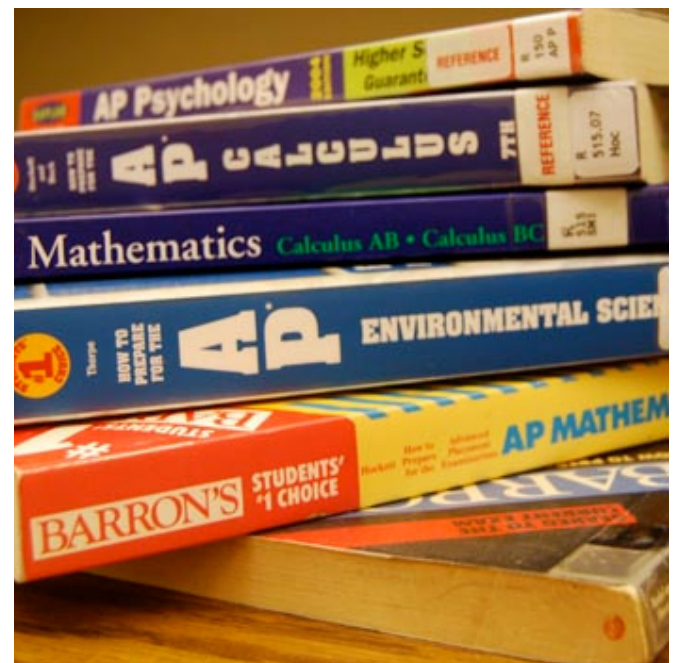
well as created classes that covered the same topics as the AP courses without confining the teaching schedule to one that conforms to the AP schedule.

The AP “mindset” that finishing the material before the AP test supersedes learning it in depth is not the only issue schools are finding with AP courses, however. As colleges are becoming more and more selective with the students they choose to accept, their standards have been going up; this has caused

many elite and even not-so-elite colleges to deny students the opportunity to trade in their 4’s and 5’s on their AP courses for college credit, claiming they want the students to experience the courses with their teachers and materials (read: they don’t want

of their incoming students) frustrating many students

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Conspicuous Matriculation: *The Myth of Elitism*

Moshe Levenson '14)

Marsha knew where she wanted to go to college; there was no doubt in her mind that she would apply “early decision.” But Marsha’s parents were not seeing eye to eye with their daughter.

“Why aren’t you applying to Dartmouth, dear?” asked Mom; “I thought we decided on Cornell?” inquired Dad. Even older brother Max had to interject that their relatives in Cambridge would be disappointed to not to see her there. Finding the right school for you can be a difficult task. And misconceptions about the “elite” Ivy League schools only serve to aggravate an already stressful and trying process.

So how do you find the right match for you? Although the Ivy League schools are some of the best institutions, too many students overlook other schools that may be better matches, and fall victim to the wave of Ivy League obsession.

Many critics sympathize with my individual approach. One author from The Saxon Scope (student newspaper at Langley High) reaffirms that “the college a student attends is rarely a direct indicator of the student’s intelligence, ability to work hard, or likelihood to succeed later in life.” In support of this contention, author Jay Matthews (a Harvard alumnus) in his Harvard Schmarvard condemns the practice of profiling schools based on names and reputations as being the “better” ones. A follow-up study conducted by Stacy Dale reaffirms that no difference in earnings was discovered between Ivy League graduates and those offered admission (but didn’t attend).. Thus, there is no need for any ‘Brown bragging brown bear’ or a snotty bulldog (Yale), since the caliber and potential of the student

supersedes prestige when it comes to success in life.

When applying to colleges one must consider which school would be most helpful in aiding you to succeed in life. There is no right answer and every situation is unique. However, there is a wrong answer. Attending the school just for the name’s sake—literally just to receive and cherish the diploma—is one of those faulty intentions. This most often happens with Ivy Leagues or equivalent level schools. Going to University of Pennsylvania to then expect life to treat you well because of your glimmering UPenn diploma up on the wall is absurd. No need for ‘Penn peckers’ who won’t keep their Quaker beaks shut.

**This begs the ultimate question:
is it still worthwhile to attend an
Ivy League for undergrad
when graduate school matters more?**

Previous generation’s attendances to Ivy League universities might have been more appropriate than nowadays. Back in the heyday, an overwhelming majority of people received jobs after their 4 college years, or even just after high school. In fact, in 1950, only ~50% of people graduated high school let alone attend college; graduate school was uncommon. Post undergraduate studies were a rarity for the most elite and ambitious individuals, captivated by their interests and wanting to succeed in their fields on interest. Contemporary society does not operate the same way. High school graduation rates are the highest they have been in decades and graduate school enrollment increased by 38 percent in the ten years spanning 1999 to 2009.

