

AMHERST

Fifty-Sixth Annual Report to Secondary Schools

A Note from the Dean on the Class of 2006

When John Adams of Braintree, Massachusetts was 15 years old, his father, also John, and his tutor, Joseph Marsh, decided that young John was sufficiently “fitted for college” and should embark upon the college application process at Harvard College. The process consisted of a single examination and, accordingly, he was to be greeted not by a smiling college admission counselor, well-schooled in the fine and gracious art of easy banter, but examined by the President of Harvard and the entire faculty, then numbering seven, who were to be wiggled and robed. Joseph Marsh had agreed to accompany John to Cambridge for his examination, but on the appointed day fell ill. John “collected resolution enough to proceed,” and began “a very melancholy journey” by horseback to Cambridge which, Adams later recalled, was wrapped in threatening clouds. He did well despite all the travails of the day, however, and was not only admitted to Harvard, but was awarded a partial scholarship. As a consequence, Adams later wrote, “I was as light when I came home, as I had been heavy when I went.”

Not so fortunate was James O. Woodward who applied to Williams College, the Commonwealth’s second oldest college, in 1880. He was informed by O.M. Fernald (“for the examiners”) that “the result of the examination is that we cannot accept you. The math examination was a failure, the Latin very poor, and in the Greek, you did not attempt to do the work.” It seems superfluous for me to observe that words were not minced in that particular letter to the unfortunate young James O. Woodward.

Why do I begin this, the *Fifty-Sixth Annual Report to Secondary Schools*, with these brief sojourns into the 18th and 19th centuries? First, I find both Adams’ experience and Fernald’s letter somehow peculiarly bracing. In an era when I am, mostly by way of various harangues and editorials, reminded virtually weekly that the admission process is too “stressful,” even cruel, I cannot help but wonder whether there is something to be learned from Adams’ absolute acceptance of life’s inevitable and manifold vicissitudes and trials, as well as from Fernald’s brutal honesty. Did John Adams’ decision to sign the Declaration of Independence, for example, knowing full well that he could be hanged for having done so, owe itself in some small measure to his decision as a 15-year-old to forge on with his examination in Cambridge despite a miserable day and an arduous and lonely ride? These are mere musings, certainly, and, while thought provoking, are not at all helpful in any concrete

way, but I hope my second observation and the data contained herein may be of use to you in your counseling and planning.

What also strikes me about Adams’ and Woodward’s experiences with the college admission process of the time is its clarity and straightforward nature. One either knew one’s Latin, Greek, and Mathematics or did not and was accordingly qualified or not. That is certainly not the case at Amherst today. Virtually all of our applicants are not only qualified (although, I suspect, few could compete with John Adams’ Greek and Latin), but are more than qualified and able not only to do the work here but to do it exceedingly well. This phenomenon owes itself largely to self-selection among students applying to Amherst and similar institutions. For that reason, we have, for 56 years, presented comprehensive and detailed data on our applicant, accept, and matriculant pool with the hope that secondary school guidance counselors can make reasonable inferences about individual students’ places in Amherst’s applicant pool.

We received 5,238 applications for the Class of 2006, accepted 957, and are matriculating 412. Women account for 52% of the Class, fully 36% are students of color, and 6% are non-U.S. citizens. Our students hail from 329 different secondary schools.

The academic credentials of the entering class are arresting indeed. Because average SAT scores, rightly or wrongly, tend to be the *lingua franca* of academic quality, or the closest thing we have to a common standard or means of comparison, I will quickly observe that the average composite SAT score for the Class of 2006 is 1416. I urge you, however, to dig more deeply into the table, which exhibits the range of SAT scores for applicants, admits, and matriculants. I hope those data reassure you that the admission process here is far from simplistic or crudely formulaic. Allow me also to observe that of students matriculating from secondary schools that report class rank, 22% of our entering students are Valedictorians.

