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Dear Counselor:

The first time I ever saw the phrase “YOLO” in a text I started laughing. I had no clue what the texter was talking about. I asked my hip daughter and she told me it is an acronym for “You Only Live Once.” As I’ve gotten older this phrase has taken on more meaning. Many icons I grew up watching on TV or listening to on the radio have recently passed (recent examples include Rick Ocasek and Eddie Money) and the day to day nuances such as a driver cutting me off in traffic or someone not returning a phone call have begun to fade as issues that once would have made my blood pressure go up. They are now only seen as minor inconveniences.

YOLO came to mind as I’ve recently been perusing several different Counselor related groups on Social Media. I have been reading many rants about issues with students such as wanting to change a class after the deadline, late registrations, the same questions getting asked over and over and a whole host of other issues. Each problem in a vacuum can be considered small but over time they add up and can lead any Counselor to begin getting a bad attitude. So, the next time you begin to feel your blood pressure go up, take a step back and remember YOLO and that there are more important things in life than sweating the small stuff.

Thanks again for all you do. The majority of parents and students do value you and the impact you can make on their lives. Our next issue, Spring 2020, will be out in February. If you have a peer that isn’t getting their own issue of LINK for Counselors, they can sign up for a free subscription at https://www.linkforcounselors.com/link-magazine-subscribe/

Regards,

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STUDY SKILLS IN COLLEGE:
HOW TO START NOW

By Elizabeth Drucker

As a counselor, you may regularly remind your students that college will be an entirely different experience.

Some of them may even be bombarded by all those new academic and social opportunities right from the start. But how can you get them to understand the changes they will likely encounter from the moment they step on those college campuses or log into their course websites? You have been working with many of them for several years now and likely have some important insights into the ways they can best prepare for some of the new pressures that are part of their new lives at both four-year and community colleges. Every college-bound student has a unique set of circumstances, but you can certainly set your students up for postsecondary success by helping them to develop some very essential study and time-management skills.

Each of your students are clearly individuals: some prefer to memorize vocabulary and read Shakespeare in AP English classes, while others find themselves stimulated by lab science courses. You should always reinforce their intellectual curiosity by encouraging your students to seek out new learning experiences such as dual enrollment in community colleges, an online creative writing course, or an AP class. Some prestigious universities like Stanford and Brown even offer special pre-college enrichment programs during the summer on their own campuses, which provide an excellent opportunity for all sorts of growth. You might also want to have regular conversations about what your students might want to study in college, so they can start developing those skills that they will need to be successful. Some college courses will involve a stretching of the critical thinking skills while others will require strong quantitative skills.

Chelsea Truesdell, Assistant Dean of Advising and New Student Programs at MIT explains that time management is a very important skill that incoming college students should ideally master before matriculating. The academic demands placed upon your students are naturally going to be more substantial once they start those college courses. It is also necessary to note that simply “regurgitating” material from PowerPoint slides and textbooks will simply not cut it in college courses. Mary Napoli, the Director of Academic Success at the University of Pittsburgh, also explains that in college, your students will “need to understand why things are the way they are, not just what they are.” Again, taking some AP classes in high school and preparing for those exams at the end of the school year will help your students develop some of these skills. Napoli also explains that the five paragraph essays that are typically taught in the curriculum of the early years of high school will not be adequate for college.

You can also encourage your students’ parents to help reinforce productive time management and study skills, as well as techniques that will help them cope with the stressful situations that they will inevitably encounter.
Even the new competition deriving from their fellow students can lead to anxiety. Parents can help students focus on ways to quiet some of that discomfort that can get in the way of productivity. There are many stress-management techniques to try, such as mindfulness and breathing exercises. Some apps can even be found that have guided meditation exercises as well as calming music to put them at ease whenever stress appears.

Many colleges and universities have also established services for students transitioning into that first year of college. Some of them have even developed entire offices and departments dedicated to this very important mission. You should also encourage your students to check out and make use of these helpful resources, such as writing, math, and foreign language centers. These offices are typically free of charge for all students.

Because of the stress, depression, and anxiety involved in the college transition, colleges also offer counseling and psychological services to help them cope. It might be helpful for you to explain to your students that these experiences are very common. If you have students with any sort of disability, they can often receive academic support and coaching from the disability resource office on campus. Make sure that they know what paperwork needs to be completed so they can apply for those essential accommodations before the day their classes officially begin. Whatever their circumstances, make sure your students have practice in advocating for themselves, whether they might need an extended deadline for an assignment or more time on an exam.

There are also some academic habits that need to be broken before the beginning of college, in order to best promote their academic success. Students often enter college not knowing how to schedule their time, which introduces some difficulties. Truesdell also explains that there are many distractions that can sometimes take the focus off of academics, such as “new friendships and new involvements.” Additionally, many students simply are not prepared for that faster pace of college academics or how much time they will need to invest in order to adequately prepare for an exam. Leaving certain tasks until that very last moment only makes things more difficult in the end, by increasing the anxiety and pressure your students face as they try to finish each task. It is crucial that your students develop some sort of study schedule right from the beginning and work to keep up with it. Catching up when you get far behind will have negative consequences. You might want to suggest that your students work a little bit each day, in order to make things more manageable.

Most importantly, you will endeavor to be realistic in all your conversations with your students about college. Again, it will likely be entirely different from anything your students have ever experienced before. Ms. Truesdell also suggests that because
academics vary so much amongst the many colleges and universities, you might want to check out the websites of prospective colleges your students might apply to. Some colleges might require higher average math SAT or ACT scores of entering freshmen, so you will know that these colleges are more quantitatively oriented than others. Comparing your own students’ grades and test scores will also allow you to see how they measure up to all these other admitted freshmen students. Whatever the case, it never hurts to keep challenging your students beyond their comfort zone, whether to enroll in a new AP class outside of their usual interests or joining student government to mingle with more of their peers.

Again, as a counselor, you play a very important role in making sure that your students are ready and confident to begin college. Over the course of high school, you can ensure that your students develop those skills they need for that next big step: academics, time-management, study skills, and stress-reduction techniques. When you help them prepare for some of those harder and unexpected parts of transitioning into college, you will ensure that they perform to the best of their abilities.

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How Important is Demonstrated Interest in College Admissions Decisions?

By Judi Robinowitz

The short answer is that while Demonstrated Interest (DI) might not carry significant weight for some colleges, it can be important for those schools that have a competitive admissions process — and, in fact, it could be the deciding factor in close-call situations at such schools.

According to a recent National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) survey, colleges responded to a question about the role of demonstrated interest this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance of Demonstrated Interest in Admissions Decisions</th>
<th>% Responding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considerable importance</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate importance</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited importance</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No importance</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Logic says that the most highly selective colleges – those that almost all students would like to attend and, thus, turn away applicants by the tens of thousands – are likely to be heavily represented in the “no influence” group, which reflects less than 30% of colleges. For all but those schools in the “no influence” group, an article posted on usnews.com quoted J. Leon Washington, Villanova’s Dean of Admission, as saying that one of the reasons applicants who demonstrate interest by applying Early Decision or Early Action are so favored is that, “It is really difficult to say ‘no’ to outstanding young men and women who say, ‘I love you. I want to be there.’” Villanova, which admitted fewer than 30% of its applicants last year, is considered a very selective institution.

Colleges track DI in multiple and surprisingly robust ways, including embedding links on their website that capture what a student visitor accessed, how long that student stayed on the site, and from where it was being accessed. They can also log phone calls, text messages, emails, letters, visits to the school’s table during colleges fairs, on- and off-campus interviews, campus information sessions and tours, overnight visits, and even feedback that lets them know if their emails to students have been opened.
The interactions mentioned above can be considered as “touchpoints” to which schools may give varying “weights,” aggregated for a numerical DI total that can then be compared among applicants.

