

# **NINE THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS**

## **1. RELAX - YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER WILL THANK YOU**

Much of the stress that parents feel in the admission process is self-induced. Choosing colleges, applying, getting admitted, and deciding where to enroll isn't easy. There's a lot of work involved, and it's drawn out over a long period of time. The best way to avoid stress is to plan slowly and deliberately, using a calendar that builds in an ample cushion for time-sensitive endeavors.

## **2. MAKE A PLAN-OF-ACTION CALENDAR - AND STICK TO IT!**

Together with your son or daughter, construct an outline for the entire college admissions process, from initial browsing for information to deciding where to attend. Create an itinerary for visiting colleges and gathering your financial information for filing aid forms. Post the calendar in a handy location, touching base with your child to monitor progress.

## **3. PLAN OUT YOUR TESTS**

In this competitive admissions environment, standardized tests are becoming increasingly important. In addition to the SATs and ACTs, the most important tests for college admissions, there are many exams that are vital for getting accepted into the most selective universities. Students should plan to take some of these tests well before their senior year. The PSAT not only helps students practice for the SAT, it allows them to qualify for National Merit Scholarships. Advanced Placement exams are administered in a variety of subjects. Passing the AP test means that students are able to receive college credit or even pass out of certain college prerequisite courses. Students should take AP tests after they have take AP courses. The SAT II, formerly known as the Achievement Test, is necessary for admissions to many competitive colleges; students should take each subject test immediately after they finish the class.

## **4. DON'T CONTACT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICES FOR YOUR CHILD**

Colleges track the contacts they have with prospective students and applicants. It doesn't look good if the college has spoken with you and has never had any contact with your child, the actual applicant. (Sounds like Mrs. Smith really wants to come here!)

## **5. KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING**

Set up file folders for each college to which your child is applying. Keep all correspondence within these folders. Document phone calls as well. Always get the names and titles of those with whom you have had contact. Quick and comprehensive access to all pertinent materials will pay off in the long run.

## **6. FILE ALL FINANCIAL AID FORMS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER JANUARY 1**

Do not wait for this year's income tax forms to be completed. Use last year's data and file aid applications as soon as they become available. Financial aid officers can compile an estimated package that will closely reflect their final, updated package provided that family financial circumstances have not changed dramatically from the last tax year to the present.

## **7. BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER**

Many employers, social clubs, and religious organizations offer scholarships. Be sure to check with these organizations early, before your child's senior year. A lot of these programs have selection calendars that do not mesh with the college admission calendar. Don't miss out due to lack of awareness.

## **8. VISIT YOUR STUDENT'S TOP COLLEGE OPTIONS**

If you can, visit all of the colleges to which your student is applying. There is no substitute for a campus visit, and college-produced videos are **NOT** "the next best thing." Never stick strictly to a "packaged" admissions visit consisting of an information session/interview and a slide show or tour. Balance the experience by lunching on your own in the dining hall and browsing around campus. When you do visit, make sure that you allow enough time on campus for your son or daughter to explore on his or her own. This is the perfect time for you to meet with a financial aid officer.

## **9. REMEMBER THAT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO COLLEGE, YOUR CHILD IS**

There's no doubt that you should have some say in the matter, just remember to keep it in perspective. Parental input should focus on the mechanics of making a choice, not on the choice itself. Be frank and direct about any absolutes, such as financial limitations, but be low-key and reserved about the characteristics you think your student should want in a college. Think about helping your child choose the best college for him or her.