While there is much to celebrate in these data, I must say that I continue to be disheartened by several trends in the profession. Because a growing number of the nation’s most competitive and prestigious colleges and universities are taking close to or more than half of their class early decision, I see enormous pressure being exerted on young people to conclude the college search process prematurely, and with the pressure has come a concomitant tendency to

strategize rather than search. I find the narrow and shallow institutional self interest that is driving this trend genuinely galling. So what does Amherst do? We simply pledge to take no more than 30% of our class early. I was pleased to learn that Stanford, too, has chosen to swim against the tide, and I applaud their position of taking no more than 25% of their class early. I am disturbed also by an increasing tendency to “leverage” financial aid or to use it as a part of a “tuition income maximization model” of greater or lesser sophistication. To see “leveraging” replacing a focus on “access” in the distribution of financial aid is certainly disheartening. Again, what is Amherst’s stance? We continue to practice genuinely “need blind” admission and to meet the full need of all admitted students. In addition, for the last three years, we have eliminated the loan component of financial aid packages for low income students and significantly reduced it for middle income students. Of course, it is far easier for a school with Amherst’s considerable means to take the “high road” in awarding aid, but I do believe access has been one of Amherst’s core values (if not THE core value) since its founding as a college for “indigent and pious” young men.

As pervasive as the critique on the admission process as “stressful,” capricious, or confounding is the critique of the sheer cost of higher education. Before I introduce our staff, I return to John Adams for perspective. John’s father sold off 10 acres of the family farm in Braintree to help finance John’s Harvard education, and this at a time when property

was treasured above all other investments!

I hope that I or a member of my staff will have the opportunity to meet you or to renew conversations this year. To that end, allow me to introduce this year’s staff: Director of Admission/Senior Associate Dean **Katie Fretwell**; Senior Associate Director/Associate Dean **Kathy Mayberry**; Associate Deans **Michael Hawkins**, **Cate Zolkos**, and **Joy St. John**; Assistant Dean **Meg Caddeau**; Admission Fellows **Chris Kuipers**, **Darren Reaume**, and **Julie Lipez**.

Finally, let me thank you for all past and future kindnesses. Should your travel bring you to Amherst, please do not hesitate to visit with us.



Tom Parker
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid

* I am indebted to David McCullough for his wonderful biography of John Adams, in particular, his account of John’s experience with Harvard; and to Madeline Cuccia of the Williams College Admission Office for O.M. Fernald’s letter.

The Admission and Financial Aid Staff for 2002-03

Tom Parker, *Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*

Admission

Katharine Fretwell, *Director of Admission/
Senior Associate Dean*

Kathy Mayberry, *Senior Associate Director/
Associate Dean*

Michael Hawkins, *Associate Dean*

Joy St. John, *Associate Dean*

Cate Zolkos, *Associate Dean*

Meg Caddeau, *Assistant Dean*

Chris Kuipers, *Admission Fellow*

Julie Lipez, *Admission Fellow*

Darren Reaume, *Admission Fellow*

Nancy Ratner, *Admission Counselor*

Constance Broughear, *Admission
Processing Assistant*

Mary Carlson, *Staff Assistant*

Jean Clark, *Director of Admission Information
Systems*

Melissa Makepeace O’Neil, *Admission
Information Coordinator*

Cindy Dumais-Holubowich, *Campus
Visit Coordinator*

Susan Geissler, *Staff Assistant*

Flora Chamlin, *Administrative Assistant to the
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*

Linda Loven, *Reference Secretary*

Linda Rodriguez, *Admission Assistant*

Judith Trzcieski, *Data Entry Coordinator*

Financial Aid

Joe Paul Case, *Director of Financial Aid*

Kathleen Gentile, *Associate Dean*

Michael Ellison, *Associate Dean*

Pamela Crouse, *Department Secretary*

Joan Millett, *Financial Aid Counselor*

First-Year Students in the Class of 2006

September 16, 2002

A Snapshot

Student Background Profile

48% are men; 52% women
43% are receiving scholarship and grant aid
36% indicated they are students of color
(149 students)
13% Asian-American (55 students)
10% African-American (42 students)
8% Latino/a (32 students)
5% multi-ethnic (20 students)
11% are first-generation college students
10% are children of alumni
6% are non-US citizens
15% have indicated that English is not their
first language
Students hail from 35 states, DC, and 17 countries

Student Academic Profile

82% finished in the top 10% of their class
(of those with reported rank)
22% are valedictorians
(of those with reported rank)
33% plan to pursue science or math
21% plan to pursue humanities
25% plan to pursue social sciences
7% plan to pursue arts or foreign language
32% of the class were admitted through
Early Decision
Mean SAT scores: verbal 709, math 707
Mean ACT score: 30
Secondary schools represented in the class: 329

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	2397 (46%)	2841 (54%)	5238
Accepted	440 (46%)	517 (54%)	957
Enrolled	199 (48%)	213 (52%)	412

For the Class of 2006, 368 students applied under the Early Decision option; 132 students were offered admission.

