

CATEGORIES REGARDING COLLEGE CHOICES

One of the questions asked most frequently is, "What should my final list of colleges include?" Inherent in this question are two considerations: first, how many schools should I apply to and second, what range of schools should be included with regard to admissions competition?

We discourage students from adopting the "shotgun approach" of applying to a multitude of schools. We also discourage students, regardless of academic ability, to "put all of their eggs in one basket" by applying to only one institution or one level of college. As a general rule, we advise that students apply to approximately five schools which vary in terms of selectivity, but which have the most important features desired by the student. As long as a student does not overly limit himself/herself geographically, finding such a group of schools is not that difficult a task when we consider the large number of colleges and universities found in the United States. **Generally, we recommend that a student's final list include schools from each of the following categories:**

Category I A student's top choice schools. It is fine if this group includes a couple of "reaches."

Category II Schools that possess the significant features a student desires and at which the probability of admission is likely to slightly better than likely. These are categorized as "realistic" schools.

Category III Schools that have most of the features a student desires and at which the probability of admission is "high." We refer to schools in this category as a student's "likely schools".

While there is no hard and fast rule, students usually include two schools from *Category I* & *Category II* and at least one school from *Category III*. Obviously, those schools that qualify as "reaches", "realistic", or "likely", vary tremendously from student to student. Each student has an individual academic profile and should select schools accordingly, making sure that choices range through all three categories. We would like to emphasize that students are continually encouraged to apply to more than one "realistic" and/or "likely" school. This will increase the likelihood of two or more acceptances and provide each student with some choices.