Evidently, graduate school is becoming a more important factor when trying to land a good job. This begs the ultimate question: is it still worth it to attend an Ivy League for undergrad when graduate school matters more?



Academic Epidemic: *A Revolution of Standardization*

Ari Mazor ('14)

Four thousand years ago, ancestry determined a man's destiny. Four hundred years ago, one would know his future based on the amount of land he owned. Today, one's success (for the most part) is based on his or her education. Unfortunately, as education has taken on this imperative role, the system has reformed itself and created a legacy rather than carried out the primary functions that it was designed to attain. The objective of a college education nowadays is to acquire status rather than enhance one's mind through learning. Simply said, universities no longer exist for the attainment of knowledge. They are here to bestow titles.

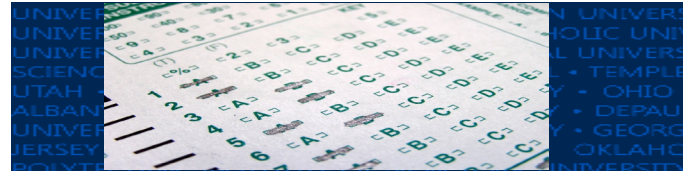
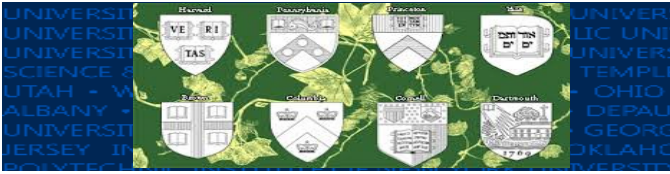
While the above paragraph does indeed reveal a sad truth, one may wonder whether or not there are any practical consequences to this unfortunate change. Regrettably, there are. Monumental ones. For a college graduate of the twenty-first century, it is the name and prestige of his or her college rather than the talent and abilities that were attained and developed there that holds the greatest meaning to him or her. Yes, there exist "special" programs that allow for those with defined interests to pursue fields of interest. However, today, even these interests are generalized. What was once a Bachelor of Communications became a Bachelor of Engineering, and nowadays is clustered under the umbrella of Bachelors of Science. Those who think it easier for scientific and intellectual progression to occur "in a single-file line" are shunning the creativity of the professional. Removing the obvious as well as subtle differences between disciplines in the world of academia did indeed bring about this decline in the student's ability and desire to be unique.

Unfortunately, this trend brings with it additional drawbacks. That which is standardized can be generated. Reproduced. Replicated. Tests are increasingly simplified and "watered down" in order to make their grading easier. Most teachers no longer lead, direct, or encourage pupils to explore new horizons. People have lost skill and individualism and exist only as titles and resumes. This general trend has not only placed us on the precipice of an academic revolution, but also in the midst of a "cheating epidemic." The Educational Testing Service (ETS) acknowledged that its primary concern is the validity of test scores, and of lesser concern is security, for they believe

Removing the obvious as well as subtle differences between disciplines in the world of academia did indeed bring about this decline in the student's ability and desire to be unique.

that most students are honorable. Whether ETS's relaxed security is justified, or whether test-centers have simply become less attentive, is of little consequence. What does matter is that standardization has allowed for

dishonorable and immoral conduct to thrive. Students such as Sam Eshgoff, who was charged for identity fraud on sixteen different tests in late 2011, raked in thousands of dollars by impersonating students and taking their college entrance exams for them. Eshgoff's illegal activity was brazen. He simply showed up and tested in the place of both boys and girls. Neither faculty nor testing administration personnel bothered to check the identities of students. The result of standardization is that it renders everyone nameless and without character. No one is unique, and no one is important. Standardization allows people to get away with crimes that affect the lives the honest students whose hard earned scores fall short of the scores that were purchased rather than earned.