A recent Wall Street Journal article examined college data mining, using Seton Hall University in New Jersey as an example. That university scores applicants’ DI on a scale of from one to 100 using roughly – and what we consider to be a staggering – 80 different variables. Seton Hall doesn’t advertise its policy on DI to prospective applicants, so virtually none of them know that every potential touch point is important.

But which of them is the most important way to demonstrate interest to a school? With the understanding that DI is far more important to some schools than to others, there’s pretty good evidence that at one highly selective school the costlier the “touchpoint” action is to the student, the greater will be the effect on admission chances.

An article in Volume 3 (2018) of the Lehigh Research Review summarized the findings of a broad study titled “Demonstrated Interest: Signaling Behavior in College Admissions,” published in the journal Contemporary Economic Policy. In that study, the research team examined unique and comprehensive administrative data from the admissions office of a medium-sized, highly selective university during two admission cycles. Data used in the final analysis included the types of contact each of 12,501 applicants made with the admissions office. The researchers found that costlier signals of interest that prospective students send, such as in-person campus visits, have a greater impact on a university’s admission decision than attendance at a high-school-based information session. These on-site types of contact can increase an applicant’s likelihood of admission by approximately 30 percent, and the effect becomes stronger when the contact is costlier. In other words, the more it costs a student to contact the university in time and money, the more likely he or she is to get in, all else [being] equal.

So while it’s costly to travel by air for a college visit and tour, and then stay overnight to attend a class or two the next day, there’s data to support the common sense idea that colleges – including at least one highly selective college – give greater weight to that type of DI when they’re comparing candidates for admission — and that’s aside from the fact that there are terrific benefits for students who make that campus visit (which we consider nearly mandatory).

Nothing demonstrates interest more than applying Early Decision (ED), an application plan that commits a student to attending that college if accepted. Applying Early Action (EA) also demonstrates interest, but not as much as applying ED. The fact is that ED and EA applicants are filling increasingly large percentages of the incoming freshman class at many colleges — several of them in the range of 50% or more of the freshman class! Vanderbilt, with its ED acceptance rate at least twice as high as its RD acceptance rate,
is a prime example; it filled more than 50% of its incoming classes with ED applicants in recent years and might well announce an RD acceptance rate that’s below 7% for the current year. Washington University in St. Louis is yet another example; it anticipates that students who applied ED will constitute 60% of its next freshman class, up from 40% for its current freshman class.

There are several reasons that colleges are interested in DI, the most important of which is money: Recruiting students to fill available slots, making admissions decisions, and then extending offers are costly exercises, and students that demonstrate interest are those most likely to enroll if they’re accepted. From the total number of students accepted, a college tries to maximize its “yield,” the percentage of accepted students who commit to attending — a vital and publicized statistic for every college. Thus, for colleges that don’t offer ED or EA, an applicant’s letter promising to enroll if admitted would clearly demonstrate interest and could make a difference in the chances for admission.

We’ve just provided you with knowledge that motivates our own actions: We encourage all students who want to enhance their chances of admission to let their top-choice colleges know that they’re likely to enroll if accepted by using the information above to demonstrate interest to those colleges early and often – and we hope our insights help you help the students you advise.

Judi Robinovitz is a Certified Educational Planner with more than thirty-five years of experience in educational consulting. She visits dozens of campuses every year, and, along with her team, has successfully guided more than 7,500 students and their families through the college planning and application process. She’s a professional member of the Independent Educational Consultants Association, the Higher Education Consultants Association, the National Association for College Admission Counseling, and the Learning Disabilities Association of America. She’s also the founder of Score At The Top Learning Centers & Schools, accredited by AdvancED and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, providing academic tutoring, SAT/ACT preparation, full-time schooling, and courses for credit to almost 2,000 students every year.
When high school students consider careers in kinesiology, many think about working as physical education teachers at the elementary or secondary level. They may even consider possibilities in collegiate and professional sports. But the truth is that kinesiology covers a range of possibilities in plenty of areas outside athletics and teaching.

Kinesiology is the science of human movement, and while athletics-related careers fall into this area, a large group of available careers also falls under pre-allied health. But no matter what area students want to pursue, a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology will set them on the path to success.

For Michael Martinez of Victoria, Texas, a degree in kinesiology allowed him to reach his goal of teaching. Martinez graduated from the University of Houston-Victoria in May with a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology with a kindergarten to 12th grade teaching certificate focus. He recently signed a contract with a Victoria Independent School District middle school to work as a boys’ physical education teacher and to coach the football and boys’ basketball teams.

“When I first started studying kinesiology, I didn’t realize how involved it was,” Martinez said. “There’s a lot more than just going outside and playing with children. There’s real science behind it, and I had to learn about children’s physical development and health. Now I’ll be using that knowledge to help young athletes grow and improve, and maybe one day, they will do well enough to get athletic scholarships to go to college.”
The American Kinesiology Association lists 29 career options in kinesiology that encompass everything from coaching or teaching physical education at a school to working in the pre-allied health field as a cardiac rehabilitation specialist, occupational therapist or physical therapist. Because the field offers so many options, there also is a broad range of possible pay scales. According to the national website Payscale.com, the average salary for someone with a Bachelor of Science in kinesiology is $58,000, which can range from an average of $39,000 for personal trainers or $42,000 for athletic trainers to an average of $70,000 for physical therapists or more than $100,000 for physician assistants.

Because kinesiology careers cover such a wide range of possibilities, students should research what types of concentrations and degree options are available before choosing a university program. For example, a student who wants to be an elementary school physical education teacher or a secondary physical education teacher should consider a program that includes an option to prepare for teacher certification as well as the typical kinesiology curriculum. However, a student who wants to pursue a career as a physical therapist or work in rehabilitation should look for a program that includes an emphasis in pre-allied health.

As they begin researching programs, students also should consider the sports programs available at different universities. Many institutions allow kinesiology students pursuing sports-related fields to work with athletes to gain practical knowledge. For example, a student working toward a degree in exercise or sports science could work with the school's football team as a strength and conditioning coach's assistant or intern.

Another important consideration when choosing a kinesiology undergraduate program is what kind of certification or licensing is required for a student's chosen career. For example, students who want to be strength and conditioning coaches can earn certifications from a few different groups, including the National Strength and Conditioning Association, the National Academy of Sports Medicine or the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association. In some cases, university programs may include a streamlined path to help students earn a certification. However, a student who wants to pursue a career in the pre-allied health field, such as a physical therapist, would likely need to pursue a master’s or doctoral degree and earn a license to practice.

If students are looking for a career in kinesiology that will allow them to make a difference in another person's life, it's hard to go wrong with physical therapy and rehabilitation. Physical therapists can work with anyone from newborns to the elderly to treat medical or health-related conditions, and to improve their ability to move and perform daily activities. Depending on their training, therapists can help wounded military members work through recovery, aid patients recovering from major surgeries or traumatic injuries, assist stroke patients during rehabilitation and more. Whether they work in a hospital, an outpatient clinic, a private practice, a nursing home or even a school, physical therapists can have a positive impact on their patients.

Kinesiology programs also can include an emphasis on exercise and sports. These areas of study are good for students who want to be
personal trainers, athletic trainers, strength and conditioning coaches, or exercise technologists. Personal trainers can work with clients in a gym setting, while athletic trainers often are on staff for sports teams, from high school athletics programs to professional teams. Athletic trainers are skilled professionals who work with physicians to offer preventative and emergency care as well as rehabilitate athletic injuries.

Another position that often is desired by sports programs and teams is a strength and conditioning coach. These coaches focus on helping individuals improve their fitness and athletic performance through training programs. They also help athletes prevent injuries by teaching proper posture and technique when performing exercises and strength training workouts.

A different side to kinesiology is sports management. This area tends to focus more on the business of sports and recreation organizations. Although this field does not focus as much on the physical condition of athletes or how to improve their strength and skill on the field, it does connect factors involving players and teams with the business elements needed to run a successful team, clubhouse, league or program. For example, some sports management professionals actively are involved in the process of drafting players or hiring coaches, scouts and athletics staff. They also can work as representatives for individual athletes or even handle accounting and marketing for entire teams or leagues. With a degree in sports management, a student could go on to help run the front office of a team or work in a municipal office, such as a city parks and recreation director.

