COLLEGE NIGHT FOR PARENTS OF JUNIORS

JUNIOR SEMINAR
WHO ARE YOU
COLLEGE LIST CREATION
TESTING
NAVIANCE
JANUARY 29, 2019

SENIOR PERSPECTIVE

Anna Hauser
(AND RUSTY)
Senior, Class of 2019
Moravian Academy

JUNIOR SEMINAR PROGRAM

- Weekly meetings with students in small groups
- Journey of Self-Discovery - develop self-confidence and understand the application process
- Use of Naviance - College Counseling Tool
- Organization of Activity Sheet

JUNIOR SEMINAR PROGRAM

- College Search and Research
- Preparation for Individual Interviews
- Campus Visits and Tours
- Work on Common Application
- Essay Discussion/Workshop
- Individual Family Conference
  - preliminary college list

WHO ARE YOU

- Self Discovery
  - The person with whom you will spend the most time in your life, is yourself; therefore you owe it to yourself to become as interesting a companion as possible
- Switch your mindset
  - Instead of focusing so much on what the college has to offer, learn what you have to offer first
- "Be Yourself! Everybody Else is Taken" - Article
  - What do I love?
  - What qualities do I appreciate about myself?
  - Who am I now and how did I get there?
  - Who are your people?

THE COLLEGE LIST

- College Guidance Questionnaire
  - What do you want to study?
  - Geographic boundaries?
  - Size of institution?
  - How do you learn best?
  - Career possibilities?
  - Extracurricular interests?
  - College setting - urban, suburban, rural?
**COLLEGE LIST – DNA STRANDS**

- **Building the List**
  - Identify colleges that fit your parameters
  - What are their characteristics?
  - [https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/)
    - www.collegeboard.org

- **DNA Strands (characteristics)**
  - Liberal arts, smaller, undergraduate focus, college towns
  - Research-oriented, urban
  - Liberal-minded, less structured
  - Large flagship

**COLLEGE LIST – DNA EXAMPLES**

- **Liberal Arts, Smaller, Undergraduate Focus, College Town Strand (by selectivity)**
  - Princeton, Dartmouth, Duke
  - Pomona, Middlebury, Bowdoin
  - Davidson, Bucknell, Colgate
  - Dickinson, Denison, Wheaton, TCNJ

**COLLEGE LIST – DNA EXAMPLES**

- **Research-Oriented, Urban Strand (by selectivity)**
  - Penn, Harvard, Stanford
  - Vanderbilt, Johns Hopkins, Rice, Washington U., St. Louis, Emory, Northwestern, Carnegie Mellon, Tufts, University of Southern California
  - American, Drexel, Pitt, Syracuse

**COLLEGE LIST – DNA EXAMPLES**

- **Liberal-Minded, Less Structured Strand (by selectivity)**
  - Brown, Swarthmore, Haverford
  - Wesleyan, Vassar, Carleton, Reed, Oberlin
  - Conn College, Skidmore, Macalester, Grinnell
  - Wooster, Guilford, Hendrix, Hampshire

**COLLEGE LIST – DNA EXAMPLES**

- **Large Flagship Strand (by selectivity)**
  - UNC, Chapel Hill, UVA, Michigan, Cal Berkeley, UCLA
  - Georgia, William and Mary, U Florida, Texas
  - Wisconsin, Illinois, Penn State U, UConn, Rutgers, Delaware
  - Rutgers, UNH, UMass, Indiana, Alabama

**HOW MANY?**

- **Create a Balanced and Realistic List**
  - 1-2 Super Reach Schools
  - 2 Reach Schools
  - 4-5 Target Schools
  - 2-3 Likely Schools
    - (each student’s list will be vastly different depending on academic record, scores, and parameters for the college search)

  - **The Average MA Student applies to 10-12 Colleges**
**FINAL THOUGHTS ON COLLEGE LIST**
- If you can't answer the question “why us” to a college, then why are you applying?
- Every college on your list should be one that you would be happy to attend
- More super reach colleges on your list does not increase chance of admission at those colleges
- This process is an education in learning how to manage a complex process and presenting yourself in a compelling way

