



Finding Your “Fit”

Selecting Schools Strategically

April 2023

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The Two Questions

- ▶ Students ask:
 - Can I get in?
- ▶ Parents ask:
 - Can I afford it?

Better Question

- ▶ Students *and* parents should ask:
 - Does it fit?
- ▶ Answer:
 - Two-sided analysis – Student and School
 - Involves five key factors – The Five P's

Big Ideas and Key Take-Away's

- ▶ “Hope is not a plan.”
- ▶ Goal is best “fit,” not best “name.”
- ▶ Act with integrity and start planning early.
- ▶ Know thyself and remember The Five P’s.
- ▶ Build a diversified, well balanced college list.
- ▶ Best “fit” analysis should take Net Price into account.
- ▶ Have “frank family discussion” about college funding *before* selecting schools.
- ▶ Use trusted resources to make well-informed, timely decisions (PVSCollegeCounseling.com and Naviance).

Finding The Optimal Fit

- ▶ First, “Know Thyself”
- ▶ Then, Consider The Five P’s:
 1. Program
 2. Place
 3. People
 4. Price
 5. Priorities

Finding The Optimal Fit

- ▶ “Know Thyself” – Take a Personal Inventory:
 - Passions and interests (in and out of classroom)
 - Academic profile (grades/courses, test scores, class rank)
 - Personality and learning style
 - Strengths and challenge areas
 - Goals for college and thereafter
 - Limitations, if any
- ▶ Remain:
 - Open-minded
 - Realistic and honest
 - Willing to critique self

Finding The Optimal Fit

Program

Content

- Majors and Programs
- Distinctive Features
- Honors and Dual Degree Programs
- Co-ops and Internships
- Study Abroad
- Undergraduate Research

