



who went this route and today is a tremendous success. Dina Taylor West was rejected from every school she applied to. She was devastated. Nonetheless, she applied and was accepted to Middlesex Community College, where she acquired an Associate's degree; went on to receive her Bachelor's at the College of St. Elizabeth's in Convent Station, New Jersey; and then attained a Master's in Social Work from New York University. She has now authored two books about her experience, among them *Bloom and Grow with Your Learning Disabilities*. Dina is living proof that even if your educational path takes a few unexpected twists and turns, you can still achieve your dreams. □

JEWISH STUDIES: THE HUC/PRIVATE UNIVERSITY OPTION

Students seeking a Judaic studies program at a private university may wish to consider the University of Southern California, where the Jerome H. Louchheim School for Judaic Studies offers classes in cooperation with the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion—the only such arrangement in North America.

Covering antiquity to modernity, biblical Israel to the contemporary United States, literature to linguistics, USC's Jewish studies courses include: "Jewish Magic in the Ancient World," "Blacks and Jews: Conflicts and Alliances," and "Israel, Zionism and the Modern World." The Hebrew program offers four semesters of language instruction.

Louchheim School graduates go on to professional careers as doctors, lawyers, business entrepreneurs, rabbis, Jewish non-profit management professionals, educators, and politicians.

For more information, visit huc.edu/louchheim or [facebook.com/JewishStudiesUSC](https://www.facebook.com/JewishStudiesUSC), email louchheim@huc.edu, or call (213) 765-2113.

Admissions 104: What Colleges Don't Tell You

Over this past year, many parents and teens who had believed that their college search would be a clear-cut, well-defined process have learned otherwise. Following the "right path" has not always led to the anticipated results.

Indeed, a number of recent trends, interacting together, have complicated the college admissions landscape. Here is what you need to know now.

The Applications Spiral

Even though the number of U.S. high school students who are ready for college is declining, the number of applications flooding into college admissions offices is increasing every year. Why?

First, students are applying to more schools because the technology has made it relatively easy to do so; you can copy and paste application responses from one college to another without much effort and just hit the "send" button.

Second, more colleges are sending unsolicited publicity materials encouraging students to apply (see "Selectivity and Image" explanation below). Some students will then interact with the school, feel confident that "This school really wants me," and apply there "just to be safe," even if the college didn't make their short list. As college outreach activities increase each year, so do the overall number of applications.

Selectivity and Image

Colleges are committed to raising their standing in the marketplace of higher education through such indicators as popularity and selectivity. To do so, they are encouraging a larger pool of applicants while maintaining the same size incoming class, which lowers the percentage of students they admit and makes them appear more selective.

International Applications

More applications are also coming from abroad, increasing the competition for admittance. A number of schools, such as Vassar College, are actively recruiting internationally as well as nationally. This has led to significant increases in the number of international student applications—1200 such applications out of a total of 8,000 applications for 660 Vassar seats last year.

The "Legacy" Factor

In the past, legacy applicants (the sons or daughters of alumni) would swell the applicant pool almost exclusively at private schools. But in today's economy they are also applying to state schools, where they have an edge over other applicants.

Meeting the Challenge

College rating books or computer college selection programs are unlikely to tell you about these new admissions trends. The challenge, therefore, is finding up-to-date, accurate information to help you add or delete specific colleges from your list early on.

In this more competitive environment, your best course of action is a realistic assessment of your admissions chances, keeping in mind that you will now need higher SAT/ACT and GPA scores than the published data indicates. If you make smarter applications choices, you'll be more likely to be accepted by those schools eager to engage a student with your qualifications and interests. And consider a "Gap Year" if you believe it will increase your chances of acceptance to your favorite school(s).

Rise to the challenge—you'll be glad you did.

—Claire D. Friedlander, college consultant to Jewish Family Service in the greater Stamford and Westport areas of Connecticut; college advisor to the Jewish High School of Connecticut

