



Princeton Review's 2009 "College Hopes & Worries Survey" Reports On 15,000 Students' & Parents' Application Experiences, Concerns & "Dream" Schools

- **66% Report Stress Levels High**
- **67% Say Economy Has Affected Their Decisions**
- **85% Say Financial Aid "Very Necessary"**
- **Stanford #1 Dream School Among Students / Harvard #1 Among Parents**

NEW YORK / March 25, 12:01 am ET / PRNewswire / -- Some call it "the other March madness." It's nail-biting season now through April as college acceptance / rejection and financial aid letters land in family mailboxes. According to a Princeton Review survey of 12,715 college applicants and 3,007 parents of applicants, almost 7 of 10 respondents say the economic downturn has affected their college application decisions and report high levels of stress about them.

Nearly 9 of 10 respondents say financial aid will be essential. However, if cost was not an issue and acceptance a given, the "dream college" students most wish they could attend is Stanford. Parents most wish their kids were headed to Harvard.

The Princeton Review, an education services company, has conducted its "College Hopes & Worries Survey" since 2003. Findings this year are based on 15,722 surveys completed on paper or online by students and parents from all 50 states and DC. The 13-question survey ran in The Princeton Review college guide, "Best 368 Colleges" (Random House, July 2008) and on www.PrincetonReview.com from late January to mid-March. All but one question was multiple-choice.

Top 10 Dream Colleges

For the survey's only fill-in-the-blank question, "What 'dream college' do you wish you (your child) could attend if acceptance or cost weren't issues?", respondents wrote in the names of more than 700 institutions from Alaska Pacific University to Yale.

The schools most named by students as their "Dream Colleges" were:

1. Stanford University
2. Harvard College
3. Columbia University
4. Princeton University
5. New York University
6. Yale University
7. University of California--Los Angeles
8. Massachusetts Institute of Technology
9. University of Southern California
10. University of California--Berkeley

The schools most named by parents as their "Dream Colleges" were:

1. Harvard College
2. Stanford University
3. Princeton University
4. University of Notre Dame
5. Yale University
6. New York University
7. University of California--Los Angeles
8. Duke University
9. University of Southern California Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Key Findings

Among respondents overall:

- **66% reported high levels of stress about college applications**

- **67% said the economic downturn had affected their application decisions.** Asked what was the major way it affected them: 38% said they were applying to colleges "with lower sticker prices," 34% said they were applying to "more 'financial aid safety' schools," and 28% said they were applying to "schools closer to home."

- **85% said financial aid will be "very" or "extremely" necessary** (60% of which said "extremely")

Other issues the survey asked about, and answer choices respondents most selected:

- **Biggest worry about applying to college:** "Will get into first-choice college, but won't have sufficient funds/financial aid to attend it"

- **Toughest part of their application experience:** "Taking the SAT, ACT or AP tests"

- **How many colleges they were applying to:** "Five to 8"

- **How far from home they'd prefer their ideal college to be:** 53% of parents chose "0 to 250 miles," while 65% of students selected answer choices in ranges over 250 miles.

An optional question invited respondents to offer advice for next year's applicants. One student wrote: "It's hard. Take up yoga." Said another "Parents just need to be there for their kid. It's not about getting into the very best college in America, it's about getting into a college that suits you best." The most common tip from students and parents alike: "Start early." Said one mother: "Start preparing when your child is born."

A survey report and samplers of "best advice" from student and from parent respondents are at www.PrincetonReview.com where users can search Princeton Review's list "100 Best Value Colleges for 2009" and get information on financial aid.

The Princeton Review is known for its test-prep courses, books, college and graduate school admission services, and education programs. It is not affiliated with Princeton University and not a magazine.

SOURCE: The Princeton Review

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EDITORS NOTE: Robert Franek, VP, Princeton Review, can discuss survey findings, admission trends, and advice for applicants.

Web site: <http://www.princetonreview.com>