**STANDARDIZED TESTS**
- Standardized Testing
  - SAT and Subject Tests
  - ACT
  - AP Exams

**COLLEGE TESTING CALENDAR**
- Standardized Testing: PSAT, SAT or ACT, Subject Tests, AP Exams
- Test Preparation: Classroom Prep, Using Workbooks and Software, Taking Courses, Private Tutoring
- Importance of Testing Varies According to the College/University; test optional institutions; www.fairtest.org

**INTRODUCTION TO NAVIANCE**
- A comprehensive tool to assist the school and family with the college search and application process
- Family Connection
  - Surveys — College Guidance Questionnaire, Parent Questionnaire
  - Tabs — Colleges, About Me

**EVALUATING APPLICATIONS**
- Points to Consider
- Qualified candidates versus competitive candidates
  - Academic profile: GPA, degree of difficulty of courses, and standardized testing
  - Recommendations
  - Essays
  - Commitment to school and community
  - Interest in the college/university
  - Special interest groups, talents, development interests

**FINANCIAL AID**
- Learn the terms
- FAFSA and CSS Profile
- Deadlines
- Outside Scholarships
- Financial Aid Night, Fall, 2019
INDIVIDUAL INTEGRITY

- Too much pressure can lead to impulsive acts with very serious consequences
- Academic dishonesty – cheating and plagiarism
- Behavior issues become part of the official school record
- Talk with your child on a periodic basis about this critical issue

POINTS FOR PARENTS

- We are a team – parent, student, counselor
- The counseling office gives guidance but ultimately whether and where to apply is a student/family decision
- The realities of selective college admissions – positive and negative decisions

POINTS FOR PARENTS

- "Like" on Facebook - MACounseling and Twitter @MA CollegeCounseling
- Your child's needs in the application process come before your needs
- August – athletic pre-season, mandatory college application and essay workshop

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

Susan Stifel, parent of
Lizzie Stifel, Class of 2019
Moravian Academy
Will Stifel, Class of 2016, MA Class of 2020, Davidson College

TAKE A DEEP BREATH

- You are in good hands
- We will get through this together
- Your daughter/son is well prepared in mind, body and spirit for the next step in her/his education
JUNIOR YEAR - SPRING 2019 - COLLEGE COUNSELING CALENDAR

February
* Begin the process of gathering information on colleges; Internet, guidebooks on colleges, information from colleges, campus visits, informal conversations with alumni and current students.
* February ACT - February 9, 2019
* Call Ms. Condon at 610-691-1600 to arrange for a family appointment to discuss the preliminary college list; parents and child attend the meeting that lasts for approximately one hour; meetings are scheduled on Mondays through Thursdays and some Saturdays beginning February 15 through June - you must complete the College Guidance Questionnaire before an appointment can be made.
* Consider March 9 SAT; online registration deadline is February 8 – www.collegeboard.org
* Consider how you will prepare for the ACT or SAT; if formal preparation, ensure that grades do not suffer

March
* March SAT - March 9, 2019
* Consider April 13 ACT; online registration deadline is March 8.
* Review test requirements for colleges of interest. If Subject tests are required or recommended, consider registering for the SAT Subject Tests that can be taken on May 4 or June 1, 2019. Not all colleges require Subject Tests, therefore, ensure that you are taking these tests only if necessary. Common subject tests for MA students include Math Level 1, Math 2, Literature, Chemistry, United States History, French and Spanish. Some colleges require students interested in engineering, math or science fields to take a science Subject Test.
* Make plans for summer vacation; consider community service opportunities, employment, study or travel abroad, internships, programs on college campuses, etc.
* Visit colleges when you can; tour, information session.

April
* Finish Activity Sheet and email a copy to Mrs. Dubreuil or Mrs. Shaughnessy (this will be completed in Junior Seminar)
* Registration for senior year courses – be sure to have a balance in the academic selections so that the program is challenging, but not overwhelming.
* Prepare for AP exams to be taken in May. Visit the AP web page on College Board Online (www.collegeboard.com).
* Consider May 4 SAT or Subject Tests; online registration deadline is April 5.
* Visit colleges when you can; tour, information session.

