

AMHERST

Fifty-Ninth Annual Report to Secondary Schools

A Note from the Dean on the Class of 2009

Last year, before I reviewed the admission year, I turned to a sort of admission parable. I do so again this year, and I expect that this will become something of a tradition (at least until I run out of parables) in the years to come.

I have struggled through the admission process with four of my own children, and several years ago during a visit to a wonderful, small New England college on a splendid October Saturday, things were going exceedingly well. My twin daughters had had a fine tour with an engaging and dynamic tour guide and were in the midst of lunch with the track coach. Unexpectedly, however, the Dean of Admission, a gentleman I had studiously avoided (for reasons that will reveal themselves as this parable unfolds), spotted us across the dining hall and came over to say hello. He could not have been more engaging and welcoming. My daughters became visibly wary. Upon leaving the dining hall, we ran into the President (consider the odds!), whom I knew somewhat well. He too was gracious and personable. In fact, he invited us to join him on the roof of the tallest building on campus. Once there, as we gazed out over the Atlantic, this renowned scholar of Islamic cultures explained how coastal Islamic societies were significantly more open and urbane than those inland. The implicit message, delivered with wit and verve, was, of course, clear—come to our college rather than to those other hopelessly parochial land-locked small New England liberal arts colleges. Wariness does not begin to describe my daughters' mood as we left the building. Once we were settled in the car, it became inescapably apparent that this wonderful college, once near the top of one of my twins' list, had fallen precipitously from grace. The reason for its demise was obvious if unspoken. Entirely inadvertently, of course, Dad's relationship with two of that college's senior administrators had become far too much a part of the equation.

The lesson of this year's parable is rather simple. The choice of a college is a sort of declaration of independence, and the degree to which it is perceived as such by students is critical. Attempts to control or coerce by well meaning (or not so well meaning) adults generally backfire in comical or, worse, insidious ways.

It seems pedestrian perhaps to move now to a review of the Class of 2009 and some ruminations (grumbings, perhaps) about the admission and financial aid

scene generally, but I do believe sharing as much data as is possible and reasonable will continue to be helpful to students, parents, and secondary school counselors.

We received 6,281 applications for the Class of 2009, the largest number the college has ever received: We accepted 1,176 and matriculated 431. Women account for 52% of the class; fully 33% are students of color, and 7% are non-U.S. citizens. Our students hail from 342 different secondary schools, and one was home schooled.

Because average SAT and ACT 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 2009 is 1442, and the average composite ACT score is 31. The academic credentials cited above are certainly arresting, but I urge you 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. In fact, I believe that the Admission Committee is at its best when it is able to recognize academic potential that is not necessarily reflected in standardized testing.

To my way of thinking, what lies behind, or perhaps accounts for, such statistics is more important. What has struck me thus far in my six-year tenure here are the habits of mind of Amherst students: They are curious, comfortable, even exhilarated in the world of ideas, remarkably aware of the world around them, and deeply committed to the values of a diverse community. Fascinating to me also is the degree to which they are deeply interested in the admission process itself—an interest that I suspect grows out of their knowledge that the content and context of their education in a small community such as ours is shaped as much by myriad interactions with fellow students as by formal classroom instruction.

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 or early action, I see enormous pressure being exerted on young people to conclude the college search process prematurely, and with that

pressure has come a concomitant tendency to strategize rather than search. This trend commingles with a bewildering and contradictory array of early decision or early action plans, the net effect of which is to make a complex process ever more confusing. I find the narrow and shallow institutional self interest that is driving these trends genuinely galling. So what does Amherst do? We simply pledge to take no more than 29% of our 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, which almost inevitably results in staggering debt levels for students. 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 six 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.

I hope that I or a member of my staff will have the opportunity to meet you or to renew conversations on the road. 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 **Demisha Lee**; Acting Assistant Dean **Eli Bromberg**; Senior Admission Fellow/Coordinator of Admission Outreach **Darren Reaume**; Admission Fellows **John Quigley** and **Julian Michael**.

Finally, and as always, 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

The Admission and Financial Aid Staff for 2005-06

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*
Demisha Lee, *Associate Dean*
Cate Zolkos, *Associate Dean*
Eli Bromberg, *Acting Assistant Dean*
Darren Reaume, *Senior Admission Fellow*
Julian Michael, *Admission Fellow*
John Quigley, *Admission Fellow*
Nancy Ratner, *Admission Counselor*
Elaine Brighty, *College Counselor*
Constance Broughear, *Admission
Processing Assistant*
Mary Carlson, *Staff Assistant*
Jean Clark, *Director of Admission Information
Systems*
Melissa Makepeace-O’Neil, *Admission
Information Coordinator*

Donna Eaton, *Campus Visit Coordinator*
Susan Geissler, *Staff Assistant*
Flora Chamlin, *Administrative Assistant to the
Dean of Admission and Financial Aid*
Debbie Fuller, *Reference Secretary*
Linda Rodriguez, *Admission Assistant*
Judith Trzcieski, *Data Entry Coordinator*