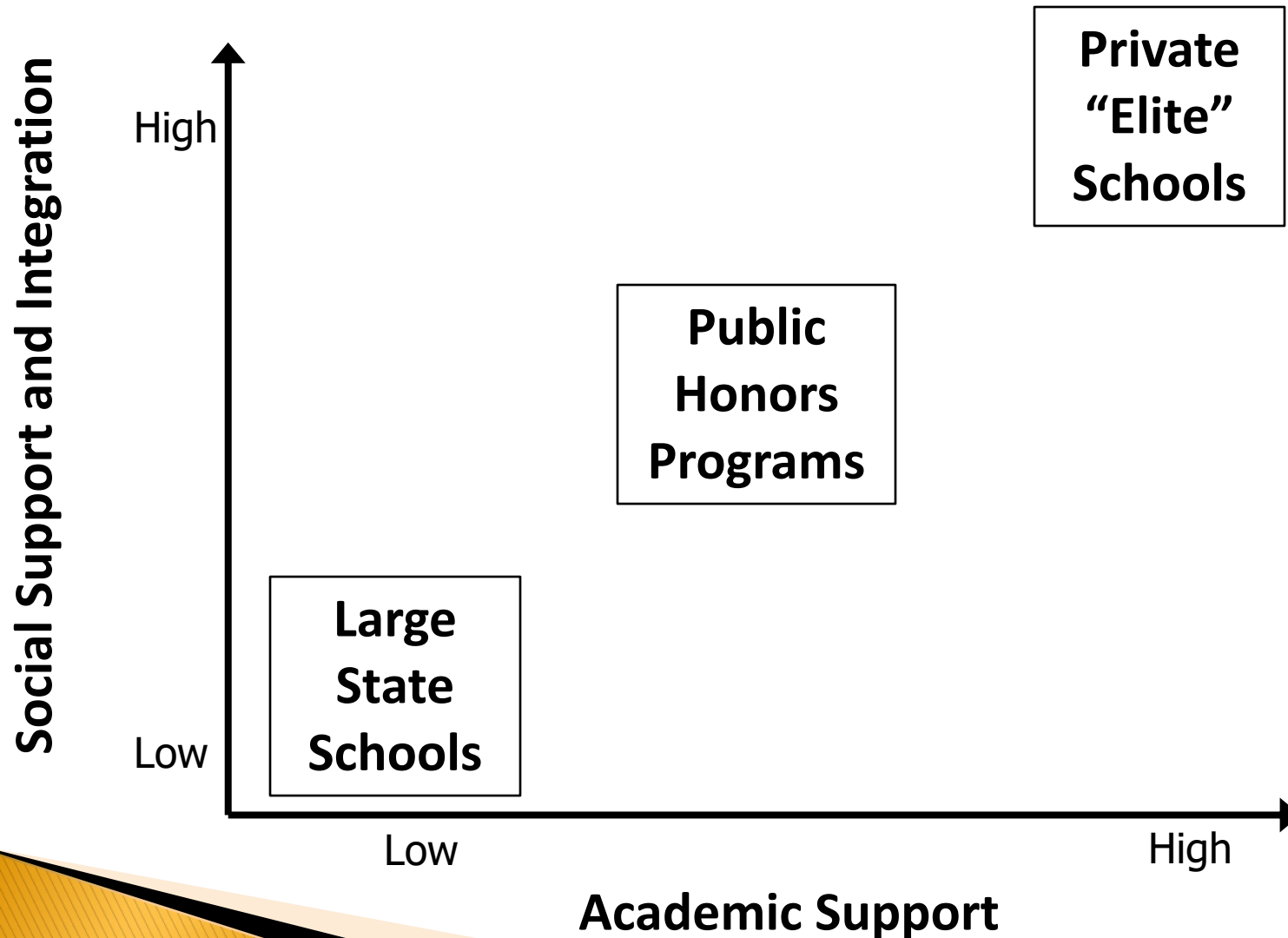
Learning Environment

- Class Sizes and Student-Teacher Ratios
- Faculty Access and Credentials
- Living-Learning Centers
- Service Learning
- Leadership Development
- Support Levels

Outcomes

- Retention Rate
- Graduation Rate
- Jobs and Graduate School Placement
- Loan Default Rate
- ROI – Return on Investment

Question: What Type of Support Does the Student Need to Thrive?



Finding The Optimal Fit

Place

- Public vs. private
- Size (campus size and student–body size)
- Location and distance from home
- Proximity to extended family (access to support)
- Climate
- Rural, suburban, or urban environment
- Well–bounded, distinct campus

Finding The Optimal Fit

People

- Student body background and diversity
- Academic profile of students (entrance difficulty)
- “Personality” of the school
- Campus life – activities and organizations
 - Athletic
 - Political
 - Cultural
 - Service
 - Greek Life
- Interaction between school and community

Finding The Optimal Fit

Price

- Know your financial situation (frank family discussion).
 - Who is paying?
 - What are your family's financial resources for college?
 - Come up with a number your family can contribute.
 - Are you eligible for need and/or merit-based aid?
 - Are you and/or your parents willing to take loans?
 - Are you willing to be employed during school?

Finding The Optimal Fit

Price

- Sticker Price vs. Price to You
 - College costs vary widely.
 - Total Cost of Attendance (“TCA”) is Sticker Price.
 - TCA has multiple elements.
 - TCA does not equal Net Price (“Price to You”).
 - Families are expected to contribute to extent able, rather than willing.

What is Net Price?

► Basic Equation

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Total Cost of Attendance (TCA)} \\ & - \textit{minus} \\ & \quad \underline{\text{“Gift Aid” (Grants/Scholarships)}} \\ & = \text{Net Price} \end{aligned}$$

What is included in Total Cost of Attendance (“TCA”)?

- ▶ Direct or “Hard” Costs
 - Tuition and fees
 - Room and board

- ▶ Indirect or “Soft” Costs
 - Books and supplies
 - Transportation
 - Miscellaneous personal expenses
(computer, cell phone, travel, clothing, recreation)

What is “Gift Aid”?

▶ Grants

- Need-based
- Eligibility: “Demonstrated Financial Need”
- Sources: Federal Gov't, State Gov't, Schools

▶ Scholarships

- Merit-based
- Eligibility: Academic, Athletic, Artistic, Leadership
- Sources: Schools*, Civic Orgs., Foundations, Employers

***Note:** Not all schools give Merit-based Aid. Ivies and many highly selective schools give only Need-based Aid.

Focus on Net Price

- ▶ Amount you really pay (not the “Sticker Price”)
- ▶ Equals TCA minus Gift Aid (“Free Money”)
- ▶ Can be determined using Net Price Calculator
- ▶ Varies from person to person
- ▶ Varies from college to college
- ▶ Informs your college list and college choice
- ▶ Enables “apples to apples” comparisons
- ▶ Helps you work smart (not just hard)