May
* May SAT or Subject Tests - May 4, 2019. Common Subject tests include Literature, Math 1 and Math 2
* Take AP exams during the period May 6 – 17, 2019.
* Visit colleges when you can; tour, information session; consider interviewing at schools of great interest where offered.

June and July
* The AP scores are obtained online in early to mid July
* Consider June 1 SAT or Subject Tests; online registration deadline is May 3.
* Visit colleges when you can; tour, information session; consider interviewing at schools of great interest where offered.

Summer
* Visit colleges when you can; tour, information session; consider interviewing at schools of great interest where offered.
* Continue building on areas of interest with employment, volunteer work, internships, college programs, travel, or other
* Begin working on Common Application – www.commonapp.org
* There will be a college application boot camp in mid-August for students to continue working on the Common Application and work on college essays. Nothing should be mailed to colleges until it is reviewed by the college counseling staff. The process for completing applications will be reviewed in the Senior Seminar Program.

Upper School College Counseling Web Page – www.moravianacademy.org
The website will be updated during the course of the year, but feel free to review the pages that are currently listed. Moravian Academy recommends that you check out the information listed on the Summer Programs section; in some cases MA students have participated in a program and can give first-hand observations.

E-mail addresses  ldubreuil@mamail.net or kshaughnessy@mamail.net
INTRODUCTION TO NAVIANCE

Family Connection is a comprehensive website that you and your child can use to assist you in making decisions about colleges and careers. Family Connection will allow you and your child to:

- **Get involved in the planning and advising process** – Build a resume, complete on-line surveys, and utilize school and web resources to navigate the search process
- **Research colleges and careers** – Explore how personal interests and strengths help to generate college and career possibilities

Family Connection also lets us share information with you and your child about upcoming meetings and events, local scholarship opportunities, and other Web resources for college and career information. You will be receiving an e-mail which is your official registration into Naviance.

First Steps
To visit Moravian Academy’s Naviance site, you will use your Web browser to connect to:

student.naviance.com/moraviana

- You will be prompted to change your password once you log in with the password that has been provided
- You will choose the student’s file (if you have more than one in the upper school) you wish to review, and the Welcome page will appear. Announcements and other important information are posted on this page. Check it as often as you like.

NOTE: When you log-in in the future, your username is your e-mail address and your password is the one you established when registering. If you change your e-mail address at any point, remember to inform us and to update it in Family Connection.

Links
Once you have logged in to the Welcome Page, you will see five links on the upper right hand side of the page which are useful tools that will be used by your students in various capacities. These are “Home”, “Colleges”, “Careers”, “About Me” and “My Planner”. We will be focusing only on “Colleges”, Careers”, and “About Me” links. Below is a list of what you will find in each link; the interface is very user friendly and somewhat self-explanatory, but if you have questions, feel free to reach out to the college counseling office.

**Colleges**
Several tools are available in this link to assist you as you search/research and apply to colleges/scholarships, and you can also see our schedule of visiting colleges.

- **Find Your Fit**
  - SuperMatch College Search, College Match, Scattergrams, Advanced College Search, College Lookup
- **Research Colleges**
  - Colleges I’m Thinking About, College Compare, College Resources, Enrichment Programs, College Maps
- **Apply To Colleges**
  - Colleges I’m Applying To, Letters of Recommendation, College Events, Test Scores
- **Scholarships and Money**
  - Scholarships I’m Applying To, Scholarship List, Scholarship Match, National Scholarship Search
- **College Visits**

**Careers**
Several tools are available in this link to assist you as you self-reflect on personal characteristics and how they might match with specific majors and careers.

- **Explore Careers and Interests**
  - Careers and Clusters I’m Thinking About, Career Cluster Finder, Do What You Are, Career Interest Profiler

(OVER)

**About Me**

- **My Surveys**
  - Surveys Progress, Surveys To Take
- **My Assessments**
  - Assessments in Progress, Assessments to Take
- **My Postsecondary Plans**
  - Colleges I’m Thinking About, Careers and Clusters I’m Thinking About, Game Plan
- **My Journal**
- **Documents Shared With Me**

We hope that you will find this resource helpful. If you have further questions, please contact the College Counseling Office.
General College List

Most college admission offices focus on three key areas: grades and degree of difficulty of courses; standardized testing; major contributions to school and community life. College admissions is generally a holistic process, meaning that college admissions offices review all materials, including transcripts, standardized testing, extracurricular activities, recommendations, and essays. The general rule of thumb is that a student should meet the basic expectations of grades and scores listed below in each category to be considered a competitive applicant. The list below represents some of the colleges/universities to which our students commonly apply.

