

Elite U.S. Colleges Face Class-Action Lawsuit Over Early-Decision Admissions Practices



Boston, August 8, 2025 – A sweeping class-action lawsuit has been filed in federal court in Boston, leveling antitrust allegations against 32 prominent U.S. colleges and universities—including Columbia, Duke, and the University of Pennsylvania—for exploiting early-decision (ED) admissions to artificially elevate tuition and limit financial aid competition. The suit asserts that these institutions collaborated to suppress market dynamics and mislead applicants by marketing ED as binding agreements. [Cohen Milstein+9Reuters+9Reuters+9](#)

Allegations Summary

- **Collusion claims:** Plaintiffs, comprising former students from Wesleyan University and other institutions, argue that defendants conspired to avoid competing for ED applicants, thereby inflating tuition costs for both ED and regular applicants.
- **Binding commitment implications:** By requiring ED applicants to formally commit before comparing other offers, schools gain leverage to offer minimal financial aid. This dynamic undermines students' negotiating power, especially for price-sensitive families. [Reuters+10Reuters+10Wikipedia+10](#)
- **Structural disadvantages:** Regular-decision students face fewer available slots and lower acceptance rates because ED admits claim a significant portion of freshman spots early.
- **Named parties beyond schools:** The complaint also targets the Common Application, Scoir Inc., and the Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE), alleging they facilitated coordination among institutions.

What Plaintiffs Seek

- **Class certification:** Plaintiffs are requesting class status for ED applicants since 2021 and regular decision students affected by the practice.
- **Injunctions and damages:** The suit seeks an injunction to end binding Early-Decision programs and monetary compensation for alleged tuition overcharges.

Universities' Responses

- As of now, several institutions—including Penn and Columbia—have declined to comment. Others, such as Brown, have expressed intent to vigorously defend their practices, calling the allegations meritless and rooted in misunderstanding of their financial-aid and admissions policies.

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