Financial Aid

Joe Paul Case, *Dean/Director*
Kathleen Gentile, *Senior Associate Dean*
Michael Ellison, *Associate Dean of Admission
and Financial Aid*
Michael Albano, *Financial Aid Counselor*
Nancy Robinson, *Student Employment
Coordinator*
Pamela Guyott, *Department Secretary*
Kelly Martula, *Student Records Assistant*

First-Year Students in the Class of 2009

October 1, 2005

A Snapshot

Student Background Profile

48% are men; 52% women
47% are receiving scholarship and grant aid
33% indicated they are students of color
(142 students)
10% Asian-American (45 students)
9% African-American (41 students)
6% Latino/a (24 students)
< 1% Native American (1 student)
7% multi-ethnic (31 students)
12% are first-generation college students
12% are children of alumni
7% are non-U.S. citizens
Students hail from 35 states, D.C., and 22 countries

Student Academic Profile

80% finished in the top 10% of their class
(of those with reported rank)
17% are valedictorians
(of those with reported rank)
29% were admitted through Early Decision
Mean SAT scores: verbal 723, math 719
Mean ACT score: 31
Secondary schools represented in the class: 342

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	2,913 (46%)	3,371 (54%)	6,284
Accepted	554 (47%)	621 (53%)	1,175
Enrolled	208 (48%)	223 (52%)	431

For the Class of 2009, 368 students applied under the Early Decision option; 124 students were enrolled.

Statistics for the Past Decade

Year	Number of Applicants	Number of Students Accepted	Number of Students Enrolled
1995	4,836	943 (19%)	422 (45%)
1996	4,682	922 (20%)	431 (47%)
1997	5,210	1,039 (20%)	434 (42%)
1998	4,491	1,030 (23%)	440 (43%)
1999	5,194	997 (19%)	428 (43%)
2000	5,352	1,041 (19%)	434 (42%)
2001	5,175	973 (19%)	430 (44%)
2002	5,238	957 (18%)	412 (43%)
2003	5,631	1,001 (18%)	413 (41%)
2004	5,489	1,136 (21%)	428 (38%)
2005	6,281	1,176 (19%)	431 (37%)

Rank in Class

	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
Top 10th	2,311 (76%)	550 (89%)	175 (80%)
Second 10th	427 (14%)	39 (6%)	26 (12%)
Third 10th	168 (6%)	20 (3%)	13 (6%)
Top 31st-50th	117 (4%)	8 (1%)	4 (2%)
Total Number of Ranked Students	3,051 (49%)	618 (53%)	219 (51%)
Total Number of Unranked Students	3,230 (51%)	558 (47%)	212 (49%)

Distribution of College Board SAT I Scores

VERBAL	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1,742 (35%)	580 (57%)	176 (47%)
700-749	1,203 (24%)	187 (18%)	75 (20%)
650-699	999 (20%)	143 (14%)	72 (19%)
600-649	604 (12%)	81 (8%)	38 (10%)
550-599	265 (5%)	25 (2%)	12 (3%)
500-549	122 (2%)	11 (1%)	3 (1%)
450-499	36 (1%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
200-449	31 (1%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	702	736	723
Mid 50%	660-760	700-790	670-780
MATH	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
750-800	1,316 (26%)	470 (46%)	152 (40%)
700-749	1,553 (31%)	275 (27%)	105 (28%)
650-699	1,171 (23%)	151 (15%)	68 (18%)
600-649	586 (12%)	85 (8%)	31 (8%)
550-599	217 (4%)	36 (4%)	17 (5%)
500-549	103 (2%)	8 (1%)	3 (1%)
450-499	33 (1%)	2 (%)	0 (%)
200-449	22 (%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	699	726	719
Mid 50%	660-750	690-780	680-780

Distribution of ACT Scores

ACT Composite	Applied	Accepted	Enrolled
34-36	141 (15%)	59 (37%)	11 (19%)
30-33	456 (48%)	66 (41%)	30 (52%)
24-29	317 (33%)	34 (15%)	17 (29%)
21-23	36 (2%)	1 (1%)	0 (%)
Below 21	21 (2%)	0 (%)	0 (%)
Mean	30	32	31
Mid 50%	28-32	30-34	29-33

Secondary School Representation

	Public	Private	Parochial	Home School
Applied	4,085 (65%)	1,750 (28%)	409 (7%)	33 (1%)
Accepted	705 (60%)	399 (34%)	66 (6%)	4 (%)
Enrolled	246 (57%)	164 (38%)	20 (5%)	1 (%)
Number of Schools Represented in the class	247 (57%)	164 (38%)	20 (5%)	1 (%)

