

Admission Pet Peeves

A few years back, U.S. News ran a story about admission representatives' pet peeves during the college admission process. U.S. News was nice enough to quote me in the article. Overall, the admission process goes smoothly for admission representatives and students alike, but every so often, something happens that just really annoys me. So I filled in U.S. News about something that happens more than you think: when students email me, but use the wrong school name.

The article got me thinking that there are indeed a few more things that tend to get on my nerves during the admission process. Keep in mind, 99.9% of what happens in college admission is annoyance-free. And we, as admission representatives, also understand that this is a stressful time for you as well. So, I figured it may be helpful for you high school juniors and seniors (and your parents) out there to know of a few things that us folks on our side of the desk consider to be admission pet peeves. Now, if happen to be guilty of doing any of these things in the past, **don't fret**, these are not make or break. But, since you'll always want to put your best foot forward in the world of college admission, I figured it can only help you (and all my colleagues) if you avoid asking like the following people.

1) The Vague Email Question Asker: Admission representatives can get upwards of a thousand emails a week. It's a part of our job, and for us, we really enjoy it. I like communicating with students, helping them plan their visits to Tulane, and answering their questions. However, if there is one type of email that can be a little frustrating for us, it is when prospective students email us *very* open-ended and vague questions like: "Dear Mr. Schiffman, Can you tell me what it's like to be a student at Tulane?" [it's great!] and "Dear Jeff, What is Tulane looking for in an applicant?" [well rounded!] and "Dear Mr. Schiffman, What is New Orleans like?" [it's funky!] These are the type of questions that, while great and well intended, are probably best asked in person or over the phone. When we have to sit down and type out what the campus is like, it's really too broad of a question for us to answer well, and also takes us a long time to give an answer that does our campus justice. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and call schools to ask these broad questions, or do some research online, or **chat with our current students** (which you can do online every day from 3-5 CST!). I would much rather answer questions that are specific and well-researched. Trust me on this one, it makes admission representatives lives a lot easier. For more on this, check out my **five emails you should never send** post as well as **questions to never ask your admission rep**.

2) The Let-Mom-Take-Over-the-Meeting Student: We love meeting with students on campus. But there is nothing more disheartening when a student arrives in my office and speaks a few welcoming words before mom or dad takes over with their laundry lists of questions. Because we don't offer formal interviews with the admission staff here at Tulane, we totally welcome your mom or dad to come into our office during your chat with your admission rep. But if they are going to dominate the conversation and won't allow you a word in edgewise, then let them stay in the waiting room and come in towards the end of your discussion. I once had a student come into my office with her mom, made no eye contact with me the whole time, and on her mother's twelfth question, the daughter actually began texting on her phone. In my office! No thanks. Best overall advice I can give here is; parents, you do not want to be more memorable than your students in this process.

3) The Best Kid in the World- This goes along with #2 above. Mom and dad, I know you are going to have a tough time holding back these words, but I can tell you that *every* parent thinks their kid is really special. I can count on seventeen hands the number of times I had an overanxious mom or dad say this to me. Even if you start the my-kid-is-special sentence with "I know that all parents will say this to you, but..." it still seems unrealistic to us. Also, mom and dad, "we" are not taking AP Calculus. "We" are not taking the SATs in November. They are. Avoid this word. I know you are partners in this process, but let your kid be themselves. Let them show their specialness on their own.

4) The Leader On-er: This is the peeve I was quoted about in U.S. News. I had a student contact me all year long last year. They were a decent applicant, had expressed a lot of interest, and had really let me know that Tulane was their top choice. However, when they were added to our waitlist, I got a full page email from them indicating how badly they wanted to attend [insert school here that is not Tulane]. I was all set to bring the applicant to my VP and say how I wanted to support the candidate, but this really took the wind out of my sails. So, make sure you are being honest—don't lead admission officers on. Never cut and paste an email from another school or make the fatal error of writing the wrong school. This happens much more often than you would expect. If you are expressing interest in a school, have it be genuine engagement rather than forced or feigned interest.

5) The Twelve Page Resume-Sender: I have spoken on this topic before. It won't do you much good to send us an

extremely lengthy resume about every single bake sale you have ever worked. The best resumes we get are contained on a single piece of page. They highlight the three or four major priorities and passions that you have and succinctly describe them. Sending 44 pages of photocopies of every award you have won (true story) is similar to this. Same with filling out every single blank on the activities section of the Common App. I am 33 years old... your resume shouldn't be longer than mine is! More tips on great resumes are on my previous blog [here](#).

We know that you all are about to start working hard to get these applications out and we know that this might be a pretty stressful time for you and your family. I hope these little tips are able to help you a bit, and of course selfishly, following many of them will make your admission representative's life just a little bit easier.

For the full article from U.S. News, you can click [here](#) to see what other admission representatives claim their pet peeves to be.