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Doesn't it make sense to attend the more prestigious university for your graduate training? And to have a degree from the best school of its kind when applying for a job in that field? Yes. But, the chances of standing out at an Ivy League over a state school are slim given the strength of the student body. Being part of the elite 'Columbia crew' can only take you so far. Many argue their 'need' to attend an Ivy League is to secure a stable and good job. The sad truth of the matter is that jobs are all about connections. I believe one's connections, friends, family, and coworkers are more important for securing a job than the name of the school you attended. And even though better schools with prestigious names might have faculty with 'better connections,' you do not want a predetermined lifestyle. That is to say that your Princeton professor's connections would land you a job, but not the one meant for you. Your residence and location would be fixed. Raising a family where you want, secondary to your job. Kid's schools, cost of living, taxes, etc. would be prearranged based on your job. And safety. Even something as vital as safety for yourself and for your family is often overlooked. Would attending an Ivy League only to employ you in that area benefit you and your family? According to The Daily Best 6 of the 8 Ivy League Universities as well as MIT and Stanford rank in the top 50 most dangerous colleges in America. Do not think I am trying to detract from the schools' reputations or dissuade you from applying to the school of your dreams. Just understand the issue is complicated and must be looked at from multiple viewpoints. Of course Ivy League schools are right for some teens, just make sure it is truly right for you. Uphold to a greater standard: "We're not celebrating learning anymore when we worship the name-brand colleges. We're celebrating the destination, not the journey."

The most shocking part of it all is the irony present in this social flaw.

Standardization makes it difficult for colleges to distinguish a genuinely good candidate from a "good-on-paper" candidate. This very system allows kids to cheat their way into college in place of others who should have been considered first. This very system allows kids to cheat their way into college in place of others who should have been considered first. It is this very system that stresses the importance of college itself. Higher education is now a vaunted symbol and a social status trumpeted by the very people who dismiss the true value of learning. The "academic epidemic" that this article addresses is really a broad sense of collegiate competition that permeates every aspect of American education. Students compete for grades, extracurricular activities, leadership positions, all in order to "jut out" at an admissions officer who will in fifteen minutes, judge a student's development over four years. Consider: is a student anymore qualified for admission to Harvard (a university that thrives on the mystique of its name rather than academic merit) because he or she attended an "enriching program" for three weeks of their life? The selection process is absurd and illogical—it encourages students to strive to mold their beings to fit the cast an admissions officer is supposed to "look out for."

It is therefore imperative to understand that the current education system creates a notion of control over one's academic future, when in reality the system is in control. But it does not have to be this way.

Is today different from the days past? Of course! We may not be in control of our futures, but with knowledge we may influence it. Understanding the present only enhances our ability to deal with our future. So work hard, play the system's game (legally, of course), and do the best you can. What is the moral, you ask? If you cannot work your way through the system, beat it. That is what high school is for, and what the world of 2013 demands.



Competitive Admissions

Jared Samilow ('14)

The competition for acceptance to top universities has rocketed in the past ten to fifteen years—a trend that posits a natural question: why is now any different than the past? Universities like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Stanford, and company always have profited from their positions as the cream of American higher education, and that we enjoyed a less intense admissions competition in the 1980s, 1970s, and 1960s (and even before that) owes very little to diminished scholastic interest. Digging through old Ivy League records surfaced a table documenting Yale's admit rate from 1979 to 2001. The 1979 admit rate

...one that has no doubt aided in cultivating an atmosphere of Ivy League aspiration in nearly every serious American high school.

was 27.3 percent; its 2012 counterpart, 6.8 percent. In fact, the acceptance rate declined in almost every year from 1979 to 2001, and this dramatic surge in selectivity isn't unique to Yale, but is a feature shared by all top colleges, and one that has no doubt aided in cultivating an atmosphere of Ivy League aspiration in nearly every serious American high school. But it isn't just elite universities that are receiving unprecedented numbers of applications come the new year—the whole of higher education, from the most obscure state school to expensive private colleges, has deeply felt the acute increase in competition. The confluence of two major factors has welcomed such a brutal climate, and we will address each in turn.

American industry fasted in the latter half of the twentieth century and opening years of the twenty-first, while China and other overseas nations fat-

tened their coffers with our capital. In fact, one study claims that since 2001, more than 42,000 factories have closed their doors (and even more before that!). This unfortunate shift has caused our industry to virtually bottom and has displaced many middle class jobs. Such a significant decrease in American blue-collar jobs has helped paint the scene of our present workforce—one in which it is almost impossible for the high school graduate, non-matriculate that is, to find work in a sea of college degrees. In twenty-first century America, very few decent jobs exist that do not mandate a college degree—and those absent of one are consigned to the service industry; or, in many cases, such individuals find that they can make more money from government assistance than by earning money at a job that doesn't demand a higher degree. Only one natural trend should and has resulted from this: more and more people, qualified or not, are seeking admission to college. Any rise in the number of college graduates hardens every high school graduate's bid for employment—and encourages more people to apply to college so that they can be competitive for employment. The relationship described is somewhat like that of a self-fulfilling prophecy. A related phenomenon arises from this, and although not broad enough to merit separate consideration, it is nonetheless noteworthy. That so many students feel *compelled* to attend colleges *impels* them to “over apply”—that is, to submit ten, fifteen, or even twenty applications to bolster their chances of being accepted somewhere. Thus, admissions offices are forced to contend with thousands and thousands of form applications—submissions from students who don't really harbor any affinity or desire to attend that particular university, but are so driven by economic logic that they, to use the term we coined, “over apply.”

