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You've Got College Mail!

by Vicki Salemi

Article provided by The CollegeBound Network

Okay, it boils down to this: After all the campus tours, interviews, recommendations, applications, your future--your very fate--is in the hands of your postal carrier?! Yep, that's right! Although the postal worker delivers your mail every day, never before have you been so excited and nervous to see him or her. Bulky envelope or skinny envelope, which will it be? Your heart races as you run home from class to catch a glimpse of that little white truck as you realize your destiny is sealed even before you rip open the envelope ...

Skinny envelopes bring good news, too!

The unofficial rule is that fat envelopes represent acceptances because they are full of info, and skinny envelopes represent rejection. But sometimes rules are made to be broken. At Binghamton University in Binghamton, New York, the acceptance letter is literally paper thin. "We send a one-page letter congratulating the student on their acceptance and we indicate we'll follow up with another mailing about housing information, etc. We're one of the few schools who do it this way," notes a Binghamton admissions representative.

At Scranton University in Scranton, Pennsylvania, the good news is actually indicated on the outside of the envelope. "Congratulations on your acceptance," it reads. "It's a nice touch and a nice way for the students to be excited," explains Joe Roback, director of admissions. Scranton sends about eight mailings to prospective students throughout their senior year, including packets of useful information after the acceptance letters are sent, such as a list of what to bring on move-in day.

Other schools such as Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, are more traditional. "In mid-March we send a big, thick 8-1/2 x 11-inch envelope which includes the acceptance letter, residence hall information, [and] deposit forms to hold their spot," explains Tara Zinna, senior assistant director of admissions. "We tell them they need to respond by May 1." As suspected, the waitlist mailing is a slightly lighter envelope containing a letter and a response card so students can indicate if they either accept or reject a position on the waitlist. As for the rejection letter? Drew sends the skinny

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envelope every college-bounder dreads.

You've seen one viewbook, you've seen 'em all

While admittance letters are probably the most important pieces of mail you'll receive in the college search process, they're certainly not the only ones. Viewbooks, invitations to open houses, scholarship info--you name it, you've probably received it.

"It's like they're stalking you," describes Megan Steel, senior at Ramapo High School in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. "You get mail from schools you've never even heard of and they keep sending stuff. Eventually you learn to sort through all the junk mail to only look at the schools that really interest you."

And how do schools get your name and address? According to Zinna, the Drew University admissions officer, it occurs in a variety of ways. "It can be from a high school visit, college fairs, on-campus interview, or even an inquiry through our Web site," she says. "Like other schools, we also get information from the College Board." In other words, taking the PSAT and SAT means you're signing up for loads of college mail, too.

As for the most, um, "memorable" piece of mail received, high-school senior Megan Steel got a Christmas card from one of the schools she applied to, which simply said, "Wish you were here!" Megan chuckles, "It's like they were taunting me!"

Stress be gone

As for the anxiety, you're not the only one dealing with tension. According to Anne Geyer, window clerk at the Montvale, New Jersey, post office, "[In December], you see a lot of frantic parents because they're the ones sending the applications for their kids. And if at least one of the parents doesn't work, they're also the ones getting the mail first upon acceptance time," she says.

Staying calm, cool, and collected is the best advice. "I tried not to worry about waiting for acceptance mailings because I could not control it at that point, but it's hard not to think about it," explains James Landon, a sophomore at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. "The entire application process was exhausting and tedious. I was just glad it was over with in April."

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