Grades in the B/B+ range, scores at around 600
Drew University; 1,500 students
Elizabethtown College; 2,400 students
Goucher College; 1,400 students
Ithaca College; 6,200 students
James Madison University; 18,000 students
Susquehanna University; 2,400 students
University of Delaware – 17,000 students
Ursinus College – 1,800 students

Grades in the B+/A- range, scores of 600 and above (preferably near 650)
American University; 7,300 students
Dickinson College; 2,400 students
Franklin and Marshall College; 2,400 students
George Washington University; 10,400 students
Gettysburg College; 2,400 students
Muhlenberg College; 2,500 students
Syracuse University; 15,000 students
University of Pittsburgh, PA; 19,100 students
Virginia Polytechnic Institute; 24,000 students

Grades in the A/A- range, scores 650 and above (preferably 700)
Boston University; 18,200 students
Bryn Mawr College; 1,300 women
Bucknell University; 3,500 students
Lafayette College; 2,400 students
Lehigh University; 4,800 students
Pennsylvania State University; 40,000 students
Skidmore College; 2,700 students
Smith College; 2,700 women
University of Rochester; 6,200 students
Villanova University; 7,000 students

Grades in the A range, scores 700 and above
Boston College; 9,100 students
Carnegie Mellon University; 6,300 students
University of Richmond; 3,000 students

*Grades in the A/A+ range; standardized test scores in mid 700's or higher in each section
The Ivy League Institutions: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Princeton University, University of Pennsylvania, Yale University
College of William and Mary; 6,300 students
Georgetown University; 7,600 students
Haverford College; 1,200 students
Johns Hopkins University; 5,300 students
Northwestern University; 8,500 students
Swarthmore College; 1,500 students
Tufts University; 5,200 students
University of Virginia; 16,100 students
Wellesley College; 2,500 women
Williams College; 2,100 students

*Keep in mind that competition is exceptionally keen at schools in the “most competitive” category for admission (many of these schools have acceptance rates lower than ten percent). In addition to straight A averages in the most rigorous courses, and at least 700 in each section of the SAT, students are typically standouts (in many cases regionally, statewide, or nationally) in one or several extracurricular areas.
Be yourself! Everybody else is taken...

Posted on Tue, 01/07/2014 - 12:46

High school counselor Barbara Simmons joins us today to examine the meaning of the directive to "Be yourself!" in the college application -- and provides some steps for getting there. Heads up, juniors! The time to start thinking about this is now.

With all of the resolutions swirling around in January when everything is fresh and new -- I propose a resolution for all students embarking upon their search for those colleges that will become their new educational and social homes in a year and a half. So, this resolution is for you, the juniors in high school, heading towards your 2nd semester of junior year.

Resolved: I will continue to "know myself".

Many of you will think that this aphorism, "know thyself", has been both overused and around since ancient Greece -- at times a proverb used to help those who boasted about themselves, "exceeding what they actually were," and at times a "warning to pay no attention to the opinion of the multitude." . How many times have you heard "know who you are?" from a counselor or educator or parent? How many questionnaires have you answered with this as the guiding theme?

You might even think "what does this have to do with a college search?". It's difficult to imagine a college search that doesn't include your wanting to know everything you can about each school that you're interested in -- from on-line sources, from Facebook, on Twitter - from friends and family. After all, it's about the college, isn't it?

Not exactly.

It's easy to acquire all sorts of information about colleges -- they use vast marketing outreach to acquaint you with their institutions, from facilities to faculty, from recreation to retention rates, from curricular choices to commencement speakers. But, students really need to know, first, who they are before they can begin their college search for WHAT they want.