As you can see, kinesiology covers a wide range of career options students can choose to pursue. Professionals impact every area of physical fitness from training sessions and injury prevention to recovery and rehabilitation after injuries occur, as well as managing the business side of sports clubs, teams and leagues. With research and a willingness to work hard to succeed, a student can have a bright future with a degree in kinesiology.

Raymond Tucker is an assistant professor of kinesiology in the University of Houston-Victoria School of Education, Health Professions & Human Development in Victoria, Texas. He may be contacted at (361) 570-4381 or tuckerr1@uhv.edu.
School counselors touch every aspect of their school building and community. We are teaching in classrooms, facilitating small groups, responding to crisis, meeting with individual students, consulting and collaborating with administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and community members, all in order to support students in the three domains of academic, career and social/emotional development.

Yet many stakeholders still do not have a full comprehension of what school counselors do, what is available to them within the school counseling program, and how school counselors impact student achievement. Thus, school counselors are tasked with advocating for our programs by promoting the who, what, when, where, why and how of our programs with our stakeholders.

Often school counselors use websites, newsletters, bulletin boards, email blasts, and face-to-face meetings such as advisory councils to share who the counselors are, who can benefit from the counseling program, what programs, resources, and supports are available, when events are taking place, when counselors are available, why the school counseling program is essential in the school community, and how the school counseling program is impacting students’ academic success, career development and social/emotional learning through process, perception, and outcome data.

With the awareness that most of our stakeholders are connected to one or more social media platforms, especially our students, school counselors are taking their program promotion and advocacy to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like. However, not only school counselors have taken to social media for promotion and platforms are saturated with so much content it can be difficult to make your school counseling program stand out and gain engagement from stakeholders among all the online traffic.

In order to stand out and catch the attention of our stakeholders on social media, school counselors can use a variety of tools to create images and videos to pair with content to showcase our who, what, when, where, why, and how. According to Postcron.com, a blog about social media marketing and digital marketing, “tweets with images are 34% more likely to get retweeted than tweets with no images.” When I volunteered as social media editor for the Georgia School Counselor Association (GSCA), I explored and practiced using a variety of apps to create images and videos that stand out and engage our members. Below I will share the top 10 apps and tools that I have found easy to use and effective in engaging our stakeholders.

**Gifs:** Gifs are built-in and available on many social media platforms now, but they can also be found online and through the Giphy app. Gifs can be a humorous way to grab stakeholders’ attention, but care should be taken when using Gifs to ensure they are a good representative of your school and your counseling program by being appropriate,
positive, and culturally sensitive to everyone, including stakeholders and populations not represented by stakeholders.

▶ **Boomerang:** Boomerang is another fun app to use to create brief gif-like videos that stand out. The mini back-and-forth style videos can be used to capture and highlight the excitement and fun of a new program, event, procedure to follow or counselor meet and greet online. Our counseling program used boomerang to highlight and show the places and procedures to leave notes for school counselors when students wanted to speak to us.

▶ **Word Swag:** Word Swag is an app that allows you to create your own unique images with eye-catching fonts and backgrounds. Word Swag does have a cost of $3.99 now, but it is well worth it to use all the available fonts and background styles. The app allows you to use your own images or the database of free images as well as multiple font styles in one image. By creating images with fonts you can highlight the most important information such as title, date, and time of an event in the image while sharing details in the post or caption below the image. Word Swag also allows you to format the image that best fits the social media platform that you are posting to. Other similar apps exist such as Hype Type, Typorama, TypeArt, Spark Post, and Ripl.

▶ **Unsplash:** Unsplash is a database of free high resolution photos without watermarks that can be used alone or as background for images with fonts to attract attention. You can search for topics and ideas for photos you would like to use and save them to your device to use within apps such as Word Swag to then add type to. Other similar apps exist such as Hype Type, Typorama, TypeArt, Spark Post, and Ripl.

▶ **Werble:** Werble is a photo animator app that is free with some in-app purchases including a cost to remove the Werble watermark on photos. You can upload your own photos, downloaded photos from apps such as Unsplash or images created in apps such as Word Swag to the app to add animation. You can add weather effects, lights, color splashes, fire, fairy dust, fireworks, and more graphics to your images to make them pop in an already saturated online world.

▶ **Pixaloop:** Pixaloop is another free photo animator app. This app allows you to add movement in one or more parts of a picture creating mini videos or gif-like images to create engagement with your social media promotions. It gives a unique and interesting look to your images that will be sure to catch your stakeholder’s attention long enough to be curious about your post.

▶ **Picsart:** PicsArt is a photo editor app that through its effects feature allows you to change your images using a variety of artistic filters to make your images stand out. You can use filters to make your image look like a sketch, pop art, shades of grey, golden, animation, and many more. Changing up the image in a different and unique way can hook your audience and increase the likelihood of your stakeholders engaging in your post.

▶ **Pic Collage/LiveCollage/PicPlayPost:** They are a variety of collage apps that allow you to put together different images from a single event or time so that your stakeholders can see multiple images in one view. Pic Collage and Live Collage are both free with in-app purchases that provide many templates for a varied number of images, backgrounds, borders, stickers, and the ability to add text. PicPlayPost allows you to create collages that include still images, videos, gifs and more. You can also add music and voice overs to your PicPlayPost creations. Collages of multiple images and videos can highlight your content that piques stakeholders interest by showing the activity and impact school counselors have with multiple students in one view on social media. Our school counseling program often uses collages to highlight different grade levels and moments of our school-wide events such as No One Eats Alone Day and Reach Higher Week.

▶ **Moshow:** MoShow is a photo and video slideshow editor. This app allows you to use images, videos, and Werble, Word Swag, Pics Art and other app creations to create a professional looking video with movement and music. MoShow is a free app with in-app purchases including a cost to remove the watermark if desired. As GSCA social media editor, I used MoShow to create a promotional video for the 2019 fall conference that highlighted the conference hotel, keynote speakers,
and the theme to boost interest in conference registration. MoShow provides a variety of slideshow transitions, tempos, and music to fit the needs of your promotion.

Adobe Spark Video: Adobe Spark Video is another video creator app that can allow you to create videos using your own images or in-app created images just like MoShow. Adobe Spark Videos can be brief or long and allow you to add music and voice over to slides to create even more engagement to your video.

Using image and video apps to enhance your content on social media will help you connect, promote, and advocate for your program with your stakeholders by creating eye catching, stand-out posts. You do not need to use all apps at once, practice with one or two for the first few posts of the school year then set a goal to try one or two more by the end of the first semester. Find the apps that work best for you and your program and stand out with your stakeholders.

Laura Ross is the lead counselor at Five Forks Middle School in Lawrenceville, Georgia where her focus is connecting with students to connect them to their education. She has been a school counselor for 13 years. She has presented at district and state levels on creating school wide teacher-student connections, integrating social studies in counseling lessons, and using technology and data in school counseling. Laura maintains a school counseling blog about creating connections with students at www.thecoloringcounselor.com. Laura also moderates the #mscchat on twitter for middle school counselors and co-moderates for #scchat on twitter. She was previously the GSCA Social Media Editor and recently became the GSCA Metro Director. Laura was also named the 2018 GSCA School Counselor of the Year. She can be reached at LauraRuthRoss@gmail.com.

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School counselors are facing an increasing number of responsibilities, and technology can help streamline your practice to fulfill your professional responsibilities more efficiently and effectively. If you are looking to connect with other counselors, get innovative and creative counseling ideas, or simply looking to make your job a little easier, look no further! Below are some tech tools many counselors are using today and a sneak peek into what's on the horizon for school counselors from tech and education insiders.