Geographical Distribution of Those Matriculating

Alabama	3	Minnesota	8	Vermont	4
Arizona	3	Mississippi	1	Virginia	8
California	53	Missouri	5	Washington	6
Colorado	7	Nevada	2	West Virginia	2
Connecticut	23	New Hampshire	3		
DC	3	New Jersey	23	New England	20%
Florida	17	New Mexico	3	Mid-Atlantic	33%
Georgia	1	New York	83	Midwest	8%
Hawaii	3	North Carolina	2	South-Southeast	9%
Illinois	13	Ohio	4	West-Southwest	23%
Kentucky	1	Oklahoma	1	International	7%
Louisiana	1	Oregon	5		
Maine	4	Pennsylvania	15		
Maryland	19	South Dakota	1		
Massachusetts	52	Tennessee	1		
Michigan	5	Texas	15		

Financial Aid

	2005 (Class of 2009)	2004 (Class of 2008)
Accepted students who applied for scholarship and grant aid	792 (67%)	761 (68%)
Accepted students who demonstrated need for scholarship and grant aid	501	469
Of those, accepted students awarded scholarship and grant aid	501	469
Total amount offered	\$13,927,206	\$11,479,267
Average amount offered	\$27,799	\$24,476
Matriculating students who received scholarship and grant aid	203	180
Total amount	\$5,637,045	\$4,732,534
Average amount	\$27,769	\$26,438
Percent of class receiving scholarship and grant aid	47%	43%

Fall Transfer Students

	Men	Women	Total
Applied	74 (44%)	94 (56%)	168
Accepted	14 (56%)	11 (44%)	25
Enrolled	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	11

Eight transfer students enrolled in the spring of 2005; 15 transfer students enrolled in the fall of 2004.

Senior Major Distribution for the Class of 2005

Single Majors		Biology and Women's & Gender Studies	1	History and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	3
American Studies	4	Black Studies and Political Science	1	History and Political Science	3
Anthropology	4	Chemistry and Economics	3	History and Russian	1
Asian Languages & Civilizations	4	Chemistry and European Studies	1	History and Spanish	1
Biology	14	Chemistry and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	1	Interdisciplinary and Physics	2
Black Studies	1	Chemistry and Music	1	Interdisciplinary and Psychology	1
Chemistry	8	Computer Science		Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Political Science	1
Classics	2	Computer Science and Economics	4	Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Psychology	4
Computer Science	7	Computer Science and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	1	Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Spanish	1
Economics	24	Computer Science and Mathematics	3	Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought and Theater & Dance	1
English	36	Computer Science and Music	1	Mathematics and Physics	1
European Studies	1	Economics and English	2	Mathematics and Theater & Dance	1
Fine Arts	13	Economics and Fine Arts	2	Music and Neuroscience	2
French	4	Economics and French	2	Music and Philosophy	1
Geology	3	Economics and History	2	Music and Physics	1
German	1	Economics and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	1	Music and Psychology	1
History	26	Economics and Mathematics	1	Music and Theater & Dance	1
Interdisciplinary	7	Economics and Music	1	Neuroscience and Spanish	1
Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	19	Economics and Philosophy	1	Philosophy and Political Science	1
Mathematics	3	Economics and Political Science	6	Political Science and Spanish	2
Music	3	Economics and Psychology	2	Psychology and Sociology	1
Neuroscience	12	Economics and Sociology	1	Psychology and Spanish	3
Philosophy	6	Economics and Spanish	3	Total Double Majors	131
Physics	3	English and Fine Arts	3		
Political Science	23	English and French	2	Triple Majors	
Psychology	34	English and German	1	Astronomy, Computer Science and Physics	1
Religion	5	English and History	1	Chemistry, Mathematics and Spanish	1
Sociology	3	English and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	2	Total Triple Majors	2
Spanish	4	English and Mathematics	1		
Theater & Dance	1	English and Music	1	Total	
Women's & Gender Studies	1	English and Philosophy	1	Class of 2005 Graduates	409
Total Single Majors	276	English and Political Science	1		
		English and Psychology	2		
Double Majors		English and Religion	1		
American Studies and English	1	English and Russian	1		
Anthropology and Biology	1	English and Theater & Dance	2		
Anthropology and Religion	1	European Studies and French	3		
Asian Languages & Civilizations and Economics	2	Fine Arts and Political Science	2		
Asian Languages & Civilizations and Fine Arts	1	Fine Arts and Spanish	2		
Asian Languages & Civilizations and History	2	Fine Arts and Women's & Gender Studies	1		
Asian Languages & Civilizations and Psychology	1	French and History	3		
Astronomy and Physics	1	French and Neuroscience	1		
Biology and English	1	French and Political Science	1		
Biology and Fine Arts	1	French and Theater & Dance	1		
Biology and French	2	Geology and Music	1		
Biology and History	1	Geology and Spanish	1		
Biology and Philosophy	1	German and Law, Jurisprudence & Social Thought	1		
Biology and Psychology	2	German and Political Science	1		
Biology and Spanish	1				

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