When I start to work with students, one of the first questions I ask hearkens back to those perennial questions asked by Plato and the Greeks. Do you know who you are well enough to know which colleges fit that REAL you, not the you that is a combination of what you THINK you should be or who your best friends say you are, but the YOU that in Doris Lessing's words, has "learn[ed] to trust your own judgment, learn[ed] inner independence, learn[ed] to trust that time will sort good from bad -- including your own bad."

A quick Google search on the words "know thyself" brought up some well-known phrases that I'd heard before or read before -- from history and philosophy classes and from well-worn quotes that often preface a chapter in text books. But it is Ben Franklin's statement, "There are three THINGS extremely hard, STEEL, DIAMOND, and to know one's self" that resonated most with me as I ponder this first task of students looking at colleges that might meet their authentic needs, their authentic selves.

So how do you get there?

It truly is a matter of more than figuring out whether you like urban or rural settings, although that does figure into your tastes and values.

Knowing yourself means knowing what you value, what your habits are, how you make and sustain relationships. Knowing yourself means knowing your strengths and weaknesses as a student, your
passions and dislikes in learning situations. It means knowing what your insecurities are as well as your courageous moments.

One writer said you are not born knowing yourself. And, you do not get to know yourself better by just turning one year older! To know yourself is a conscious effort.

Sandy Grason, author of a book Journaling: Journaling to Awaken Your Inner Voice, Heal Your Life and Manifest Your Dreams, has five prompts to help you discover who you are, to know yourself.

1. “I don’t want to write about” --- a way to get you to “let go” of all that is hiding beneath the surface so the real you shows up.

2. “Who am I now?” Perhaps remember who that person was at 7 and at 10 and now at 16 – and explore the paths you took to get where you are now.

3. “Things I love” – What does make you happy? Good conversations, time alone, the complexity of urban crawls or a meandering walk through a park?

4. “Affirm how wonderful you are” – Make a list of qualities that you like about yourself – and keep these in mind when you begin looking at colleges that, you deeply hope, will help you keep these vibrant.

5. “Conversation with your 99 year old self” – Write about what experiences this 99 year old version of yourself would have liked to have had – and keep in mind that colleges should be enhancing the years that come before old age!

Too often in the world of "hype" it is the knowledge of marketing gurus that we acquire first – what colleges are the best for (fill in the blank); what faculty are the recipients of the Nobel Prizes; who’s at the top of whatever ranking is the current trend.

But, it is YOU who are going to college – not the marketing guru’s invention of the ‘typical high school senior’ – and before you begin that college search, take the time to know yourself, your hopes and dreams and strengths and limitations, so that the colleges that appear to be ‘right’ for you are actually a match for the REAL you and not a figment of anyone else’s imagination.

Barbara Simmons is currently Director of College Counseling at Notre Dame High School in San Jose, CA. Previously, she worked at other public and private high schools (in California and in Massachusetts) as an English teacher as well as a college counselor. She worked ‘on the other side of the desk’ as an admission officer at both Santa Clara University and at Wellesley College.

http://collegeadmissionbook.com/blog/be-yourself-everybody-else-taken
Ten Ways For Parents

To Get On Top Of The College Admission Process

Willard Dix
Contributor
Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.

“Holiday decorations have been put away, you're trying to keep up with your New Year's resolutions, and that fruitcake has been re-gifted. It's time to think about gearing up for the college process with your high school junior! When I first started college counseling, I assumed it was mostly a matter of matching students to colleges, with parents playing a primary but mostly supportive role. Coming from the college side of admission, which was usually remote from family dynamics, I had yet to see that the process exerts its influence on nearly every aspect of family life, often stressing hidden fault lines.

Over the years, I've had parents demand that their student apply to their alma maters despite his or her own preferences; divorced parents nearly coming to blows over their child's college choices (with him in the room); parents in tears because their child didn't get into a favored institution; parents clueless about their children's interests or goals; parents refusing to pay except for certain schools ("If he doesn't go to Harvard, he'll be a bum!"); and parents talking about how "we" were going to apply to the following schools.

I've had plenty of great parents, as well. They supported their children's choices; had had great family conversations; and were prepared to do what was needed as time went on. That being said, it takes a lot of self-restraint to enter this phase of your child's life. He or she is coming into adulthood but still depends on parental support; is expected to make a huge personal decision but based on family conditions; and looks forward to independence but may not have the tools to use it wisely.