**What’s Trending Today?**

1. **Twitter** is one of the most powerful professional networking sites. You can harness the power of the hashtag to connect with counselors across the country. Find, follow, and engage in professional dialogue on a local and global scale. If you are new to Twitter, simply search using key hashtags. Once you get more experience, you can participate in Twitter Chats. These are live Twitter events usually lasting about an hour focused on a specific topic at a set time and filtered into a single conversation using a set hashtag. Typically, there are about 5 questions posed by a moderator and participants respond to those questions. Key hashtags to follow include #SCCHAT (school counselor chat), #HSCCHAT (high school counselor chat), #MSCCHAT (middle school counselor chat), and #ESCCHAT (elementary school counselor chat).

2. **Pinterest** is known as a fun place to get recipes, craft ideas, fitness tips and more. Did you know it’s also a great place to get free school counseling resources and ideas? There are over 100 million monthly active users on Pinterest, and many of them are school counselors who love to post pictures of bulletin boards, share lesson plans, group activities, and organizational tips to meet your needs as a busy school counselor and also the needs of your students. Just getting started? Check out the following pinners. They have thousands of pins (ideas) organized by theme/topic. School Counselor Central, Savvy School Counselor, Creative Elementary School Counselor, and School Counselor Blog.

3. **Doodle** is a free website that simplifies scheduling a meeting at work or any other event in which several people have to find a date and time they are all available. It’s free and easy to set up an account, select dates/times of meetings, and email the link Doodle gives you to participants. Their names are automatically listed in the Doodle survey. It’s easy to fill out the form since all participants do is put a check next to dates/times that they are available. Doodle color codes the chart with yes/no/ifneeded and lists the number of responses of each at the bottom of the chart. Doodle eliminates lengthy back and forth emails with colleagues when trying to find a mutually agreeable time to meet, set up conferences, and more.

4. **Nearpod** is an interactive presentation and assessment tool. “Interactive” is the key word. Many presentations (and lessons) are largely one directional with information being given to participants. It’s nearly impossible to engage all
participants simultaneously and easily to assess their knowledge. Nearpod allows for all that and more! You can incorporate participant quizzes and polls along with drawings that you can choose to project out or view for yourself to get a fast and thorough glimpse of your entire audience’s response. No more passive learning! Sign up is free and easy. You can quickly import your existing PowerPoint or Google Slides presentations or search for free and low-cost lessons on Nearpod.

5. Facebook is more than your go-to place to catch up with family and friends! School Counselors are coming together to collaborate in members-only Facebook Groups. These groups are hidden gems with numerous resources and supports. A great feature of these groups is that you can ask for help or ideas on specific topics, and schools counselors respond and share. “Elementary School Counselor Exchange” “High School Counselors’ Network” and “The School Counselor Store” are some of the larger groups with thousands of active members. You can post questions, follow conversations, or search the groups by key words. Something to be mindful of is that while the groups are “closed,” they are not completely private. If you are seeking advice, keep the request very general and about the topic without giving out details of your situation so as not to breach confidentiality.

What’s Trending Tomorrow?

1. Slack has greatly risen in popularity in the last 2 years and allows individuals to collaborate with other colleagues. The benefit is that it replaces the traditional email back and forth. You can create small groups for your immediate team, or Channels with hashtags for a topic or project (for ex: #AntiBullying). People can react to a post with an emoji. Think of it as a group text message with the ability to add pictures, giphys and links. Moreover, you can keep groups public or private with full access control. The best part is that files are not only easily uploadable but searchable through word, PDF, and any other file type. Someone can direct message you or - within a large group convo - tag you with an “@” sign to get your attention. The Slack app is available on your iPhone or Android so that you can stay on top of messages on the go.

2. Wunderlist is a great app for those who like lists and staying organized and was acquired by Microsoft last year. It has a simple, clean design and is very easy to use. You can put in any type of task: school supply shopping lists, to-read books, or household items. Wunderlist allows you to share your (selected) lists with friends or colleagues for increased accountability. Anyone you share it with will be able to comment on tasks together. You can assign certain tasks to yourself and star other items. The best part of to-do lists is often completing it, and once you check it off it will disappear (along with a friendly chime for positive reinforcement).

3. Calm is helping many people increase mindfulness and focus on meditation. Upon visiting their website, you are greeted by a serene mountain lake. You can choose your 3 main goals (options are choosing happiness, building self-esteem, reduce stress + anxiety amongst others). There are plenty of options to choose from: 7 Days of Calm which teaches the basics; timed or open ended meditation with bells chiming to keep you in the present, and other guided meditations such as love, kindness, and forgiveness. The newest addition is Sleep Stories which narrate around national parks like Yosemite or Yellowstone. If you don’t want any talking you can always choose a scene to play in the background, such as rain on leaves, oceans, streams, waves, and the beach amongst others.

4. Pocket We’ve all had the dilemma of coming across interesting articles online but not having time to read it then. With Pocket, a click of one button can save articles, videos, or images to your list. You can share or recommend them to others and follow others on Pocket to read what they are saving. An extension is available on your browser as well which allows you to save directly from your desktop computer. The best part is that you’re able to read the articles without Wi-Fi, so it’s perfect for long plane rides or nighttime reading when you want to shut off any phone notifications and have uninterrupted reading time.
5. **Voxer** is a walkie-talkie app that allows users to hear messages as people speak, or listen later at their own convenience. It supports instant communication with voice messages and users can also include text, photos, video, gifs, and share their location. Voxer works on any network on iPhone, Android, and the web. School districts and especially counselors are advocates for using voxer because it’s simple to communicate loud notifications for emergency situations, users can send encrypted chats, and they can be monitored with admin control. Voxer cuts through email clutter and solves problems with communication (without giving out one’s cell phone number) with families, staff, and students.

Angela Cleveland has 15 years of experience as a school counselor. She is an Executive Board Member and Webmaster for the New Jersey School Counselor Association. In her free time, Angela enjoys writing and is the author of several therapeutic children’s books. Learn more: www.angelacleveland.com. Follow Angela on Twitter: @AngCleveland

Saqi Mehta is currently the Associate Director of Employer Relations and Diversity Engagement at Tufts University. She is passionate about all things education, specifically women in tech. As an avid writer, she has published articles to The Huffington Post, Daily Muse and Blavity amongst others. In any non-typing free time she is an art, interior design, and travel enthusiast. Follow Saqi on Twitter: @CallMeSaqi
When you hear the word ‘College Fair,’ we usually equate these events centered around colleges, students, and families. As educators, we encourage our students to attend these events and sometimes, host our own.

Have you ever thought of how college fairs can not only benefit students, but also, the ways in which they can be fruitful for counselors? In fact, college fairs can serve the purpose as a practical and enhanced professional development for school and college counselors.

We will look at five specific and intentional ways counselors can use college fairs to increase engagement and strengthen their knowledge and experiences in college admissions.

■ **Networking** - There’s that saying …’Your net-work is your net-worth’! Well turns out, that’s true in many cases. Networking is a catalyst for connections to develop and where opportunities can occur. As counselors and those who work closely with students, we understand relationship development is critical and essential in our role with students. These same practices should also apply to building our professional relationships with colleagues, admissions reps, and stakeholders alike. College fairs provide the space to form and build relationships in a real manner--with a--real person.

■ **Market your School** - Colleges seek to recruit, admit and educate students. During these face-to-face encounters with a college rep or organization, be encouraged to share your role and provide details of the students you serve. Think of your school profile and beyond... Share information about your school environment, school culture and highlight key attributes that are unique to your campus or organization. Essentially, you are a part of your school’s brand. As counselors, we serve as gatekeepers and the bridge between students, families, and the school community. You have the opportunity to leave a positive and lasting impression on your student's, and overall school community.

■ **“Fly In/Fly Out” Programs** - Whether your flying ‘in or out,’ there are several colleges who sponsor both Counselor and Student Fly-In’ programs. These programs that are often times partially or fully paid for, allow students and counselors to visit campuses and learn more about their programs. Fly-In-Programs are encouraging for students because oftentimes, they provide students with exposure and awareness to a campus that they may have otherwise not had the opportunity or financial means to visit. The same holds true for counselors. College fair environments provide these great opportunities
to learn which campuses offer Fly-In-Programs not just for students, but an immersive campus experience for Counselors too.

