

## Weekly Countdown to College Column

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Thu 9/26/2019 10:58 AM

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### More nuances in the Early Admissions Programs

Posted: 25 Sep 2019 05:18 PM PDT

By Lee Shulman Bierer



Last week I shared information about two early admissions programs:

Early Action (EA) and Early Decision (ED).

- Early Action is where colleges have earlier deadlines (October 15 – December 1) and they notify students earlier (December – January) and students are not required to make a decision until May 1; after they've received all their offers.
- Early Decision most typically has a November 1 deadline and colleges commit to notifying students by Christmas, but ED is binding which means that if a student chooses this program they are only allowed to apply to one school Early Decision.

I mentioned that part of the appeal, besides an earlier notification date, is that there is often a sizable jump in the acceptance rate for students who apply ED. The one thing I discourage is when a student or a family member says “we’re applying ED, we just don’t know where.” It is much more important to identify why a college is a good fit, rather than try to game the system and limit your choices.

There are two other early admissions programs that are even more confusing, because they are so similar but have different names: Single Choice Early Action (SCEA) and Restricted Early Action (REA). Both of these

plans have earlier deadlines – typically November 1. They notify students earlier – typically by Christmas and they are **not binding**, i.e., if students are accepted, they are not bound to attend. But the plans differ from traditional Early Action programs because they place restrictions on where else a student can apply Early Action and Early Decision.

Both REA and SCEA allows students to hear back from their first-choice school early and gives them the opportunity to compare cost, financial awards, and visit (or revisit) the school before making a final commitment. Students applying REA/SCEA indicate to a college that it's their first-choice school by signing an agreement that they will file just one early application at a private institution. Students are allowed to apply to other colleges via regular admissions or rolling admissions. Students who are accepted SCEA can therefore wait until they have all their regular admissions decisions back before committing.

The SCEA/REA schools and their policies are as follows:

- Harvard – ([www.harvard.edu](http://www.harvard.edu)) Applicants may apply EA to any public college/university, but are restricted from applying to other private universities' Early Action and Early Decision programs.
- Princeton – ([www.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu)) Applicants may not apply to an early program at any other private college or university, but may apply early to any public institution as long as the decision is nonbinding. Students may apply early to any college or university with a nonbinding rolling admission process.
- Stanford – ([www.stanford.edu](http://www.stanford.edu)) Applicants agree not to apply to any other private college/university under EA, REA, ED or Early Notification program. In addition, students may not apply to any public university under an early binding plan, such as Early Decision.
- Yale – ([www.yale.edu](http://www.yale.edu)) Applicants may apply to any college's non-binding rolling admission and any public institution, provided that admission is non-binding. Students may apply to another college's Early Decision II binding program but only if the notification occurs after January 1. Students may apply to any college's non-binding rolling admission program and may apply to any public institution at any time, provided that admission is non-binding.
- Georgetown University – ([www.georgetown.edu](http://www.georgetown.edu)) students applying under the Early Action program may not apply to any binding Early Decision programs since they then would not be free to choose Georgetown if admitted. Students are, however, allowed to apply to other Early Action or other Regular Decision programs while simultaneously applying to Georgetown's Early Action program.
- University of Notre Dame – ([www.nd.edu](http://www.nd.edu)) A student applying Restrictive Early Action to Notre Dame may apply to other Early Action programs. A student applying Restrictive Early Action to Notre Dame may not apply to any college or university in their binding Early Decision program.

Rolling Admissions accepts applications on an ongoing basis (no hard deadlines) and they notify students on a rolling basis; i.e., the earlier you submit, the earlier you will hear back.

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9/27/2019

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