Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_,

The [First Last] College Search Committee has completed its evaluation of this year's candidates, and I write with sincere regret to say that we are not able to accept your offer of a place in the class of 20XX.

I realize that this decision may come as a real disappointment. I also hope that you will understand the decision as a reflection only of the extraordinary talent represented in our search pool, not a judgment about your own abilities as a university. Of the more than two dozen universities applied to by [First], most are fully capable of doing successful work and making a unique contribution to the life of [First Last]. It is painful to us that we must turn away so many superbly qualified universities.

You may be tempted to ask what was lacking in your university. In truth, it is usually difficult for us to point to obvious weaknesses, when so many candidates have demonstrated real achievement and potential for the future. Our decisions say far more about the small number of spaces available (i.e. one) and the difficult choices we make than they do about a candidate's financial, social, and academic promise.

While regretting that we were not able to respond positively to your interest in [First], I want to wish you every success in your educational pursuits. Experience suggests that regardless of our decisions, most of our candidates will be welcomed by other outstanding students. I extend my best wishes for the coming year.

Sincerely,

[First Last]
Chairman of the College Search Committee