

# Why Perfect Students Don't Get Accepted

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A recent article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune newspaper talked about a student with a 36 ACT and near perfect grades that was involved in varsity sports, played in the orchestra and volunteered at two food shelves. His principal said he was “the complete package” but still the student didn't get into Stanford.

Frankly, I would have been more surprised if this student HAD gotten into Stanford.

When you are considering highly competitive colleges like Stanford, grades and test scores don't get you admitted. They only get you considered. That is why you often see these stories of strong students who don't get admitted to selective colleges. You need to have more to be competitive for these colleges.

What do you need? Not the “complete package”. It is fine to have various activities that you are involved in but these highly selective colleges are not looking for well-rounded students. They are looking for students with a passion or focus. The student in the article sounds like a nice kid but he did nothing to stand out from the other 38,000 other nice kids.

Sometimes, even the kids with a great focus don't get in. I talked several months ago about one of my students who applied to Stanford but did not get in. That student did not get admitted into Stanford even though 5 of her less qualified classmates did. What the 5 admitted students did have was legacy status at Stanford. Yes, colleges like Stanford regularly don't admit great students and admit legacy students, recruited athletes and others who are less qualified.

We could debate forever whether this is wrong or right but the bottom line is that Stanford gets to decide who to admit. But make no mistake about it. Nice kids with well-rounded backgrounds rarely get admitted to the most selective colleges. It has been this way for years and will continue to be this way for the foreseeable future.

If you want to attend a highly selective college like Stanford, you need to figure out early on in your career what you like and have a passion for. Developing this passion will be the best thing you can do to be the most competitive candidate for the college of your dreams.

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