Statistics for the Past Decade

Year	Number of Applicants	Number of Students Accepted	Number of Students Enrolled
1992	4572	952 (21%)	395 (42%)
1993	4302	991 (23%)	423 (43%)
1994	4823	976 (20%)	418 (43%)
1995	4836	943 (19%)	422 (45%)
1996	4682	922 (20%)	431 (47%)
1997	5210	1039 (20%)	434 (42%)
1998	4491	1030 (23%)	440 (43%)
1999	5194	997 (19%)	428 (43%)
2000	5352	1041 (19%)	434 (42%)
2001	5175	973 (19%)	430 (44%)
2002	5238	957 (18%)	412 (43%)

Secondary School Representation

	Public	Private	Parochial	Other
Applied	3263 (62%)	1609 (31%)	351 (7%)	15 (%)
Accepted	552 (58%)	342 (36%)	60 (6%)	3 (%)
Enrolled	232 (56%)	153 (37%)	27 (7%)	0 (%)
Number of Schools Represented in the Class				
	196 (60%)	109 (33%)	24 (7%)	0 (%)

Rank in Class

	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
Top 10th	1924 (75%)	493 (88%)	179 (82%)
Second 10th	388 (15%)	55 (10%)	32 (15%)
Third 10th	133 (5%)	9 (2%)	6 (3%)
Top 31-50th	77 (3%)	2 (%)	2 (%)
Total Number of Ranked Students			
	2558 (49%)	559 (58%)	219 (53%)
Total Number of Unranked Students			
	2680 (51%)	398 (42%)	193 (47%)

Distribution of College Board SAT I Scores

VERBAL	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1161	410 (44%)	141 (35%)
700-749	1255	242 (26%)	113 (28%)
650-699	999	134 (14%)	70 (17%)
600-649	785	109 (12%)	49 (13%)
550-599	365	38 (4%)	23 (6%)
500-549	159	7 (1%)	2 (%)
450-499	61	2 (%)	1 (%)
200-449	48	0	0
Mean	684	720	709
Mid 50%		670-780	660-770
MATH	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1084	371 (39%)	139 (34%)
700-749	1328	265 (28%)	113 (28%)
650-699	1194	151 (16%)	71 (18%)
600-649	720	98 (10%)	49 (12%)
550-599	315	43 (5%)	22 (5%)
500-549	117	14 (1%)	10 (2%)
450-499	51	0	0
200-449	24	0	0
Mean	687	716	707
Mid 50%		680-770	650-770

Geographical Distribution of Those Matriculating

New York	85	Minnesota	4	U.S. Military Bases	1
Massachusetts	46	Vermont	4	Total US	385
California	38	New Mexico	4	International	27
Illinois	23	Arizona	3		
Connecticut	20	Indiana	3	International Students	7%
Pennsylvania	19	Maine	3	New England	20%
Maryland	19	Missouri	3	Middle Atlantic	36%
New Jersey	16	Arkansas	1	Midwest	14%
Texas	13	Georgia	1	South-Southeast	6%
Ohio	12	Nebraska	1	West-Southwest	17%
Florida	11	Kansas	1	Total	100%
District of Columbia	9	Nevada	1		
Washington	8	Kentucky	1		
Virginia	8	Montana	1		
Michigan	7	North Dakota	1		
New Hampshire	6	Tennessee	1		
Rhode Island	5	West Virginia	1		
Colorado	4	Wisconsin	1		

Financial Aid

	2002 (Class of 2006)	2001 (Class of 2005)
Accepted students who applied for scholarship and grant aid	636 (67%)	617 (64%)
Accepted students who demonstrated need for scholarship and grant aid	391	408
Of those, accepted students awarded scholarship and grant aid	391	408
Total amount offered	\$10,235,633	\$7,693,838
Average amount offered	\$26,178	\$21,344
Matriculating students who received scholarship and grant aid	178	191
Total amount	\$4,264,515	\$4,482,938
Average amount	\$23,957	\$23,470
Percent of class receiving scholarship and grant aid	43%	44%

Fall Transfer Students

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	84 (44%)	108 (56%)	192
Accepted	8 (53%)	7 (47%)	15
Enrolled	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	11

Two transfer students enrolled in the Spring of 2002; five transfer students enrolled in the Fall of 2001.