- **Regional Admission Counselors (RAC)** - Collaborating with Regional Admissions Counselors (RAC), who represent colleges and universities outside the state you serve can be helpful in many ways. Aside from RAC serving as direct admissions contacts for out-of-state college opportunities and college fair representatives, RAC can also provide other services to partner with counselors with assisting students and families. Some outreach events and school programs include: Day/Evening Presentations/Workshops, Admissions Case-study Events and Mini College Fairs provided at your school site.

- **Volunteer/Career Opportunities** - ‘Stay ready, so you don’t have to get ready.’ NACAC and its affiliates offer National College fairs across many states as well as internationally. Counselors are welcomed and encouraged to volunteer the day of or serve on the National College Fair (NCF) planning committee for many of these fairs provided by NACAC including: National Fairs, Performing and Visual Arts Fairs, Stem College and Career Fairs and International University Fairs.

No matter which side of the desk you serve students---whether it is at the secondary level, or directly in college admissions, college fair settings can lead Counselors to greater career advancement opportunities and deepen their knowledge with advising students.

*Candice Mackey has served as a public school counselor for 10+ years. She is currently a College Counselor at Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies - LACES (Magnet). Candice is an Assembly Delegate for WACAC and has served for the past four years as Co-Chair, for NACAC Greater Los Angeles College Fair, the largest college fair in the state of CA and Western region.*
If you are advising students who have both interest and talent in chemistry and math and are looking for a challenging yet rewarding course of study that will lead directly into many diverse career options and opportunities, chemical engineering and/or biomolecular engineering may be the path to explore. Today, graduates in these rigorous majors are in demand in a wider-than-ever array of industry sectors — in both traditional and non-traditional industry sectors. And recent hiring and salary data (discussed below) confirm that these highly skilled graduates are highly valued by employers. In fact, unemployment rates for chemical engineers are among the lowest, and salary rates are among the highest, compared to all engineering professions.

For many chemical engineering professionals, the question of how they became interested in that course of study is often answered in the same way — “I was always good at chemistry and math, and at some point along the way, one of my teachers, advisors or counselor suggested I consider studying chemical engineering or biomolecular engineering in college.” Chemical engineering, and the related course of study biomolecular engineering (which integrates concepts of biological processes with traditional chemical engineering), can be challenging majors to master in college, but students who are willing to pursue them will find a diverse range of career options and opportunities awaiting them.

More options than ever

Today, the scope of career opportunities in chemical and biomolecular engineering is broader than ever, as many different industry sectors need the particular intellectual and problem-solving skills and engineering capabilities of graduates in these two dynamic and flexible engineering disciplines.

Traditionally, most graduates in these two majors have presumed that their careers would lead them into chemicals and plastics production or petroleum refining. However, thanks to the flexibility of these dynamic fields of study, many career pathways are available today, in a wider-than-ever array of both traditional and non-traditional industry sectors. For instance, today’s chemical engineers and biomolecular engineers are working in a range of positions in these and other industry sectors:

- Chemicals, petrochemicals and specialty chemicals production
- Plastics/polymers processing
- Petroleum refining
- Manufacturing of all types
- Engineering design and construction
- Advanced materials, materials science and metallurgy
• Food processing, production and packaging
• Clean energy, wind, solar, carbon sequestration and more
• Pulp-and-paper production
• Electronics and microelectronics development and manufacturing
• Pharmaceuticals and vaccines discovery and development
• Consulting, forensic engineering and forensic science investigations
• Legal services related to intellectual property, contract law and more
• Academia
• Trade press and journalism

The flexibility of these inherently versatile degrees is particularly useful when economic conditions create ups and downs in specific industrial sectors. “For instance, a downturn in petroleum prices may cause a slowdown in hiring in the traditional fossil-fuels space (petroleum and natural gas exploration, production and refining),” said Irvin Osborne-Lee, Ph.D., Professor and Head of the Chemical Engineering Department, Roy G. Perry College of Engineering, Prairie View A&M University (Prairie View, Tex.).[1] “But the flip side of that coin is that when petroleum prices fall, it creates a boon for all of the industrial sectors (such as chemicals and plastics) that rely heavily on petroleum and petroleum-derived products as the main feedstock, so this helps chemical engineers to weather certain economic ups and downs better than other types of engineers.”

**Encouraging hiring and salary data trends**

Today, several factors are driving strong demand for graduates in these demanding majors. [2] These include:

• The ongoing need for professionals with highly specialized engineering skills, problem-solving capabilities and technical experience to address challenging problems in many industries
• The large-scale retirement of the “Baby Boom” generation workers
• A large skills gap reported in many manufacturing sectors
• An enduring capital-spending boom that is spurring demand for engineering professionals

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for chemical engineers remains low — just 1.5%. This is lower than the overall unemployment rate for all fields, which was 3.7%.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)[4], through its Winter 2017 survey of employers, reports that U.S. chemical engineering graduates in the Class of 2017 earned the highest average starting salary ($68,445) among the top 10 engineering disciplines.

Meanwhile, according to an October 2018 salary survey published by *Chemical Engineering* magazine[5]:

• The average salary of respondents was $133,600—a 1.6% increase over findings from the prior year
• More than 75% of respondents earned >100,000/yr
• 35% of respondents reported salaries between $100,000 and $140,000/yr
• Only 12% reported their salary was <$80,000

Similarly, in 2017, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the average salary for all U.S. chemical engineers was $102,160, while a recent survey by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) reports the median salary for U.S. chemical engineers is $124,000.[5]

**What do their career options look like?**

Students studying chemical and/or biomolecular engineering develop a unique knowledge base and strong problem-solving skills, and they are trained to approach the challenges at hand with deep intellectual rigor. In particular, through their course of study, they develop a deep understanding of — and comfort with — chemistry and/or biology, math and many aspects of engineering, materials science, safety, environmental stewardship, process design, equipment selection and sizing, computer-based modeling and simulation, and more. With their intrinsic understanding of how to identify promising chemical reactions and useful chemical conversions, such engineering graduates shepherd these discoveries through all stages of scaleup — from the proverbial test tube, to pilot-scale demonstration plant, to full-scale commercial production unit. At all stages of the scaleup process, chemical and biomolecular engineers work on challenges related to, for instance:

• Identifying, sizing and specifying the complex equipment components and systems that are needed throughout the step of the scaleup process
• Specifying, operating and maintaining all of the
The recently published book, “Careers in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,” by Vic Edwards and Suzanne Shelley (CRC Press/Taylor & Francis, 2018), provides a wealth of insight and advice for high school students considering these two major options, and college students who are preparing to graduate and consider their many career options. The book features 10 easy-to-read chapters that describe these two dynamic majors, and relate the key engineering technologies and unit operations that are at the heart of the engineering curriculum to real-world career examples.

Similarly, to give readers an “up close and personal” sense of what the many career options really look and feel like, the book also includes in-depth, first-person-narrative profiles of 25 chemical and biomolecular engineers, who have diverse genders, ethnicities, ages and industry specializations. Their detailed stories give students, parents, teachers and counselors a clear view into the lives of people who have chosen these majors and are enjoying intellectually rigorous, socially conscious and highly lucrative careers, advancing along both technical and managerial tracks. The engineers profiled in this book discuss not only their work and educational experiences — in terms of both triumphs and challenges — but they generously share wisdom and recommendations for students who are pursuing these two dynamic disciplines.

Interestingly, among the 25 engineering professionals profiled in this book, some of them have developed highly specialized expertise in a relatively focused field, such as distillation, petroleum refining, semiconductor fabrication, pharmaceutical development. In this way, these engineers have differentiated themselves from others, creating demand for the particular skills and expertise they possess.

