



Root Causes of the Heightened Competition for College Admission

The heightened competition is caused by two vicious cycles:

- Massive inflation of credentials
It's not just the quantity but the quality of students. 1) As college admission standards rise, students take on more extracurricular activities and AP classes. This drives other students to attempt to match or be better than their peers. 2) High schools have become very competitive too, and in certain regions (Long Island especially) vie for coveted top rankings on the leading lists of the best high schools by encouraging students to take AP courses, a common measure of high school excellence.
- Inflation in applications
Students apply to more schools as their chances of getting into any one school decrease, further driving down admission rates and prompting students to apply to yet more schools. The lines have blurred between traditional categories like "safety" schools and "stretches" while second tier schools are becoming the new Ivy Leagues. According to stats compiled by the Kaplan Test Prep Company, a significant number of seniors in 2008 applied to as many as 15 schools on average. This practice continued to be a major factor in even lower acceptance rates for the high school class of 2009 and is expected to persist over the next several years.

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