Looking beyond grades and scores

Students’ stories move admissions panels

By Peter Schwonak

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NANCY KALISHER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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Money & Careers, G1.

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Colleges face tough decisions in competitive admissions field

**ADMISSIONS Continued From Page 36**

For high school seniors applying to the nation's top colleges and universities, the inner workings of admissions offices are shrouded in mystery, a mazy process that fascinates and frustrates parents and students alike. But for those who are accepted, the decision to choose one of the nation's most competitive colleges, the process is a bit more clear.

"This is the sobering part," Tufts admissions dean Lee Collins tells the seven-member committee gathered around a long conference table on a recent morning at the school's campus. "It's a long march.

The Tufts admissions office is one of the nation's most competitive, with an acceptance rate of just 21 percent. But even for those students who are accepted, the process can be daunting.

"The first few weeks of the process are the most difficult," Collins said. "Students have to decide whether they want to attend the school, and that's a big decision.

"But the real challenge comes later, when students have to decide whether they want to stay.

"The process is a long one, and it's not easy. But it's a necessary one, and we're proud to be part of it."