Finding The Optimal Fit

Priorities

School

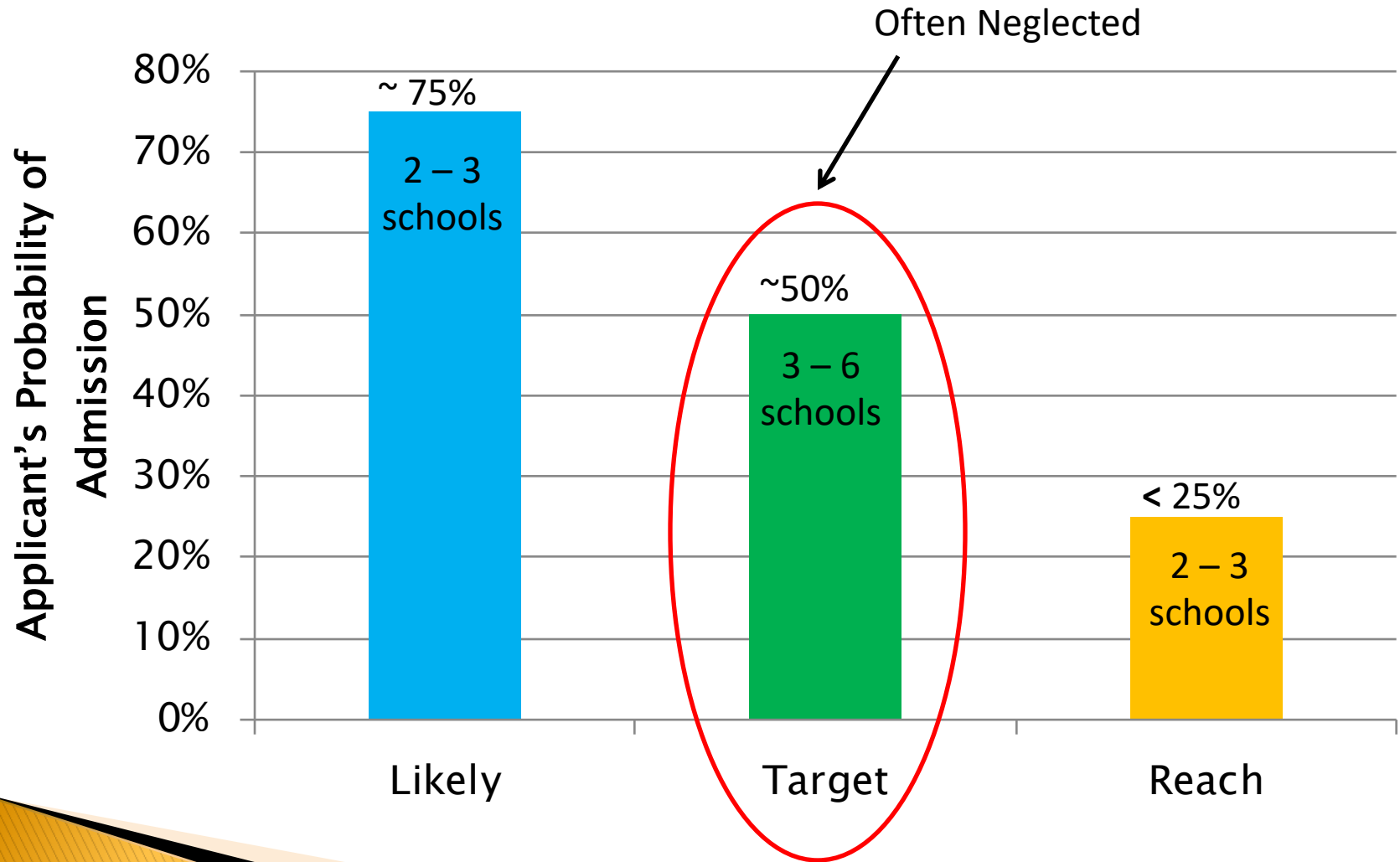
Academic Record
Admission Test Scores
Essays & Recommendations
Extra-Curriculars
Personal Qualities
Special Talents / Skills
Geography
Legacy / Development
Biographical Info (URM)
Demonstrated Interest

Student

Program
People
Place
Price
Special Considerations

- Athletics
- Religion
- Extra-Curriculars
- Military
- Special Needs
- Limitations

Goal: A Well-Balanced “Portfolio” of Schools



Outcome of Using Strategic (“Best Fit”) Approach When Selecting Schools

- ▶ Sets student up for success
 - In admissions process – more and better options
 - While in college – student can flourish in many ways
 - Thereafter – strengthens post-graduate outcomes
- ▶ Imparts valuable life lessons
 - Work smart, not just hard
 - Act with integrity
 - Widen your lens and recognize others not just self
- ▶ Upshot: Better Return on Investment

Websites and Tools for College Search

- ▶ *PVSCollegeCounseling.com* – Recommended Portal
- ▶ Quick Links Available From There Regarding:
 - College Search Engines and Guidebooks
 - Campus Visits and Virtual Tours
 - College Fairs and College Representative Visits
 - First Gen, Special Needs, NCAA Eligibility
 - Net Price Calculators / Loan Repayment Calculators
 - Financial Aid Planning
 - Scholarships and Loans
 - College Affordability and ROI Comparison Tools
 - Gap Year, Military, and Other Alternatives
- ▶ Naviance

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