Others note that they had explicitly worked to develop expertise in a widely topical area — one is always needed in many different industry sectors, to give them greater career flexibility. These include specialization in environmental engineering and regulatory compliance, safety (related to process safety, plant safety or personnel safety), powder & bulk-solids handling, modeling & simulation, academia, and law/intellectual property.

monitoring devices, process control systems and sophisticated alarms that are needed to ensure safe, environmentally sound operation

- Designing the equipment-based systems needed to treat waste streams, wastewater and hazardous emissions that produced during operation, and to minimize fire and explosion risk
- Ensuring that all inherent safety principles are being used
- Ensuring that the operation remains compliant with all mandated local, state, federal and international regulations, and industry-approved engineering protocols

Meanwhile, thanks to their unique knowledge of chemical engineering and biomolecular principles, and their broad problem-solving capabilities, engineers in these two engineering disciplines are at the forefront of efforts to meet society’s big, global challenges. “Important challenges related to sustainability and clean energy are driving the profession. Engineers are supposed to solve the problems, and we’re right in the middle of addressing the pressing questions around how we can use science and technology to support 9 billion people on the planet,” said David Dankworth, Ph.D., Distinguished Scientific Advisor, ExxonMobil Research and Engineering Co., Corporate Strategic Research (Princeton, NJ).[6]

Careers that evolve over time

Many engineering graduates, as they progress through their careers over time, decide to move away from the direct, hands-on engineering work, and move instead into other professional roles that are related to corporate or executive management, focusing on business-development and economic considerations related to the business and products at hand. These may include positions in the legal department (for instance, working on intellectual property and contracting issues related to the business), management, marketing and promotion, and corporate communications.

These include efforts to use proven chemical engineering and biomolecular engineering principles to:

- Ensure clean air and clean water by designing industrial process that have all of the appropriate emissions-control systems and wastewater-treatment systems in place
- Applying waste-minimization principles to reduce or eliminate pollutants
- Applying green engineering to replace hazardous chemicals with less-hazardous chemicals and related systems
• Address global warming and climate change

• Develop sustainable fuel and energy sources that help to reduce society’s dependence on fossil fuels

• Maximize crop yields to feed a growing population

• Discover, develop and manufacture lifesaving medications and vaccines, state-of-the-art, drug-administration devices (including highly engineered, self-administered injection devices, inhalation devices), wearable monitoring devices, lab-testing methodologies that are used throughout healthcare

• Pursue advanced materials and advanced circuitry that enables smaller, more-powerful electronic devices

“I like to tell young engineers — You’re not ‘just another engineer’ — you may end up being THE engineer who really makes a difference,” said Kristine Chin, Director of Conferences for the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE; New York, N.Y.).[7] That is often a particularly inspiring and appealing driver for young, idealistic students.

“It’s no surprise that the rigorous chemical engineering curriculum requires focus and commitment,” said Kathy Shell, P.E., Executive Vice President, Process Safety and Lifecycle Solutions for Applied Engineering Solutions (aeSolutions; Greenville, SC).[8] “But a chemical engineering degree also provides a lifetime of opportunities to be intellectually challenged. It’s creative work that’s never boring, you can choose numerous career paths, work in a variety of industries, and you will be well-compensated.” She adds: “There are not many degrees that give you as much security, flexibility and personal satisfaction.”

“Looking back on my school experience, my engineering professors were very effective in teaching me ‘how to think’ and solve problems through four challenging years of chemical engineering curricula. I was told that my engineering degree would hold the key to my profession and it did — it opened many doors,” said Otis Shelton, a retiree from Praxair, Inc. and Union Carbide Corp. (Danbury, Conn.).[9] He adds: “I have thoroughly enjoyed the technical diversity within our profession — there’s really something for everything.”

Suzanne Shelley, Contributing Editor, Chemical Engineering and Pharmaceutical Commerce magazines, and Principal/Owner, Precision Prose, Inc. https://www.linkedin.com/in/suzanneshelley

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5 Jenkins, Scott, Economy and Opportunity Drive High CPI Salaries, Chemical Engineering, December 2018; pp. 13–16.
6 In Edwards and Shelley, “Careers in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,” p. 79.
7 In Edwards and Shelley, “Careers in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,” p. 35.
8 In Edwards and Shelley, “Careers in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,” p. 59.
9 In Edwards and Shelley, “Careers in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering,” p. 130.
1. Merit Based Scholarship
   Must have a 3.0 GPA or higher, must submit an essay (500 words or less), must be a U.S. citizen.
   **Awards:** Up to $10,000. One recipient every six months.
   **Deadline:** October 31, 2019
   **Sign up here:** www.coursehero.com/scholarships/

2. Ongoing Course Hero Scholarship
   Applicant must attend a University or plan to attend a University and be a U.S. citizen.
   **Awards:** Up to $5,000. Two recipients each month.
   **Deadline:** Monthly.
   **Contact:** www.coursehero.com/scholarships/

3. David Porter Need-Based Diversity Scholarship:
   Open to students who have been traditionally under-represented on study abroad programs. This group includes, but is not limited to, students identifying by a certain race, sex, color, religion, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, marital status, national origin or ancestry, ethnic origin or veteran status. Full details available on their website.
   **Awards:** $5,000
   **Deadline:** November 1, 2019
   **Contact:** https://www.iesabroad.org/scholarships-aid/david-porter-scholarship

   Requirements are all applicants must be Black and an active NABA student member.
   **Awards:** $1,000 to $5,000 (50 scholarships awarded annually)
   **Deadline:** December 15, 2019
   **Contact:** https://www.nabainc.org/content.asp?contentid=145

5. Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
   Upload your work, print your submission forms, have a parent/guardian and an educator sign them, and then mail them to the Affiliate Partner in your local region or upload your signed submission form to your account. Students in grades 7-12 are eligible to participate.
   **Awards:** $1,000 to $10,000 (16 $10,000 winners and 30 $1,000 winners)
   **Deadline:** Varies by Region, see website for details.
   **Contact:** https://www.artandwriting.org/what-we-do/the-awards/how-to-enter/

6. Women in Science Environmental Scholarship
   Available to female high school or college students, with preference given to those who are choosing to pursue a science degree. You must demonstrate financial need and submit a one-page essay that demonstrates an idea you have for helping improve the environment, either global or locally using Drone Technology to be eligible for this award.
   **Awards:** $500
   **Deadline:** December 1, 2019
   **Contact:** Email your application to Justin Ford at justin@dronethusiast.com by December 1, 2019. More information is available at: https://www.dronethusiast.com/drone-scholarship/

7. Voice of Democracy Scholarship
   Available to students grades 9-12. Download the Voice of Democracy entry form and brochure to submit your essay to your local VFW Post. Students should record their reading of the draft to an audio CD or flash drive. The recording can be no shorter than three minutes and no longer than five minutes (plus or minus five seconds). See website for further details on topic and scoring.
   **Awards:** Range from $1,000 to $30,000
   **Deadline:** October 31, 2019
   **Contact:** https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships
8. Scooter Inside Scholarship
Write an Essay of 700+ words on the following topic: “How to improve your scooting experience or your best scooter adventure.” On top of that, the aspiring candidate must submit an essay of up to 1500 words (maximum) which should provide answers to the following questions:
- How important is social media marketing for small businesses?
- How social media is changing customer acquisition?
- How SEO (Search Engine Optimization) can help local businesses to get more clients?
Award: $1,200
Deadline: March 15, 2020
Contact: Applicants should send their essay to scholarship@scooterinside.com with the subject “Scooterinside Digital Marketing Scholarship”.

