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## College Touch Points



### COLLEGE TOUCH POINTS

**Demonstrated Interest** is one of those vague criteria in the college admissions process that can cause great confusion among applicants. Whereas SAT scores, ACT scores, GPA, and extracurricular involvement are measurable in concrete ways. "Interest" can mean something very different to different institutions. Some students have a hard time drawing the line between Demonstrating Interest and harassing the admissions staff. Students who Demonstrate Interest are likely to have a positive attitude toward the college.

Remember my story of when I was in high school and there was a girl who I liked and every time I tried to talk with her she would ignore me and walk away. I figured out pretty quick that she did not "like" me back. Then there was another girl who I liked and when I talked with her, she would reply and talk back. I figured out that she "liked" me (*Demonstrated Interest*) back and we developed a relationship.

This is the same idea with colleges. When a college figures out that a potential student "likes" them, then the college will continue to pursue that relationship. When a college figures out that a student has little or no interest, the college will drop that student and move on to the next one. (The official college term is "Demonstrated Interest".

So, how can we get a college to think that we, the student, "like" (Demonstrate Interest) that college? By using the **College Touch Points!**

According to a study by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, about 50% of all colleges and universities claim that an applicant's Demonstrated Interest in their school is either highly or moderately important in the admissions process. This means that at many schools taking a campus tour, interviewing, and contacting your admissions representative can improve your chance of being accepted.

The reasons why Demonstrated Interest matters are many, but in general colleges want to extend offers of admission to students who are sincerely interested in attending. Students who have low interest are clearly less likely to accept an offer of admission, and if they do accept, they are more likely to transfer to a different school.

Colleges have good reason for taking Demonstrated Interest into account as they make their admissions decisions. For obvious reasons, schools want to enroll students who are eager to attend.

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A college wants to increase its' **YIELD**. Most students pay little attention to the idea of "Yield," but it's a big deal to a college admissions office. Essentially, *the "Yield" is the percentage of admitted students who actually enroll in a college*. The admissions office needs to estimate the Yield in order to figure out how many students to accept. If they guess the Yield wrong, they will end up with an incoming class that is either too big or too small. The Yield varies widely from school to school. A prestigious university like Harvard may yield around 80% of the students they accept, while some of the less competitive colleges and state universities may Yield closer to 25%. (This means that if a college sends out 1000 'YES' acceptance letters only 25% or 250 out of 1000 will actually attend that college.

Colleges who value **Demonstrated Interest** are more likely to extend an invitation to attend their school to students who Demonstrate Interest and are more likely that they may offer scholarships.

For the schools on your list, go to the individual college's website and fill out the prospective students form and request them to send you some more information. By doing this you will pop up on their radar and start keeping track of you. (This is called a "College Touch"). The college needs to know you exist.

But how exactly do you *Demonstrate Interest*? The list below presents some ways to tell a school that your interest is more than superficial.

### ***DON'T LET YOUR PARENTS DEMONSTRATE YOUR INTEREST FOR YOU!***

*The last thing a college wants is to admit a student that is forced to apply and attend because of their parents. It shows immaturity on the student's part. Admissions officers are admitting a student, not their parents. Parental 'Demonstrated Interest' can backfire.*

*College Touch Points include:*

- **College Website Request for Information:** You're likely to get a lot of college brochures without asking for them. Colleges work hard to get mailing lists of high school students who show promise. Don't rely on this passive approach to getting print materials, and don't depend entirely on a college's website for information. Go to the college website and fill out the online form and request further information. Look for 'future student' or 'request for information' or 'prospective students' or something along those lines. The form contains fields asking for name, address, phone, and email. The form may ask for GPA, test scores, intended major, gender, ethnicity, and other information. Give them

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everything they are asking for. It demonstrates interest when you reach out to the college.