I ultimately concluded there are no villains in the college process, only decent people trying to navigate a complex system while balancing the family's needs. Whether it's your first time or the latest of several, here are some suggestions that may help you avoid some of the most common pitfalls as the process heats up.

1. Expect complications. There's no getting around it—you will run into problems, whether it's with choices, goals, or finances. You won't even realize it until you're approaching one, either. Expecting the unexpected enables you to face the issues more openly. See them as challenges or puzzles. It's the moment to take a deep breath, remind yourself that you've reared a great kid, and dive into the topic.
2. Become a mentor as much as a parent. This is the moment you can begin to step back from your authoritative role to become a mentor, "guiding without steering." Instead of telling your student what to do, you start asking open-ended and non-directive questions like, "Tell me why you like that college?" or "How do you think that major will help you in the future?" Finding a good balance here can be difficult if you're used to being more directive, but you'll be surprised how positive transferring responsibility while offering help when needed can be.

3. Keep your own anxieties at bay. You fear your child will make mistakes, never get into college or not take the process seriously. And you may be right. But allowing your own worries to dominate your interactions about college only makes things worse. You'll encounter resistance, avoidance or more anxiety. Share your own anxieties with your spouse but be as cool as possible with your child. When you feel like yelling about getting to work on research or applications, step back instead. Gritting your teeth is tough on the molars, but pays off well in the future.

4. Talk about hopes and goals, not just colleges. Have this conversation first. Sit down now and talk about your hopes for your student, then let him or her respond. See your child through new eyes, as a young adult. Talk about aspirations and anxieties; focus on them before trying to choose institutions. Above all, value and respect what your child tells you, even if it seems to contradict what you expected to hear. *Bonus hint:* Try having these conversations while shoveling snow, making dinner, watching TV or driving to the store. The less formal the better.

5. Present a unified front. Whether you're married or divorced, be on the same page about your approach to college. Agree about finances and other issues before you sit down with your student. Arguing about them, especially with him or her in the room, can be devastating, not just to the process, but to family relationships.

6. Listen to your school's counselor, not your neighbors. If your school has a college counselor, be sure to take advantage of that resource. He or she (or they) provide good up to date information about deadlines, institutions, and financial aid. You'll have friends and relatives tell you how their children got into college and what you should do, but consider the small sample size as well as the fact that college admission changes from year to year. Above all, don't fall into the "Keeping up with the Joneses" trap by having your student to apply to high status schools just for bragging rights.

7. Expect your student to accept others' advice he or she wouldn't take from you. Parents are often frustrated that they'd said exactly the same thing I had but were ignored while my advice was treated like the Ten Commandments. It's a normal part of adolescent development to begin relying on others; it's not a sign of disrespect. And you can be secretly happy that you were right all along. I found as a college counselor that I could help defuse situations where parents and students disagreed or where they weren't hearing each other because I was perceived as a disinterested observer.
8. Educate yourself about the college process. Don't rely on your own experience or even that of recent graduates. As I've discussed in other entries, the process shifts constantly and subtly. Attend college nights at school and do your own research online at credible sites like Big Future or Peterson's. Although the Common Application doesn't include every institution, it has about 800 members and plenty of relevant information about how to apply. Colleges' own sites are informative. If the high school uses a college platform like Naviance, be sure to sign up and use it when invited.

9. High school still matters. Don't permit the college research and application process to overwhelm your student's high school life, in class or out. It should not be a full-time job. The best preparation for college is great performance in high school. In class or out, focusing on doing well today helps ensure college acceptance and a more fulfilled life. Focus on the journey, not the result.

10. Don't nag. I saved this hint for last because it's toughest. As adults we are more long term, future-oriented than our kids. To avoid this situation, set up a calendar in an open area and agree on deadlines and goals with your child. If he or she is part of the process from the beginning, those deadlines are more likely to be met.

Prepare yourselves for a wild ride testing your relationships with each other, with your children, and with the high school. It may not be fun, but it can be a valuable experience. Attending to the journey will make the goal that much easier to achieve.

See my blog at collegeculture.net for essays about the college admission process itself.”

