Joint Statement for Candidates on
Common Ivy League Admissions Procedure

The Ivy League is an association of eight institutions of higher education, established in 1954 primarily for the purpose of fostering amateurism in athletics. Relations between the member institutions have grown over the years, and representatives of these institutions now meet regularly at a variety of levels to discuss topics which range from the purely academic to the purely athletic and from fundamental educational philosophy to procedures in admissions.

Each member institution has its own identity and character and protects its right to pursue its own educational objectives. Thus, although the Ivy League institutions are similar in many respects, each member institution will continue to make its own independent admission decisions according to its own particular admissions policy. In recent years, however, it has become clear that the transition between secondary school and institutions of higher education has become increasingly complex and that greater efforts should be made to simplify the process through more uniform admissions procedures. It is our hope that by outlining carefully the procedures under which we are operating and by clearly specifying the obligations of both the applicant and the institution, we can help students pursue their college interests free of unnecessary confusion and pressure.

I. General Procedures

All contacts with students by representatives of Ivy institutions are intended to provide assistance and information and should be free of any activity that applies undue pressure on the candidate. No information referring to the admission or financial-aid status of an applicant to any Ivy institution may be considered official unless it is received directly from that institution’s admission or financial aid office.

Ivy institutions mail admission decision letters twice annually, in mid-December and late March/early April. Those who wish a decision in December must apply by November 1. A student may not file more than one early application within the Ivy League.

II. December Notification

Under December Notification, an applicant may be notified that he or she has been granted or denied admission or that a final decision has been deferred until the late March/early April notification date. Two plans are offered according to individual institutional policy:

a. The College Board-approved Early Decision Plan, which is offered by Brown, Columbia, Dartmouth, Cornell and the University of Pennsylvania, requires a prior commitment to matriculate. Financial aid awards for those qualifying for financial assistance will normally be announced in full detail at the same time as the admission decisions. An applicant receiving admission and an adequate financial award under the Early Decision Plan will be required to accept that offer of admission and withdraw all applications to other colleges or universities. All Ivy institutions will honor any required commitment to matriculate which has been made to another college under this plan. Coaches from other Ivy League institutions are prohibited from having any recruiting contact with admitted candidates who have been admitted under this plan.

b. A Single Choice Early Action Plan is offered by Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. This plan does not require a commitment to matriculate, and students may apply to other colleges at any time under those colleges’ regular admission programs (spring notification of final admission decision) but not to another institution’s Early Action or Early Decision program. Students admitted under Early Action will be sent a financial aid offer when they receive their acceptance decision if they have completed all of the required financial aid forms. Students are urged to consult the admission literature available at each Ivy institution for details concerning its particular December Notification Plan.

III. Early Evaluation Procedure

a. As determined by each institution, admissions offices may choose to advise applicants of the probability of admission (e.g., likely, possible, unlikely). Institutions may issue likely letters only in writing, from the office of admission. Likely letters will have the effect of letters of admission, to be confirmed on the common notification date, subject to revocation only on the same terms as letters of admission.

b. Within each institution’s overall admissions process, from October 1 through March 15 an admissions office may issue probabilistic communications, in writing, to applicants who are recruited student-athletes. (Such communications given by coaches, whether orally or in writing, do not constitute binding institutional commitments.) An applicant who receives one or more such written communications and who has made a decision to matriculate at one institution is encouraged (but not required) to notify all other institutions, and to withdraw all other applications, as promptly as possible.

c. A coach may both inquire about a candidate’s level of commitment to an Ivy institution, or interest in attending that Ivy institution, and encourage that interest. However, a candidate may not be required to make a matriculation commitment, to withdraw other applications, or to refrain from visiting another institution, as a condition for receiving a “likely” letter, or an estimate of financial aid eligibility, or a coach’s support in the admissions process. In addition, coaches may not request that candidates not share estimates of financial aid eligibility with other schools.

d. An institution ordinarily may send a “likely” probabilistic communication letter to a candidate (whether or not the applicant is a recruited athlete) only if the applicant has submitted all of the materials which the institution requires in order to make an admissions decision. Infrequently and for compelling reasons, an institution may send such a “likely” communication that does not have “all” of those materials, as provided below, but only if: (i) the other materials in the applicant’s file at that time provide the institution with a clear basis for making a binding positive admission decision about the applicant, consistent with the institution’s general standards for making such decisions; and (ii) the material in question is submitted before a final letter of admission is issued. In these circumstances, a “likely” communication may be based on a file that includes an official application, an official transcript, the SAT or ACT evaluation, one essay, and at least one recommendation from the student’s school (either teacher recommendation or administrator recommendation).

e. An Ivy school may respond at any time beginning October 1 should a non-Ivy school offer admission to a recruited student-athlete with a reply date prior to the common Ivy notification date.

IV. Common Notification Date

On a common date, usually in late March, applicants to the Ivy institutions will be notified of admission decisions and financial aid awards, unless they have been notified earlier under Early Decision Plan or Early Action Plan procedures. (Letters are mailed beginning in February for the Schools of Hotel Administration and Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell and beginning in February for the School of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania.)

V. Financial Aid

All the Ivy institutions follow the common policy that any financial aid for student-athletes will be awarded and renewed on the sole basis of economic need with no differentiation in amount or in kind (e.g. packaging) based on athletic ability or participation, provided that each school shall apply its own standard of economic need. The official award of aid may only be made at or subsequent to the time of admission.

Only the Office of Financial Aid has the authority to award financial aid on behalf of the institution, and applicants should rely only on formal communications from these offices. No suggestion that financial aid may be available that comes from anyone else associated with the institution is binding on the institution. No applicant should consider or accept an offer of financial help from an alumnus, and any such offer should be reported immediately to the Office of Financial Aid.

VI. Common Reply Date

Except for those applicants admitted under the College Board-approved Early Decision Plan, which requires a prior commitment to matriculate, no candidate admitted to any of the Ivy institutions will be required to announce his or her decision to accept or decline an offer of admission until the Common Reply Date of May 1. All such candidates may delay their commitment to attend until May 1 without prejudice. By that date all admitted candidates must affirm in writing their single choice.

The preceding paragraph does not preclude students from remaining on active waiting lists and withdrawing promptly from their original college choice upon receiving subsequent waiting list acceptance to another institution. However, the Ivy institutions reserve their right to rescind acceptance decisions from candidates who make commitments to and who hold confirmed places at more than one institution concurrently. Students who choose to remain on an active waiting list after May 1 will receive a final response no later than July 1.

VII. Participating Institutions

Brown University, Harvard University, Columbia College, University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, Princeton University, Dartmouth College, Yale University