Aggravating the frenzy for a college degree is a marked decrease in educational standards, whose repercussions are wide in scope and varied in their expressions. In this “information age,” we've come to rely



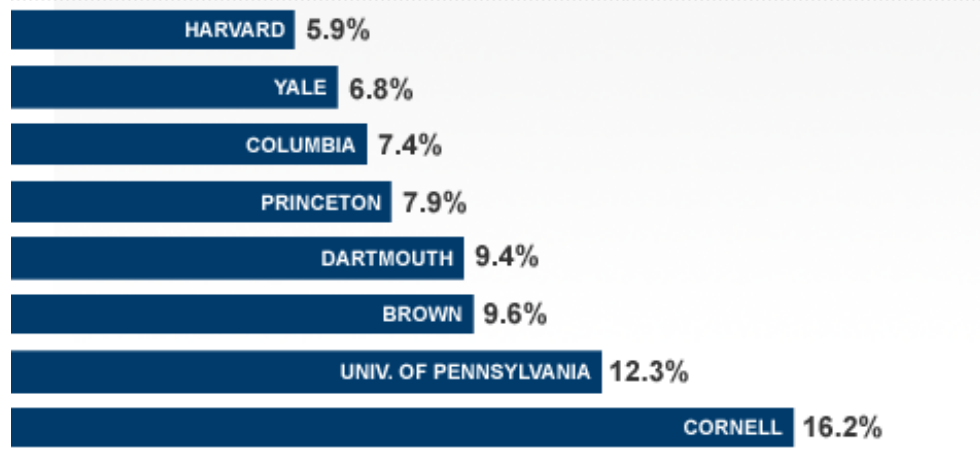
on machines to think and act for us. To paraphrase an Apple executive commenting on the September 2012 release of the iPhone 5, “your iPhone is the object you use most in your life.” That we enjoy such easy access to information

doesn’t bless us without cursing us in some respect, and such affliction manifests itself as our indifference to detail, disregard of formalities, and apathy toward tradition and well roundedness. The booming and still burgeoning test prep industry is but one of many examples that underscores our decreasing interest in learning, and increasing motivation in “getting ahead.” Frankly, universities in general and with exception, have been forced to lower their standards in order to accommodate the erudition that has peeled away from contemporary society—and consequently its education. The SAT is widely regarded as easier

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than it was thirty or so years ago. Lowering standards begets itself: relaxed educational requirements—coupled with the drive to earn a degree (discussed

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE RATES



SOURCE: HARVARD UNIVERSITY; YALE UNIVERSITY; COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY; PRINCETON UNIVERSITY; DARTMOUTH UNIVERSITY; BROWN UNIVERSITY; UNIV. OF PENNSYLVANIA; CORNELL UNIVERSITY

previously)—results in more unqualified students earning admission to college, whose academic presence forces standards to be watered down further, and so on. So, when you really analyze it: it’s not entirely the college world’s

fault that standards are lower, rather universities are being forced to accept the fact that, as a society, “we aren’t what we used to be.” To encapsulate, but hopefully not oversimplify, that we’ve moved so far backwards educationally has diminished the once high bar one needed to reach to earn a degree, and developed a culture in which earning a degree is so easy that anyone can do it—and it’s showing in the number of applications that universities are sorting through every year.

The trends we’ve discussed complement each other nicely, as do the timings: as a college degree gained more occupational importance, standards slipped to accommodate the surge in students vying for admission. Perhaps it is coincidence, perhaps not, but either way—improvement will be elusive. Steady immigration and the economic crisis certainly won’t gentle the conditions: immigration brings people who want their kids to enjoy greater privilege than they did (education is an important means to this end), and the economic crisis heightens the need to bolster one’s job resume. Thus, we tepidly (perhaps regrettably!) offer by default our assent to what will be a long chapter in the annals of admissions history.



