Frequently Asked Questions About the Waiting List

What is the waiting list for? Making admissions decisions is not an exact science. We know from experience approximately how many offers we should make to fill our entering class. But in some years, more applicants than expected accept offers of admission to the University of South Carolina; in other years, fewer do so. Or, applicants make initial confirmation deposits to more than one school, or change their enrollment plans and withdraw during the summer, creating places in the class. That's when we accept students from the waiting list.

When can I expect to hear something? By early June we should know whether we will make offers immediately from the waiting list. If we have spaces available, we will begin to review files and make waiting-list offers, and we will continue to make offers until places in the class have been filled. If we do not have places available immediately, we will not make any offers until entering students notify us that they no longer intend to enroll. Since we depend upon those students to notify us of their intentions, it can be difficult to predict when vacancies may occur.

Once the class is filled, whether with those who are initially accepted, or with applicants accepted from the waiting list, we will release some wait-listed applicants from the list. We will retain a smaller number of applicants on the waiting list throughout the summer months. If you have not heard from us, you may assume that you are still on the waiting list.

Where am I on the waiting list? The waiting list is not ranked. The Committee will consider all candidates on the waiting list if places are available, using the same criteria as in the initial admissions decision.

How many candidates are on the waiting list? The number will vary throughout the summer, from a few hundred at the beginning of the summer to only a few dozen at the end. Candidates will drop off the waiting list during the summer as they begin to make financial or housing commitments to other schools, and we will periodically release candidates from the waiting list if it appears unlikely we will be able to offer them admission.

Do people ever drop out later in the summer? We retain a smaller waiting list throughout the summer in the event that some of those who have made deposits decide not to attend. Applicants may be waiting to visit other law schools, or for law schools to make financial aid awards before making a final decision. The drop-out rate will also be affected by movement on waiting lists at other law schools.

If I receive an offer of admission, how long will I have to decide? Not long! Other wait-listed candidates are anxious for a decision. We will call or e-mail you if we have a space available, and you will be asked to make a commitment within a couple of days. We do not want to prolong the process by waiting a week or more for a letter to reach you and for your deposit to make its way back to us. You should be prepared to make a decision fairly quickly if a space opens up for you. That is why it is critically important that you keep us up to date on your current address, e-mail, and phone number over the summer.
What's the latest I could be offered admission? We have made last-minute offers right up to the day of orientation, which is August 19th this year.

How will waiting-list admission affect my chances of receiving financial aid or finding a place to live? In most cases, scholarship funds will already have been committed, and you should not expect to receive scholarship assistance as part of your financial aid package. If you qualify, getting Federal Direct Stafford or Direct GradPlus educational loans should be no problem. You should make sure that your FAFSA and supporting documentation have been received by the Financial Aid Office so that we can begin to process your loan application as soon as you have been accepted. If you are offered admission late in the summer, it is relatively easy to have loan funds designated for another law school redirected to the University of South Carolina. If you are admitted late in the summer and your loan funds do not arrive by the start of classes, we are usually able to ask the University to allow you to defer payment on your tuition bill until your financial aid arrives. You will need to come equipped with enough ready cash to rent an apartment and feed yourself until loan funds are disbursed. Off-campus housing in Columbia is not difficult to find, and we have resources to assist you with the search.

If I am offered admission from the waiting list, may I defer my enrollment? Except for very special circumstances, such as military deployment, the deferral option is not available to candidates admitted from the waiting list.

What are we looking for in a wait-listed applicant? Just as in the initial admissions process, we will be evaluating a variety of factors to try to select the best applicants. Among many things, we assess the strength of your undergraduate or graduate academic record, trends in your grades, the rigor of the curriculum you selected, your score(s) on the Law School Admission Test, your letters of recommendation, community service, extracurricular activities, work experience during school or after graduation, and any other information you provided in your personal statement or attachments to your application. We also try to assess institutional “fit,” so if there are programs or attributes of the Carolina Law community that you believe particularly suit you for this law school, you may wish to address those in a letter or addendum to your application.

How many do you usually accept? There really is no typical number accepted off the waiting list; it has varied from none to 15 percent or more of the entering class.

Is there anything I can do to enhance my chances? For many applicants, retaking the LSAT is the single most effective tool a student can utilize for moving from the waitlist to admission. Grades from the Spring semester can be a good way to demonstrate a continued rising grade trend as well. Please submit your spring grades through the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), which will update your Law School Report for each of the schools to which you have applied. Additional letters of recommendation will probably make little difference unless they provide new substantive information.

What about an interview? Unfortunately, we simply do not have the resources to meet with or offer interview opportunities to wait-listed candidates.

Hang in there! We know that being on the waiting list is frustrating, and we will let you know as quickly as possible if we can offer you a place in the class.