# Highly successful teenage entrepreneur faces surprising college rejections



Zach Yadegari, an 18-year-old entrepreneur from Roslyn, New York, has experienced a striking pattern of rejection from some of the most prestigious universities in the United States despite his remarkable academic and business achievements. The high school senior, who boasts a near-perfect 4.0 GPA, a 34 ACT score, and the founder of a highly successful tech startup, was rejected by 15 out of the 18 colleges to which he applied.

Yadegari’s entrepreneurial journey began early: he learned to code at age seven, was teaching coding classes by ten, and had an app available on the App Store at twelve. His most notable venture, launched during his junior year of high school, is Cal AI, an application that estimates the calorie content of meals from pictures. The app reportedly generates tens of millions of dollars annually.

Despite these impressive credentials, Yadegari’s college application results were disheartening. He was turned down early by the University of Pennsylvania, followed by regular decision rejections from Stanford, MIT, Harvard, Yale, Washington University in St. Louis, Columbia, Princeton, Duke, the University of Southern California, the University of Virginia, New York University, Vanderbilt, Brown, and Cornell. Only Georgia Tech, the University of Miami, and the University of Texas extended offers of admission.

Reflecting on the experience, Yadegari told The Post, “I didn’t expect to be accepted to all of these colleges, however, I did expect to at least be accepted to a couple of the top schools I was applying to. I think that entrepreneurial accomplishments may not be fully appreciated.” He described the moment of receiving Stanford’s rejection letter as particularly difficult, saying, “I held out hope for Stanford, but then when I opened their rejection letter, all of the prior rejections just flooded in and really hit me at once.”

Alongside sharing his admissions results on the social media platform X, where his post amassed over 27 million views, Yadegari also made public his personal essay. In it, he candidly chronicled his evolving perspective on higher education, stating, “I began my own journey fiercely independent, determined to forge my own path. Now, I see that individuality and connection are not opposites, but complements… In this next chapter, I want to learn from humans — both professors and students — not just from computers or textbooks.” He further pondered the nature of success and education, noting, “One million dollars of revenue. In the last 30 days … Was this hedonistic treadmill of capitalism what the rest of my life was designated for? … In the rejection of the collegiate path, I had unwittingly bound myself to another framework of expectations: The archetypal dropout founder.”

The widespread attention to Yadegari’s story has ignited debate concerning the role and priorities of elite university admissions processes. Some commenters questioned the suitability of traditional college education for entrepreneurs like Yadegari, suggesting that “the skills you are seeking are not to be found in college” and arguing that universities should primarily focus on candidates aiming to advance research and science. Another user urged Yadegari to maintain his confidence and entrepreneurial spirit, warning that “one day those same universities will come begging to you to grow their endowment.”

Yadegari himself expressed a belief that his business accomplishments were undervalued relative to other extracurricular activities such as volunteer work. “I’m convicted in my belief that the admissions offices are not adequately weighting building a company and opening up jobs compared to other extracurricular activities such as volunteer work,” he told The Post. His experience aligns with a broader pattern, where many famously successful tech founders—such as Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Larry Ellison, and Sam Altman—left college early or never completed their degrees.

The growing skepticism regarding the necessity of college education among younger generations also surfaced in Yadegari’s reflections. He remarked on a trend among his peers, stating, “There definitely is growing skepticism [about college]. I think [my results] could discourage people who are trying to follow a similar entrepreneurial path from applying to these schools.”

Regarding his immediate future plans, Yadegari indicated he would likely attend one of the three universities that admitted him—Georgia Tech, the University of Miami, or the University of Texas—but remained uncertain about completing a four-year programme. “I’m just going to go to build relationships, and then at whatever point I think I’m ready to move on to the next stage of my life, I will,” he explained.

Christopher Rim, founder and CEO of the college admissions consultancy Command Education, provided insight into possible admissions committee perspectives. Speaking to The Post, he said that Yadegari’s personal statement might have worked against him because it “offers no clear reason why he would benefit from attending college … At its essence, the personal statement must convey who the candidate is beyond his or her accomplishments and how they’ll uniquely contribute to the campus.”

Yadegari’s experience highlights potential challenges within the admissions ecosystem for applicants who present unconventional profiles. Universities often seek students who will fit their established moulds, whereas candidates demonstrating significant professional success and independence may be perceived as outside this profile.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)