An “Affirmative” for Affirmative Action

Isaac Kurtz ('14)

Since its inception, America has been lauded as a land of “social mobility.” A place where if one works hard he or she can expect to be rewarded, a place where parents can expect their children’s quality of life to be better than theirs. One of social mobility’s greatest harbingers has been affirmative action – a loose set of policies that encourage employers, colleges, and other institutions to show preferential treatment toward underrepresented minorities. The term was coined in the 1960s in one of JFK’s executive orders and has been a hotly contested practice since.

Thomas Espenshade—a Princeton sociologist—authored a research book titled “No Longer Separate, Not Yet Equal,” which determined that Asian-Americans needed a near perfect 1550 on their SAT scores to be accepted to top colleges, whites only needed a 1410, and African-Americans only an 1100. Statistics such as these have rekindled debate over the morality and practicality of affirmative action. Recently, New Hampshire and Oklahoma enacted laws barring public universities from considering race in college admissions. While it might be easy to call for a nationwide end to affirmative action, such action would be shortsighted and possibly preclude those of disadvantaged origins from advancing. Luckily, there exists a simpler and more moderate approach than gutting what seems to be an inherently unfair system. Americans must seek to refocus affirmative ac-

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As the college application process rolls around every year, the student who can bubble in Black or Hispanic has a golden ticket for the ride to college. These students’ hard work to become members of an underrepresented minority earns them a leg up against all those other slackers. That Jews are among the non-preferential groups listed would probably convince many WYHS students

that affirmative action should be done away with. However this argument is narrow and does not consider the true demographics of America today. Affirmative action is the primary medium through which economically disadvantaged students can have a chance at joining the upper echelons of society.

The woes of the public school systems in poor areas aren’t new to the American public. As school funding is linked directly to local property taxes, residents of affluent suburbs can expect their children’s schools to receive many resources, while those living in poorer neighborhood are forced to deal with unqualified teachers, a paucity of supplies, and administrative in-

competence. This has created an incessant issue in society today in which affluent families have the ability to provide their children with the top education allowing them to get into top Universities, enabling those students to compete for and receive high paying jobs that will continue this

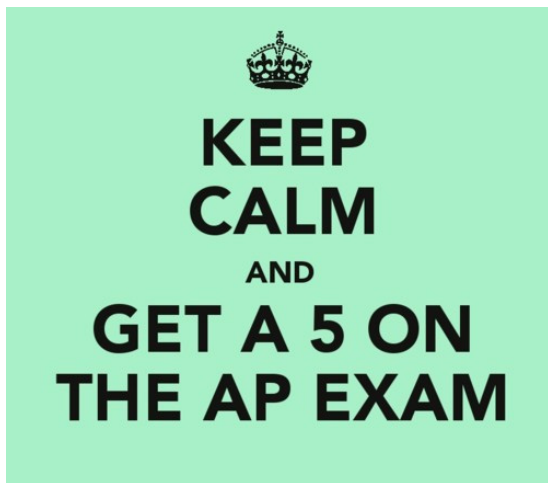




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who worked so hard in their AP courses in high school in order to place out in college and save on tuition.

As if our modern school environment is not cutthroat enough, AP classes have added an extra layer to the competitive nature between students of similar caliber, causing a “race” between students to see who can take the most AP courses in a year and pass. This also puts students who are weaker at certain courses at a disadvantage, as they struggle to take every AP course available, even in subjects that are not their strong suit. Also, many students do well in the course and receive good grades, but have poor performance on the AP test, denying them credit in a course that they worked hard at and succeeded in. As a participant in various AP courses in multiple sub-



jects throughout my high school career, I can attest to some of the obvious flaws in the system. In a Jewish high school where the holidays and various programs dictate the school calendar, it can be difficult for the teacher and class to stay on an AP schedule causing unnecessary stress for all parties. Also, many of the AP courses are on a very similar level to the honors and accelerated courses being offered, without the stress of a test in May and a specific coursework that needs to be finished by that time. In all honesty, I believe high school should stay high school, and we should save the college course for, well, college. After all, if we try to make High School College, then we’ll be missing out on four great years of our lives.

circle onto the next generation. Moreover, affluent “minorities” have an even greater opportunity, for their children are still considered underrepresented groups who lack equal opportunities, and are grouped together with the genuinely underprivileged.