- **Send an Intro Letter:** Is there something special about you such as an exceptional student, high test scores or you have some other exceptional talent, let the college know. "I am first chair for the state high school band, please tell me about your music program." etc.
- **College Fair:** Stop by the booths of the colleges you are most interested in attending. Introduce yourself to the college representative and be sure to leave your name and contact information. You'll get on the college's mailing list, and many schools keep track of the fact that you visited the booth. Go to the college fair and introduce yourself to the recruiter and ask them some additional information about the college. What's cool what's not. What are the hot majors, what majors don't fill up, what kind of student they are looking for, etc. Then follow up with a thank you note. Also be sure to pick up the college rep's business card. Check Google for "local college fair." A student who reaches out to a recruiter to develop rapport and a relationship can cause the recruiter to become an advocate for you. By doing this, the student will not be a number on an application but a person.
- **Attend a College Reception/Preview:** You might get a letter in the mail or something in your email inbox inviting you to attend a local event that is usually held at a local hotel. Registering for the event and showing up Demonstrates Interest. You will get some good information about the college(s) and have a chance to meet the recruiters.
- **Call the Admissions Department:** (speak to a department head not a student) give them your name and ask when they will have a representative here in Phoenix at a college fair. You don't want to pester the admissions office, but if you have a question or two about the college, call or email your admissions representative. Plan your call and craft your email carefully -- you'll want to make a good impression. An ungrammatical email filled with text-speak isn't going to work in your favor.
- **Call the (Major) Department Chairperson:** Call the school up and ask to speak to a department head in the major you are considering. Give them your name (so they can track it) Ask about the major, what kind of jobs can you get with this major, what kind of student are they looking for (then do what they said), how many student go into this major and how many graduate from this major, what kind of job you can get with this program, etc. Then follow up with a thank you note to the person you spoke with.
- **College Visit:** A very important College Touch Point is to physically go to the college campus and visit it. Call the college and make an appointment to go on a tour of the campus. Most colleges keep track of who visits the campus, and the campus visit is



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important for two reasons: not only does it demonstrate your interest; it also helps you get a better feel for the college. Campus visits help you choose a school, craft a focused essay, and perform well in an interview.

- **Sending a Thank You Note:** If you chatted with a college representative at a fair, send letter (hardcopy) the next day to thank him/her for taking time to talk with you. In the message, note one or two features of the college that appeal to you. Similarly, if you meet with a regional representative or interview on campus, send a follow-up thank you. You'll be demonstrating your interest as well as showing that you are a considerate person. If you really want to impress, send an actual snail-mail note of appreciation.
- **Click the Reply Button:** When a college sends you an email and there is a link for asking for more information or to receive, stickers, a brag book, or other college related material, click the link. There are tracking links embedded in the email. Use these to your advantage. 
- **College Coaches:** Athletes, call/speak to the coach, ask what kind of student they are looking for, is there going to be any openings on the roster? Follow up with a thank you note. 
- **Online Forums:** Attending an online admissions chat session through a college's web site. You may receive an email invitation to sign up for an online forum from a college. Registering and attending the web session can give you valuable information to help you determine if you will keep the school on your list
- **"Like" Colleges and Recruiters on Facebook:** This will give you periodic information from the college about different events. Do not "Like" only one college. "Like" all the schools on your list or none. Also on that note keep your Facebook account PG. If you have any PG13 pictures or profanity, remove this immediately. You want to present yourself in the best light.
- **Follow Up:** Send polite, periodic emails providing news and information about you that might be of interest. For instance, you might send a note with a link to an article in the local paper about you and your latest achievements. Let them know your latest accolades and achievements.

### *High School Seniors – Touch Points*

- **Attend Future Student Events:** Some colleges host Future Student Events and it may be called Senior Day or Spirit Day or something else. This all day event invites potential student to visit the college on a specific day (usually in the fall for seniors or in the spring for high school juniors). During these event days, future students will participate in activities, games, eat in the cafeteria and sleep in the dorms. For your top 2 to 4

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colleges if the school has this option, you should attend. This will give you a real glimpse at what college life is like at that college. (Follow up with a Thank You Note.)

- **Interview:** The interview is a great place to demonstrate your interest. Remember to research the college and the interviewer well before the interview, and then use the interview to demonstrate your interest through both the questions you ask and those you answer. If the interview is optional, you should do it. In the interview, try and connect with the interviewer. Try to find out something personal about the interviewer, like a trip they are going to take or an event they are going to attend or why they personally like the college or something, and mention that in your follow up letter. Remembering that detail and mentioning it in the note will create a longer lasting impression than a generic thank you note.
- **Applying Early:** There is perhaps no better way to demonstrate interest than to apply to a college well before any deadlines. In some instances applying through an early decision program may increase your percentage chances of being admitted. This is for the simple reason that you can apply to just one school through early decision, and if accepted your decision is binding. Early decision should be used only if you are 100% sure that the college is your top choice. Realize that not all colleges offer early decision. The down side of applying under the Early Decision Program is that if you are accepted they may not give the best financial aid scholarship/grant package. My recommendation is to get the application in months before any deadline. Best is to get it in on the first few days the application is available. Ideally get all your application in sometime in September.
- **Supplemental Essay:** Many colleges have an essay question that asks why you want to attend their school, and a lot of colleges that use The Common Application have a college-specific supplement. This is a great place to show your interest. Make sure your essay isn't generic. It should address the specific and unique features of the college that most appeal to you. Show that you've researched the college well and that you're a good match for the school.
- **Supplemental Resume/Brag Sheet Additional Information-** During your senior year, you will have additional accomplishments that you have achieved even after you submit the application, send a hard copy of this additional supplemental information to the college. (Example: awards earned during the senior year, accomplishments and accolades, further explanation of your passion etc.)
- What other things can you think of to reach out and "touch" the college?