9. Coca-Cola Scholars Program
Achievement based program to high school seniors who plan to pursue a degree at an accredited post-secondary institution.
Awards: $20,000 (150 recipients)
Deadline: October 31, 2019
Contact: https://www.coca-colascholarsfoundation.org/apply/

10. GE-Reagan Foundation Scholarship Program
Honoring the legacy and character of our nation’s 40th President, the GE-Reagan Foundation Scholarship Program rewards college-bound students who demonstrate exemplary leadership, drive, integrity, and citizenship with financial assistance to pursue higher education.
Awards: $10,000 per recipient (can be renewed for up to 3 more years - $40,000 total)
Deadline: January 2020
Contact: Scholarship America at (844)402-0354, ge-reagan@scholarshipamerica.org, www.reaganfoundation.org/scholarships

Have a submission you would like to include in Scholarship Watch? Send them to Jason@linkforcounselors.com. The only requirement is they have to be available to students to use at the College of their choice.

Have some knowledge you want to share with other Counselors?
LINK for Counselors is always looking for great content. Our Spring issue will be published in February 2020.

Contact us at Jason@linkforcounselors.com to find out how you can participate.
“I’m not going to help with the FAFSA, I will refer the student somewhere else, I am not touching that parent’s tax info.” These are common thoughts in many school counseling departments, not out of task avoidance or malice, but simply out of fear. Many school counselors often do not want to get involved with assisting students directly with the FAFSA because they are afraid that they will give them the wrong information. They may also think that the family’s income information is not information that the School Counselor is privy to. However, financial aid is a facet in the life of high school counselors that comes up all year long. Students often make their decisions on whether or not they should attend college based on their assumptions of not being able to afford it and sometimes before they have even applied for any sort of financial aid. What I have found, thanks to an intern I worked with, is that Counselors are in a very important position to assist students with this process and their students and families sometimes feel the most comfortable going to them for assistance. We are here for a reason.

SHARE YOUR STORY

One of the things that I share when it comes to building rapport with my students, in regards to this topic, is my story of financial aid. I open up to share how my process of obtaining grants, loans, and scholarships worked out and this allows them to see a first-hand snapshot of the process and all the variables in it. I was fortunate enough to have earned the Peter Witt Scholarship during my junior and senior years at Case Western Reserve University, for my work in the Cleveland Public Schools. I say this to inform the students about how there are scholarships available to them once they are in college as well. I advise them that the financial aid package can vary every year, so the process of applying this first year is important and is also practice for the upcoming years. I also have had direct experience with loan forgiveness and I discuss the possibility of these options with students. In addition, I like to talk to students about financial aid information through the Sallie Mae Scholarship Search, Naviance, The College Board and RaiseMe.

UNIQUE SCENARIOS

I believe it is important to give parents/guardians the opportunity to come and sit with me and do the FAFSA. Not only does this allow for you to go through the details of the process together, but in case there are any questions, I can reach out to the Federal Student Aid Information Center on their chatline, with the parent/guardian, ask questions and go through the scenario together. Many of our students have guardianship situations that are complicated, so I often pull from the pieces of training I have gone to and I often email or chat with the representatives I know will have the most up-to-date information. We also have the chat transcript to print out which the parent/guardian and student can take. I can also keep it for the students’ records should any discrepancy arise in the financial aid process. Because we are not
accountants, we may be oblivious to the language of tax returns and having the support of those in the know will help decipher any confusing queries.

**LET’S DO THIS IN REVERSE**

In addition, sitting with the family to do this task allows us both to learn together and discuss other concerns that may be relevant to the students’ progress, plan, and path. The School Selection portion of the FAFSA opens up a discussion on which schools the student might want to apply to and why. Counselors usually begin with the college search process before going into financial aid, but I have discovered that through the opposite, where we approach financial aid first, the reality that is revealed allows for a more authentic and enriched college search. Often this process demonstrates if college should be or could be the next immediate step for the student. This lets us learn more about each student’s story and how he/she would like it to develop.

**FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING**

FAFSA Nights are one of the best ways to accommodate the schedules of families. I work in conjunction with HESAA, the NJ Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, to have a representative come and share information with families. We have a computer lab set up and we ask the families to come with their prior-prior year tax information and other documents so that we can assist them through the process. Many families feel more comfortable going through this process alone, but we do afford them the assistance should they need it.

I recently learned about the FAFSA4Caster, which allows students to get an early estimate of their financial aid. This along with the Net Price Calculator of each college and university, are tools that allow students to have an idea of what kind of money will be involved in paying for their higher education. Having a parent symposium in the evening, perhaps right before an open house report card distribution, would be a great time to present about these tools and have families apply them with your support.

**CONTROVERSIES AND QUERIES**

Sitting with the parents/families also allows us to discuss other issues that are important for students, such as Selective Service Registration, the loan process, the Educational Opportunity Fund and options for various scholarships. Students who do not have all of their documentation also have a variety of questions and concerns when it comes to applying for financial aid. In these cases, I work with the Federal Student Aid Information Center, HESAA and the individual college financial aid offices to get the answers they need whether it be through phone calls, emails or perhaps through visits to our school. I often admit to parents/families and students when I do not have the answers and stay transparent with the process. This allows us to build better rapport and engage in learning together. With changes happening every year, I feel that I always have new opportunities to be able to learn about what options students have for financial aid.

**THE GROWTH FACTOR**

The Financial Aid process can be very tricky, but the answers are out there and staying abreast of the changes is an education both for our students and families as well as for ourselves. I have learned not to be afraid of what I do not know and it has not only assisted with building better relationships with my students and their families, but it has also permitted me to form my professional network with those individuals working in higher education. I no longer hesitate to ask questions and have developed connections as a School Counselor. My students also feel more empowered because they understand this process and can feel ownership of it because they too no longer have fear. With this knowledge comes more efficient and thorough decision-making for the next steps in their educational and professional journeys.

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Once a week, I reach out to a new college admission professional to stay up to date on the role of the application essay. I’ve learned that the essay is becoming more important as admission to the most competitive schools becomes increasingly competitive.

No matter what type of school, the reps all tell me year after year that the essay is a critical piece of the application process; they want to read personal narratives that demonstrate reflection. They don’t get enough of those! Please let your students know that at its core, a college essay is all about reflection.

We know that reflection is hard for 17-year-old students. It requires introspection and the ability to focus on themselves and to look inward. They get distracted by the wealth of information on the web and in books, and by the many well-meaning adults who are trying to help them apply to college. Unfortunately, much of the information outside of your school is confusing, gimmicky or simply inaccurate. And it can make your job a lot more challenging. It’s time to mute the noise and find ways to help your students mute it, too.

Start by letting your students know that while there is no rubric for a good essay, the ones that stand out share a few common features. Regardless of the prompt, they:

- Answer the question
- Showcase a positive trait or characteristic
- Sound like a high school student
- Illustrate something meaningful about the student
- Demonstrate reflection

We have always gone straight to the source to get accurate information about the essay, and we are happy to share some of our best inside information with you.

**The 3 Don’ts**

Heath Einstein
Texas Christian University

Heath Einstein, Texas Christian University’s Dean of Admissions, has a lot of advice for your students on writing college essays. Here’s his top 3 tips to students:

- Don’t try to write the world’s greatest college essay. “That’s a really tall order and will almost certainly fall short. Instead, write a really great essay that helps colleges get to know you better. If you’re funny, be funny. If you’re creative, write creatively. Ultimately, be yourself and that will be good enough.”
Don’t get hung up on the right topic. “Most 17-year-olds haven’t scaled Kilimanjaro, so don’t worry about finding an angle that hasn’t been tried before. Write about what you know. If the most meaningful experience to you has been serving as a camp counselor, it doesn’t matter that other students have addressed it. People will try to talk you out of certain ideas, but trust your gut.”

Don’t write about something we already know about you. “If you simply rehash what’s on your resume, the personal statement is a lost opportunity. It’s okay to write about something on your resume, but don’t just list accomplishments. Tell the story behind those accomplishments.”

Tips from the Big 10

The college essay is an opportunity, according to John Ambrose, Interim Executive Director of Admissions and Recruitment at Michigan State University. He tells students “the college essay is the one thing that can separate you from everyone else in the application pool. In the essay, take the opportunity to show us your authentic self and try really hard not repeat things that are already apart of your application. I wish students spent more time on their essay.”