As of 2013, the topic of affirmative action has yet again journeyed to the highest court in the nation. In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, a white woman is suing the University of Texas at Austin for rejecting her application in favor of less qualified minorities. The Court ruled in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) that racial preferences could be taken into account when deciding admissions, but that setting quotas on the number of minority students that must be accepted is strictly unconstitutional. Later this year, the court will vote on whether or not to “gut Grutter”—and with it the aspirations of thousands of poor and unfortunate students. This decision could have a big impact on the college admissions for the class of 2014; public universities in all states will be required to end affirmative action should the court rule so, and private universities that depend on federal funding (which is all of them!) will have to comply in order to keep receiving government assistance.

It is time for us to reward not ethnicity, but to reward all those who are truly underprivileged. It is simply absurd to favor a low-income African American student over a low-income white student—especially given the fact that blacks have been making great strides. Education has been said to be the key to success, however, how can such idealism bear fruit if we let poverty deny it to so many? Now more than ever, colleges must seek to not only reach out those that can “get a piece” of the 3.5 billion dollar test prep industry, but to look out for those who cannot even afford their own school supplies. For if we fail to provide these deprived souls the remedy of knowledge, we are failing as Americans and are cannibalizing the vaunted American dream.



The Academic Dishonesty Disease: *What it is, and How to Fight it*

Matthew Silkin ('14)

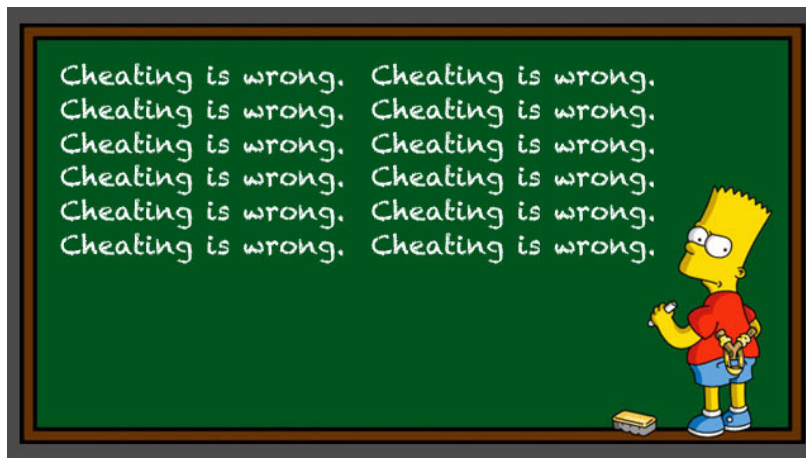
There's an epidemic going around American high schools. It is highly contagious among stressed-out juniors and seniors, and can possibly be genetic. Symptoms include sudden visits to tutors, unusually high grades, and acceptance into top schools that are seemingly an exertion for an invalid. The epidemic is known as *academius disintegritus*, and one is most prone to catching it during high school. This malady isn't spread by international travel or lack of vaccination, but by a steadily rising intensity in the college admission competition. The pressure to be admitted to a top college has never been fiercer in this country. In 2012, Harvard accepted 5.9 percent of its applications—its then record low, which was topped (bottomed?) by this year's rate!

But seriously, academic dishonesty is becoming more rampant these days, and students are being sneakier about it than ever. The way they cheat their way into college is by paying tutors to write college essays for them – not editing, not helping with ideas, just flat-out writing the essay for the student. Tutors who “help” these kids are reimbursed immensely for their effort – the parents of one of these students actually paid the rent for the tutor for the next few months. Refer to an excellent episode of the Colbert Report for satire about “hire learning.”

You might have noticed that I wrote “parents.” That was not an accident. While years ago, parents might have severely punished their kid for paying a tutor to write essays for them, now PARENTS are of-

ten the ones paying the tutors for the essay, even going so far as to pay the tutor's living expenses!

Why go to these lengths, though? The answer is simple, yet complicated: standards. No longer is it acceptable to breeze by with a B+. No longer is a 3 or even sometimes a 4 on an AP accepted for college credit. No longer are state universities letting just average kids in. To get into college, you need to be exceptional, and parents just don't want their kid seen as the “average” anymore. So they ask the tutor, the one who's been to college and is familiar with colleges' expectations, to write the essay. It's no surprise that many students who earn admission in this duplicitous manner aren't successful at the schools their parents labored so hard to get them admitted to



Franky, “overzealous tutoring” isn't the only form cheating assumes. Do not despair,

though – there is a vaccine (even though I previously denied its existence) against this epidemic: work. Working hard at school means that when the time for college applications comes, you don't send them off to some tutor for completion– that's lazy, and that spreads the epidemic. But by working hard at school and being honest, we can fight this epidemic and put an end to academic dishonesty once and for all!