

Staff Editorial

It's time to stop letting colleges dictate our lives

How do we decide our extracurriculars? What makes the final cut? The reality is that in our competitive environment, many students at NT, as at every high school, pick and choose activities based on what they perceive colleges will prefer. As the Harvard admissions lawsuit of 2018 revealed, the school prefers "academic" extracurriculars, such as Science Olympiad or Math Team. The documents produced, however, failed to address that those specific clubs may not be right for everybody.

The preferences of some colleges can pressure students to join certain clubs that they wouldn't otherwise be interested in. Harvard is the big Kahuna that many other schools follow in terms of admissions processes. If Harvard likes debate and Model UN, so do many other schools, creating an entire culture of incentivization for academic activities over others. But by pushing students into clubs that aren't the right fit, schools are limiting exploration and experimentation at a crucial time in our lives. We should be able to try new activities without fear of negatively impacting the chance of getting into a specific school.

If science is your greatest passion, then Science Olympiad is the perfect activity for you. If doing math in your spare time sounds like fun, then we fully encourage you to join Math Team.

However, if you're passionate about non-academic pursuits like dance or are more inclined towards just hanging out with friends or just don't know yet, Cereal Club's got your back and may benefit you more than any of the aforementioned activities.

By doing what we enjoy, we can gain much more than forcing ourselves into certain activities based on how they appear on our resumes and what colleges appear to want.

Sure, as the lawsuit shows, colleges may prefer certain activities over others because of the academic curiosity that these clubs show. There is a legitimate incentive to join these clubs beyond mere interest. But this academic preference that schools have only goes as far as the admissions office. The clubs may not be more beneficial than others once actually in college or out of college.

For those chemists out there, "like attracts like" is a common phrase. And the same goes for people. It's often that one's best friends will be found by being involved with the same activity. Sports teams, for example, can create strong bonds between players. Clubs as well: if two people are both really into cooking, those two people are more likely to become friends.

But joining an activity that your heart isn't fully in may be harder to form connections with people because you just don't have that much in common.

Choosing extracurriculars based on interest and not college preferences also gives us the chance to experiment to find different things that we may like. We're only in high school, so how do we know for sure what we want in the future? The huge range of clubs at NT give us a chance to try different things. Locking yourself into one all-time-consuming activity can prevent exploration into other potential interests.

Almost every extracurricular in high school will help you later on in life. While it may not be the deciding factor between you and your dream school, clubs give students the leadership and social skills necessary to succeed once actually at college. Admissions may seem like the highest hurdle, but without the practice of making friends and navigating social situations that clubs can give us, college itself may prove exceptionally difficult.

The school day goes from 8:15 to 3:25, that's 7 hours and 10 minutes of learning formulas and quotes five days a week. After school, learning more formulas and quotes may not sound appealing to some (if it does, more power to you). If it's not something you truly want to do, then don't succumb to the pressures that colleges put on you. Choose what YOU want to do. In the end, you will learn more from participating in an activity that makes you happy and that you have fun in.



Why you gotta be so mean?



by Ezra Wallach

The annual quad-header between New Trier and Loyola took place last Sunday, and, needless to say, things got contentious.

The quad is like New Trier's version of Wilmette's Friday Night Skate or the right side of Perry's at Lollapalooza. It's always overhyped and everyone feels an obligation to go. And while I'm not trying to say that it isn't fun, I'm just saying the hype around it is kinda stupid.

Look, I get it. Rivalries are fun and in good spirit, but the offensive rhetoric coming from both sides that takes place every year at the quad, as well as before it—often through social media—tends to cross the line.

But it's not just through this game that we see cyber-bullying at its peak—it's happening everywhere.

On Monday, Pete Davidson posted a note on his Instagram that described how he was fed up with the hate he was receiving on the internet. Despite previously announcing that he struggles with numerous mental disorders, people who have never met him continue to be incredibly mean to him, seemingly for no reason.

After all, part of the culture

these days is just to be offensive, even to those we don't know.

In the new Wreck-It-Ralph movie, Ralph explores a 3D version of the internet, and to make money, he starts to make viral YouTube videos. I promise you this connects to the quad and Pete Davidson.

He's having a good time until he looks at the comments on his videos. The first few comments praise him, but then the next few are devastating; not only is Ralph now sad, he is genuinely confused at how people seemed to think that it was acceptable to be so offensive.

After all, the videos were just of him eating spicy wings and doing other dumb stuff, but, nevertheless, people felt the need to comment instead of simply ignoring it.

Back to the Loyola v. New Trier rivalry—I get that it is tradition to make up chants or Facebook posts about people's appearance or whatever, but they are at times just unnecessarily mean.

