

## Leah - Colorado State University - Class of 2018



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I attended a tiny, private high school, so I was ready for a large, prestigious university that was big on school spirit and sports. I wanted to get involved in a variety of clubs and organizations as well as community service.

### Betting on Berkeley

UC Berkeley was my first choice because it had the best sociology program in the nation. Most of the other colleges I applied to were also top ranked. I did apply to a few backup schools, but I didn't think I would attend them. I felt confident I would get into Berkeley.

In March, I learned I was accepted only to UC Santa Cruz and rejected from the other UC campuses. I was crushed! Now I needed a back-up plan. I could afford Cornell College due to a scholarship or Colorado State because of in-state tuition. After looking at YouTube videos, I decided Cornell College didn't have the huge campus, the amazing athletic teams, or the school spirit I was looking for. But Colorado State did! The school pride was palpable, and I wanted to be a part of that. The sociology program was good. So were the opportunities for study abroad! Plus the school is located in Fort Collins, an incredible college town with lots going on.

### Putting prestige in its place

But there was one problem. I had always dreamt of attending a prestigious school, and Colorado State was no Harvard. It sounds crazy, but I was convinced that my peers would not consider me as smart if I attended a state school. It didn't help that one of my good friends got into Princeton. Or that a few pessimists in my class felt the need to remind me that state universities were "easy to get into," and therefore "didn't attract the smartest people." I knew many people who graduated from state universities, and I didn't consider them less smart than someone

Hometown: Denver, CO  
High School: Private  
GPA: 3.54 / 4.20 (weighted)  
SAT: 1820  
Major: Sociology  
Goal: Get involved, serve the local community, and maintain a high GPA

College	Status
Colorado State (EA)	Attending
Cornell College (EA)	Accepted
Drexel University (EA)	Accepted
Loyola University Maryland	Waitlisted
University of Denver	Accepted
UC Berkeley	Denied
UCLA	Denied
UC Santa Barbara	Denied
UC Santa Cruz	Accepted
University of Chicago	Denied
University of Southern California	Denied

who attended an Ivy League school. But it seemed there were people who looked down upon state colleges. And that worried me.

I began to consider University of Denver, because an alumna told me it was "academically better." When I visited, I thought the campus was gorgeous. But I'd be paying \$45,000 a year to attend, where at CSU, I'd pay less than \$3,000. That's when I had my lightbulb moment: If I liked CSU, if it had everything I wanted in a university, and if I would get a quality education at an affordable price, why in the world should I be worried about other people's opinions? I was so concerned with what others thought of my college choice, I almost completely disregarded what I wanted. I was ignoring the facts: I had found a great school that fit me well. I submitted my deposit, and I am now proud to be a CSU Ram!

### My ups and downs

I was surprised by the amount of hard work that went into applying to college. Balancing school, SATs, and applications kept me really busy and without a social life for the first half of my senior year. After all that work, it was awful being rejected from UC Berkeley. But it felt amazing when I realized Colorado State was the right school for me. I remember that moment—I was in the car with my family and we were weighing the pros and cons of Cornell, Denver University, and Colorado State. I found myself trying to sell CSU to my parents, and that's when I knew I was committed.

### What I learned

I feel like a completely different person now than at the start of my senior year. I definitely matured and learned to juggle things on my own. I also discovered new things about myself. The majority of questions asked by colleges are about YOU, so self-evaluation became important, both during and after the college application process.

### The money factor

My parents will contribute some to my college costs, but I will mainly be working and taking out loans.

### My advice

I made the mistake of applying to colleges that I would not have wanted to attend, even if they were my only choice. I chose them only because I was sure they would accept me. That was a bad idea! Instead, narrow down your list to colleges you really want to go to, and then work hard on those applications.

## Freshman Year Update

On my first day at CSU, I woke up early, looked out my window at all the people on campus, and felt pumped to officially be a college student! It was scary at first, because I missed my family and high school friends. But I quickly developed relationships with other students. There are so many clubs where it's easy to meet people, and every other freshman is just as nervous as you!

Through two on-campus programs for new students, I've also met some great student mentors who have given me advice on everything I need to be successful in college, including schoolwork, relationships, and finances.

Academics, though, can get overwhelming. I am often in the library for three or four hours a day doing homework. But through the university, I'm also able to volunteer in the community, and attend concerts, speaking events, and movie nights. I even saw Michelle Obama speak on campus! The opportunities at this college are pretty great.