

We know it can be difficult to receive a phone call from an alumnus when their child or grandchild has been denied or waitlisted by Penn. It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with the "Frequently Asked Questions," but there is really no "script" for handling this conversation. We wish more legacies could be admitted, so we share in the disappointment our alumni may feel. A simple tip we can offer you is to speak slowly and sincerely, and be prepared to listen.

Proactive outreach may be the most effective way to preserve the long term relationship between Penn and our alumni. If you have established rapport with an alumnus, we think the most responsible action you can take is to call them as soon as possible after the Admissions Office has sent decisions to applicants. We realize you will not yet know the decision, and it can be uncomfortable to discuss a topic where you have so little information or control. Some alumni will report good news! For those who have received disappointing news, we encourage you to share in their disappointment, and listen to any thoughts or comments they may offer.

Alumni often ask about Admissions statistics, trying to understand the overall strength of the applicant pool, and perhaps trying to gauge just how far their child or grandchild was from earning admission this year. Statistics do not present the whole picture, so it is often NOT helpful to offer statistics. Most applicants are highly qualified, but relatively few are admitted. This means that many denied applicants are also highly qualified.

In recent years, Penn's selectivity has changed more than any other Ivy school. Penn's goal is to have 2,400 new freshmen each year. Since 1995, applications to Penn have risen about 50 percent and the acceptance rate has been cut nearly in half. For the past few years, average SAT scores have been above 700 on each section (Critical Reading, Math, and Writing); the average ACT score has been about 33. Most applicants are top performers in their school, taking the most rigorous courses available, and taking leadership in extracurricular activities. Admitted legacies have the same profile as the overall admitted group.

It may be helpful to clarify the role of the Alumni Council on Admissions (ACA). We serve as a resource solely for alumni, offering guidance and advice about the application process by way of Legacy Advising Sessions. In order to accommodate all legacy candidates who wish to visit campus, the ACA began to offer open Legacy Advising Sessions on a daily basis in 2008. About 85 percent of these ACA sessions have three or fewer families in attendance. Nearly half of the ACA sessions have just one family in attendance. Any visit to the ACA may be regarded as somewhat equivalent to an "interview," since it personalizes the campus visit. A visit to the ACA is optional; about 75 percent of legacy applicants visit the ACA. For every legacy applicant, whether they visit campus or not, the ACA sends a note to the Admissions Office verifying the legacy affiliation and listing the family ties to Penn.

The Alumni Council on Admissions welcomes calls from DAR colleagues and from concerned alumni. We have no information about the rationale behind any specific admission decisions, but we welcome any thoughts or feedback alumni would like to share with us. You may forward calls directly, or offer alumni our main number (215-898-6888). Alumni may also choose to provide confidential feedback using our online survey: www.alumni.upenn.edu/survey/ACA.