Let’s end the craziness of college admissions

By Jeffrey J. Selingo
January 20, 2017

College decisions have started to roll in for high-school seniors who applied early, and for those students who want to go to one of the three dozen or so most-selective colleges in the country, the news is usually not good.

As The Washington Post’s Nick Anderson is tracking on Grade Point, the admissions statistics so far for the Class of 2021 are more eye-popping than they were last year or the year before. It’s the same story all over again, as the acceptance rates get ever smaller and colleges proclaim the virtues of their applicants with ever more superlatives.

Georgetown University saw its application pool for early action, in which admitted students are allowed to weigh offers until the spring, increase by 11 percent. The result? Its acceptance rate for early action was the lowest ever, at just less than 12 percent. MIT accepted just 8 percent of the 8,394 who applied early action. At the Georgia Institute of Technology, more than 15,000 seniors applied early action, with just about 1 in 5 out-of-state students admitted. The average accepted student had a 33 on the ACT (out of a possible 36), 1468 on the SAT (out of a possible 1600), took 11 college-level courses, and had an A average.

Although the most selective colleges and universities in the U.S. enroll fewer than 6 percent of American undergraduates, you might conclude from the angst around admissions every year that very few students are accepted into college in the United States. Not so. There are thousands of colleges in the U.S., and the vast majority of them accept far more applicants than they reject. Half of American colleges have become less selective over the past 50 years.

[What U.S. higher education can learn from Canada: Bigger schools can be the best]

But don’t tell that to some students and parents today who have turned college admissions into a game, where getting to Go seems to be ultimate goal rather than the education or degree itself.

Two years ago, Frank Bruni, the New York Times columnist, wrote a must-read book for high school students and parents, Where You Go Is Not Who You’ll Be. In the book, he discusses how much of the admissions process at top colleges is an illusion, luring students to apply even if it might not be a great fit for them. And he has plenty of examples and stories of Americans of all ages and from all walks of life who have found success without degrees from brand-name universities.

It’s a tough sell to some parents. I know from my own experience in giving talks about my book, There Is Life After College, when I try to explain that what students do while in college matters more than where they go. And while parents (and it’s always the parents) often shake their head in agreement during the talk, afterwards they often approach me to ask me for any tips about getting their children into Harvard, Stanford, Yale, or fill in the name of another selective college.

Recently, I asked Bruni if he’s noticed any changes in the students and parents he’s talked to about his book. “I’ve seen a trend toward less pushback from parents in the audience and more receptiveness,” he said. “I find it inevitable, because the wages of this pressure and status
consciousness are so obvious, as is the futility of pinning your dreams and your self-esteem on schools with acceptance rates below 10 percent. At a certain point, you’re just being a masochist, and people only have so much masochism in them.”

[People analytics are helping employers make savvier hires]

The worry of parents about college admissions too often results in them pushing their kids to do more and do better, and later on contributes in part to higher levels of anxiety now found in college students, no matter where they end up going. Last week, while visiting Penn State, I noticed the top story in the student newspaper was about how students may soon vote to pay a “mental health fee” to reduce long waitlists at the university’s counseling center.

Penn State is not alone in facing long wait times. Nearly one in six college students has been diagnosed with or treated for anxiety within the past year, according to the annual national survey by the American College Health Association. Depression is also on the rise.

The ambition to get into the best colleges is driven in part by parents’ concern over job prospects after graduation. But in interviewing employers of all sizes in recent years, I found them increasingly less interested in where someone went to college, and more concerned about the hands-on learning experiences applicants get, including internships, undergraduate research, and other outside-the-classroom endeavors. And as more employers use their own data on the performance of their best employees to find out why they are thriving in the job, some are discovering that a worker’s alma mater or degree has little do with success on the job.

Of course, there are exceptions. Some employers, mostly the big Wall Street banks, consulting firms, and law firms still tend to favor applicants from elite colleges and universities. But for the most part, it’s not the education that is better at these selective colleges; it’s the network of students that undergraduates connect to, through the parents of classmates, alumni, and eventually when students themselves become alumni. While that network might be smaller, it exists in some way at any decent college.