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For some colleges, Demonstrated Interest is an important part of the application even if there is no formal scoring of that interest. The way in which schools present the importance of demonstrated interest varies widely: Here are some examples.

- ❖ Baylor: *"we seek those who can gain the most from a Baylor experience, for students with a demonstrated interest in becoming a 'Baylor Bear'."*
- ❖ Trinity University: *"Visiting campus, emailing or calling an admissions counselor, attending a Trinity In Focus program, talking with a representative when they visit your high school, and stopping by our table at a college fair are some of the ways to show the Admissions Committee that you are genuinely interested in attending Trinity, and help us get to know you better."*
- ❖ Carnegie Mellon: *"Admission Interviews are a great supplement to an information session and tour of campus, and allow a prospective student to get a personalized introduction to campus and the unique world-class education offered at Carnegie Mellon. An admission decision will not be based off of this interview; it is looked upon as demonstrated interest in the application process."*
- ❖ Rhodes College: *"Your overall campus visit indicates demonstrated interest and will play a considerable role in the admissions decision-making process."*

Many of the country's most selective colleges do not consider demonstrated interest in the application process. Here's what a few schools say on the subject:

- ❖ Duke: *"Duke does not take demonstrated interest into account when evaluating applications. Although we are glad that you may have visited our campus or asked us questions about the school, demonstrated interest is not an advantage in the admissions process."*
- ❖ Dartmouth: *"Personal contact is not tracked during the admissions process. Demonstrated interest is not considered when making decisions."*
- ❖ Stanford: *"We offer campus tours and information sessions to provide you with the information you need to make an informed college choice, not to evaluate you. And we welcome calls and emails for the same reason. Please do not feel compelled to contact us to demonstrate your interest in Stanford; we know by the very fact of your applying that you are seriously interested in Stanford. We don't keep records of prospective student contacts with our office."*

However, even though *Stanford* doesn't encourage calls to Demonstrate Interest, that doesn't mean they don't want to see interest in other ways. For instance, the acceptance rate of those who apply early is consistently higher than for those who apply regular decision. So if you really

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want to attend Stanford, applying early is “demonstrating interest” in the university, and the figures show that this method of demonstrating interest will help your chances..\*Please contact me before you apply Early Decision

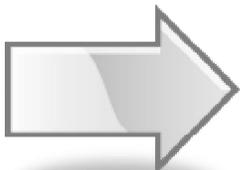
For many of the highly ranked schools, boosting their yield is not a huge concern for them. Most of them already have very high yields. But what is important is quality students. Students who have purpose, intention and vision are students that can be the nation’s future leaders. So if you clearly show why you are applying to Stanford and show sincerity, this is another way “Demonstrated Interest” will benefit your chances of admission.

When you are applying to colleges, you'll need to do a little research to find out whether or not the colleges to which you are applying put much weight on demonstrated interest. This could be used as a College Touch Point.

A key point with the College Touch Points is to periodically “touch” the college over time. Contacting and touching the college 8 times in one week is not advised. A student who touches the college a bunch of times in a short period becomes annoying and a pest. It is possible to overdo it; expressing interest is an important way to get noticed.

The best strategy is to contact the college over several years & several semesters. As a freshman and sophomore high school student, it is okay to go two, three or even six months between touches. In your junior year, you should “touch” the college every two to three months to remain on their hot list.

*\*\* The purpose of the **College Touch Points** is to “Demonstrate Interest” in addition to the student gathering information about the colleges. As you gather information about the college(s) and about the majors and other programs, this added information will help you decide to attend one school or select another and to study one major or another.*



The sooner you start the **College Touch Points** the sooner you get on a college’s radar. When you continue to “Demonstrate Interest” some colleges will offer hidden benefits. One of these **Hidden Benefits** is having the \*application fee waived, plus the college may even waive the essay. To activate this hidden benefit, the student must start the *College Touch Points* before their senior year.

\*Application fees range from \$30 to \$100.