Senior Major Distribution for the Class of 2002

Single Majors		Computer Science and		Law, Jurisprudence & Social	
American Studies	5	Economics	4	Thought and Political	
Anthropology	9	Computer Science and		Science	1
Asian Languages and		German	1	Law, Jurisprudence & Social	
Civilizations	4	Computer Science and		Thought and Psychology	3
Biology	15	Philosophy	1	Music and Computer Science	1
Chemistry	7	Computer Science and		Music and French	1
Classics	3	Russian	1	Music and Physics	1
Computer Science	8	Economics and English	1	Music and Psychology	2
Economics	23	Economics and French	2	Music and Religion	1
English	39	Economics and History	1	Music and Spanish	1
European Studies	1	Economics and Law,		Philosophy and English	1
Fine Arts	9	Jurisprudence & Social		Philosophy and Political	
French	6	Thought	4	Science	2
Geology	8	Economics and Philosophy	1	Philosophy and Psychology	1
History	19	Economics and		Philosophy and Religion	1
Independent Study	1	Political Science	1	Philosophy and Spanish	1
Interdisciplinary Studies	4	Economics and Psychology	3	Physics and Anthropology	1
Law, Jurisprudence &		Economics and Spanish	2	Physics and Mathematics	1
Social Thought	22	English and Asian Languages		Physics and Philosophy	1
Mathematics	4	& Civilizations	1	Physics and Russian	1
Music	7	English and Computer Science	1	Political Science and	
Neuroscience	12	English and Fine Arts	1	Economics	1
Philosophy	7	English and French	6	Political Science and	
Physics	4	English and Law, Jurispru-		Philosophy	1
Political Science	31	dence & Social Thought	2	Political Science and Spanish	4
Psychology	24	English and Music	3	Psychology and Anthropology	1
Religion	4	English and Philosophy	1	Psychology and French	1
Russian	1	English and Physics	1	Psychology and Russian	1
Sociology	7	English and Psychology	2	Psychology and Sociology	1
Spanish	5	European Studies and French	2	Psychology and Spanish	2
Theater & Dance	4	Fine Arts and English	2	Psychology and Women's &	
Women's & Gender Studies	1	Fine Arts and French	1	Gender Studies	1
Total Single Majors	294	Fine Arts and Neuroscience	1	Religion and Geology	1
Double Majors		Fine Arts and Psychology	2	Religion and Law, Jurispru-	
American Studies and		French and History	1	dence & Social Thought	1
Chemistry	1	French and Law, Jurispru-		Russian and Political Science	2
American Studies and		dence & Social Thought	1	Sociology and Women's &	
Economics	2	French and Music	1	Gender Studies	1
American Studies and		French and Physics	1	Theater & Dance and History	1
Law, Jurisprudence &		French and Political Science	2	Theater & Dance and	
Social Thought	2	French and Psychology	4	Psychology	1
American Studies and Spanish	1	French and Sociology	1	Total Double Majors	136
Anthropology and French	1	Geology and French	1	Political Science, Economics,	
Anthropology and		Geology and Music	1	and Philosophy	1
Political Science	1	German and Spanish	1	Total Triple Majors	1
Anthropology and Psychology	1	History and French	3	Total	
Anthropology and Sociology	1	History and Music	1	Class of 2002 Graduates	431
Asian Languages & Civiliza-		History and Political Science	1		
tions and Economics	1	History and Psychology	2		
Asian Languages & Civiliza-		History and Spanish	1		
tions and Music	1	Interdisciplinary Studies			
Biology and Anthropology	1	and Economics	1		
Biology and Economics	1	Interdisciplinary Studies			
Biology and English	1	and French	1		
Biology and Philosophy	1	Interdisciplinary Studies			
Chemistry and Biology	1	and Political Science	1		
Chemistry and Computer		Law, Jurisprudence & Social			
Science	1	Thought and Economics	1		
Chemistry and English	1	Law, Jurisprudence & Social			
Chemistry and Theater &		Thought and Music	1		
Dance	1				

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