Like Monica Lewinsky, who is literally the most cyberbullied person ever, said in her TED talk, "Cruelty to others is nothing new. But online, technologically enhanced shaming is amplified, uncontained, and permanently accessible."

There is so much unnecessary negative energy in this school, and instead of just being nice, people take the harder route and are mean, even if they don't realize it.

"Ghosting" or lying to people over text can affect them in the same

way as it would in person—and these instances are documented, which can at times be even worse.

Because we can't see people like Pete Davidson or Monica Lewinsky when they stumble upon a comments section, we think it doesn't affect them, and thus the sense of sympathy is gone. This is especially true for people who claim not to be bullies, yet with the internet actually find themselves amidst the worst of them.

We do things that we wouldn't feel comfortable doing in person because Twitter, along with just the platform of a cell phone in general, has made it acceptable to do so.

Instead of getting along with Loyola kids—which we managed to do in junior high—we opt to hate them, and this ends up hurting everyone in the long run. If someone isn't with us, they are against us.

We do this in a way because it is a "tradition" to be really mean, but that is even more dumb.

While we all hold hatred towards certain people or things, it can be more harmful than we realize. The inability to tolerate people who are different from you contributes to a toxic environment not only in this school, but in this country.

Even if someone is mean to you, try and do what Drake did after he was dissed by Pusha-T. Use that same energy to do productive things, such as making a fire album like "Scorpion," instead of going right back at them with a diss track of your own.

Take a step back, seniors

by Stephanie Kim

My teacher struck a nerve in me the other day as he said: "You can't see the forest for the trees."

He explained that sometimes we get so lost in the forest that all we see are the trees. Sometimes, we have to take a step backwards and see what the trees create—the forest itself.

The timing couldn't be more perfect. For most of us seniors (and increasingly juniors and sophomores), we're getting lost within the dense foliage of acceptance rates, supplements, Naviance, you name it. It's worth taking a minute to put the madness of college admissions into perspective.

New Trier, we're told, is one of the top public schools in the nation. Accordingly, we send numerous kids to the best universities across the country and even the world.

Last year, out of 320 kids total that applied across the eight Ivies, 28 students were accepted, which is about an average of 9 percent acceptance rate from New Trier to the Ivies. To Harvard alone, we have, on average, a nearly 2% higher than Harvard's 2018 acceptance rate of 5.2% — a record low.

These numbers seem quite minute when we look at it from the "New Trier" perspective, one that tends to be of terribly high standards. Only seven kids out of almost 100

applicants to Harvard? Only 12 kids got into Cornell last year?! Aw, man, guess you have to go to — gasp — University of Michigan now!

But we have to compare ourselves to the bigger picture, even if that's not what New Trier's been doing. Across the nation, there's seriously not that many public schools — and, dare I say, schools in general — that rival these statistics. (Yes, Stevenson, we see you.)

I used to live in a suburb of Denver, and I remember when I was in the third grade, the community was abuzz with the fact that one kid from the local public high school gained acceptance to Cornell.

Apparently, this student was one of the only kids in the past couple of years from my area to have gotten into any highly ranked college.

That high school's stats hardly compare to those of New Trier, yet everyone back in my Colorado suburb was still absolutely thrilled.

Meanwhile, here at New Trier, it's not uncommon to think that we don't send enough kids to Penn or Princeton or that going to a state school is not as "good" as a private elite university.

The bigger picture—the forest—is that we're really, really lucky. We're fortunate to send even just more than one kid to most places. We're fortunate to have over 30 National Merit Semifinalists. We're fortunate to have hordes of recruited athletes year after year.

You've probably heard this before, but I'll say it again: New Trier is in a tremendously blessed spot within the college admissions process. I really believe so.

This isn't to say that we should shame the kids who are disappointed in not gaining acceptance to these types of colleges or the kids who do get into them. Rather, we should see our contention at these universities as a humbling experience, and that we're all going to be alright, even if it wasn't my time or yours to get into an Ivy-level school.

As students, I think we're in a spot where we can choose the doors we open and piece together the futures we yearn to fulfill. No single college or path has inherent worth over another. Wherever you end up, it's you that makes the quality of the education and the college experience, not the institution — however corny I sound.

And just for kicks, let's take an even further step back from the trees and look at the entire forest, the biggest picture there is: college is a sliver of our lives. In one year, no one's going to remember this all-encompassing level of stress. And at the very end of it all, it's not going to matter whether you went to Harvard or Lake Forest College.

We've all got our own paths to follow and, better yet, to forge.

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