The students who succeed after college I have found are those who are always learning outside the classroom as undergraduates, in everyday circumstances, whether in clubs, sports, activities, in residence halls or in part-time jobs. It’s that lifelong curiosity that leads us to appreciate education whenever it happens and wherever, even when it doesn’t come on the campus of an elite university.

Selingo is the author of There Is Life After College, about how today’s graduates launch into their careers. He is former editor of the Chronicle of Higher Education, a professor of practice at Arizona State University, a trustee of Ithaca College and a visiting scholar at Georgia Tech’s Center for 21st Century Universities.

Both parents, students need a to-do list to enter college

COMMENTARY /// College applications
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By Nancy Paul
Special to the Acorn

Let’s be honest. The college process is overwhelming and stressful . . . for parents!
It’s no wonder. Rising college costs and increased competition for admission make it harder than ever to guide our
kids so they end up at the right college at the right price.
Here’s my checklist for parents of college-bound teens.

Run your own race
It’s easy to compare ourselves to other parents and feel we aren’t doing enough to help our children navigate the
college process.
Every child and every family is unique, with their own goals, values, challenges, interests and aptitudes. Don’t
compare your child to others.
The SAT tutor that worked wonders for your neighbor’s kid may not have a teaching style that fits your teen. There is
no one-size-fits-all solution.

Be realistic about the cost
Paying for college cannot be an afterthought. Tuition has increased an average of 4 percent per year recently and
1,170 percent since 1978.
Too often, families focus only on admissions without a plan to pay for college, leading to college debt, financial
burden and missed opportunities.
Be sure your teen applies to some schools that you can easily afford. Above all, do not tell your child they can go to
any college they get into, regardless of cost, if that isn’t the case.
There are a variety of ways to reduce the cost of college, even if you earn too much for need-based aid or haven’t
saved enough, including merit scholarships, tuition discounts, not changing majors and graduating in less than four
years.

Do less
Offer guidance and advocate for your child when necessary. But sometimes what a teen really needs is for parents
to take a step back and let them assume more responsibility for where they go to college.
Some parents feel bad about “making” their teen retake the SAT/ACT as a way to increase their college options.
Higher test scores often lead to more acceptance letters and more institutional merit scholarships.

Consider the source
When another parent boasts about their child’s GPA, test scores, admissions or merit scholarships, listen selectively.
Competitive parents sometimes exaggerate their child’s successes. It’s a marathon, not a sprint.
Success with the college process is determined by small steps. Years of involvement in a few activities will enhance
admissions and create opportunities to pay less. Quality of involvement is more important than quantity.
Lay a foundation when children are young. Volunteer together, talk about college, prioritize academics and visit
colleges.

Explore interests
Grades and test scores are not enough. Community service, hobbies, clubs, enrichment programs and internships
are a great way to build resumes, develop leadership skills and stand out in the college process. Plus, pursuing a
passion can provide valuable insights into college majors.
Keep an open mind
There are 4,700 colleges in America. You may not have heard of your student’s “best fit” college yet, but there are many schools where they can thrive.
Create a list of target, reach and safety schools for admissions as well as cost. Safety schools are the ones you can most easily afford and where admission is likely; reach schools are a stretch, and targets match your student’s credentials and your bank account.

Communicate
Discuss expectations, concerns and values. How are you willing to help? Is your teen expected to contribute to college costs? Will you review applications?

Skip the guilt
There are a lot of ways to parent college-bound teens.
Other parents will shuttle kids to more activities than you do, invest in more expensive enrichment programs, use connections to land more prestigious internships and visit more colleges to meet the admissions officers. But these advantages won’t necessarily prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of college.
If cost is an issue, remember that teens who contribute to college costs do better. Winning merit scholarships, for example, empowers students with validation for their accomplishments.

Create a plan
You’ll feel more relaxed and achieve better results with a plan that reflects your child’s uniqueness and your family’s objectives. The strategies that get your teen into more colleges often lead to opportunities to pay less and empower your child to reach their potential. You’ll enjoy the process and sleep better, too.

_Nancy Paul is a speaker, seminar leader, consultant and author. She advises families nationwide on how to empower their teens so they can maximize their potential in the college application process. Email her at Nancy@NancyPaulinc.com._

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