Ambrose would like to see “genuineness of character, unique flair of personality, identifiable traits of a leader or follower, team player and someone who has the capacity to add to the rich diversity of our campus and our traditions as a SPARTAN Nation.”

Advice from NACAC President

Stefanie Niles
Ohio Wesleyan University

NACAC’s Immediate Past President Stefanie Niles, Vice President of Enrollment and Communication for Ohio Wesleyan University, believes the college essay will remain a critical part of the application process, especially at liberal arts colleges.

“Many liberal arts colleges find that the essay can both provide insight into how a student might fit into an institution, and if they possess the basic writing skills to excel in that environment,” Niles said “I have definitely seen a poor essay, submitted with an otherwise solid application, keep a student from being admitted. I have also seen a particularly strong essay, submitted with an application containing some red flags, tip the scale toward a positive admission decision. The essay definitely matters in an admission committee’s overall consideration of a student’s admissibility to an institution.

Niles believes format and content are equally important. “It is important to assess how well a student can write – can they construct a coherent sentence? Can they follow directions regarding length? Do they use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation? Yet I also want to be sure that students address the question asked of them in a way that gives me insight into who they are. I believe that a student should write about what is important and meaningful to them, and that feeling will shine through their essay.”
It’s All About Reflection

Calvin Wise
Johns Hopkins University

Calvin Wise, the Director of Recruitment for Johns Hopkins University, always offers great insight on the essay.

When he reads a good essay, Wise gets excited to share it with colleagues. He doesn’t see any reason to share grades and test scores. Just like admission officers at other highly selective schools, Wise expects perfect grades and top scores on the ACT, SAT, AP and IB exams.

“We need to dig deeper,” Wise said. “That’s where the essay comes into play. That’s where we find out more about the student. We are looking for their story. Academically, we are glad they’ve done well. We want to know who they are. What did an experience mean to them? How did it shape them?”

Rounding out the Application Package

Tamara Siler
Rice University

Tamara Siler, the Senior Associate Director of Admission & Coordinator of Minority Recruitment at Rice University, said personal statements “add needed texture to an application file.”

“Quantitative factors such as transcripts and test scores only tell part of the story; a personal statement can provide context and truly show why a certain student is a better match than other clearly capable applicants,” Siler said. “Sometimes an essay can be the conduit for a student to reveal something to the admission committee that we would never have thought to ask. A student who makes a bold, committed choice in an essay may make themselves very memorable. However, if a student chooses subject matter that may be seen as controversial just for the sake of being controversial, or is not fully committed to the topic, it could fall flat.”

At Rice, students must submit multiple writing samples, including a possible essay which specifically asks what life experiences they will be able to share with their fellow students.

“These pieces of writing often provide clarity on a student’s intellectual engagement and drive, knowledge of Rice, ability to connect with a community, awareness of the world at large, and willingness to grow and evolve as a person and as a scholar,” Siler said. “We certainly look for solid writing ability, but we also look for content which will further allow us to distinguish a particular applicant from the thousands of others in our pool.”

Colleges Want Positive Stories

What message would one of your students be sending to colleges if he wrote about how much he disliked his father because he moved away when he was young, and he never had a relationship with him? If you can encourage your student to find something positive about this story, then he might be able to use it. But remind him to be careful about how he presents himself.

“There are very few absolutes when it comes to writing an admissions essay; one is to write about something positive,” said Brent Benner, Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management, University of Tampa. “Every kid has had a hardship, but life is about problem solving and conflict resolution. I want to read anything that paints a picture of moxy, drive, determination, and courage; those are compelling, and tells me how someone problem-solves.”
Mundane Topics Stand Out

Gregory Sneed
Denison

As college application volume continues to increase at many colleges and universities, admission counselors are evaluating more and more applications. Every applicant has a transcript, and a test score, but, as Gregory Sneed, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Denison University, points out, not every applicant writes a personal statement that stands out. Mundane topics stand out.

“The topic of the essay doesn’t need to be mind-blowing (in fact, the most mundane topics are often the most relatable and enjoyable), but if it reveals a someone who would be highly valued in our campus community, that could tip the scales,” Sneed said.

“The greatest value of the essay is that it offers a glimpse into the student’s personality and gives the admission committee a sense of whether or not that student’s personality, interests, and values would positively contribute to the campus community. Teachers and counselors can write about the applicant, but only the applicant can provide such an intensely personal bit of character.”

Your Students Do Not Need to Cure Cancer to Nail the Essay

Jan Deike
Vanderbilt

We work with students, but we also train school counselors and independent educational consultants. A word of caution: Don’t fall into the trap that the essay topic has to be big, something huge. Students who go to school, do their homework, babysit on the weekend and play video games get into good schools, year after year. They don’t need to start an orphanage in the third-world country like Mother Teresa to go to college. They are 17 – just kids.

“Sometimes students feel that because they haven’t found the cure for cancer, they have nothing to share,” said Jan Deike, Assistant Director of Admissions at Vanderbilt University. “Life is truly lived in the smaller moments, and that can be a powerful essay.”

Kim Lifton is President of WOW Writing Workshop. At WOW she leads a professional team of writers and teachers who understand the writing process inside and out. She teaches students how to write application essays for college and graduate school, and adults how to write anything that involves the written word (such as books). Kim also supervises Wow’s business communication services, including running online seminars for small business and nonprofit leaders interested in blogging and social media. Recently, LinkedIn named Kim a Top Voice in Education. She can be reached at kim@wowwritingworkshop.com
How to Help Teens Bounce Back

By Dawn Marie Barhyte

From not making the cheerleading team, to failing to getting accepted into the college of their dreams, to breaking up right before formals, life doesn’t always go as planned for your students. Disappointments, failure, and setbacks are all a part of life. While some adolescents weather these setbacks easily, others find it hard to get back on track. There are things you can do to help your students develop the resiliency mind-set to get through the bumps along the road of life. Although life can be super stressful, it doesn’t mean your students are destined to struggle because of these difficulties. Indeed, students have the ability to bounce back and should recognize hardships as unique opportunities to ultimately succeed in life.

Rick Hanson PhD says, “we can learn to increase everyday happiness, build inner strength and get the most out of life.” We can show our students that with the power of neuroscience, we can take charge of our brain and change it for the better. Linda Graham MFT, author of Resilience Powerful Practices for Bouncing Back from Disappointment, Difficulty and Even Disaster agrees adding “that we have the power and the flexibility to choose how we respond, and we can train our brain to respond to life’s challenges in ways that are increasingly skillful and effective”. She says we can teach students a growth mindset that if they keep trying and work hard, they will improve with practice and eventually succeed rather than having a fixed mindset. We can instill that success depends on effort. The growth mindset fosters flexibility and resilience, the fixed mindset derails them.

Studies have found that those teens who flex the resiliency muscle have an edge over those who don’t. Ellen Smith LCSW, BCD of Coaching and Psychotherapy for Success agrees and adds in her 29 years of experience working with youth, non-resilient teens often act out by rebelling against authority, become involved with drugs or alcohol or develop emotional problems. Those who thrive under pressure typically recover quickly from setbacks, without being crushed or acting in destructive ways. Surviving practically anything is the surest way to boost self-confidence, which means, you are more likely to succeed wherever life takes you. She adds, we all have different temperaments and are influenced by genetics and environment. Teachers and Counselors can encourage emotional strength and resiliency by being aware and sensitive to each child’s innate personality and respond accordingly.

It is no secret that life isn’t always fair, and frequently the unexpected happens. The reality is that your students cannot control everything that
happens, but they can control how they react to adversity. Some teens seem to possess a natural ability to bounce back from anything. Those who don’t have the ability can learn with help from counselors and practice. Whatever the issue, your students can face it, energized and ready to cope. First, encourage students to add into their everyday routine what researchers call protective factors. Then help teens put together a resiliency plan today so that they can face any issue tomorrow. By doing so, you’ll find your students will rebound faster when the going gets tough.

According to Ellen Smith LCSW, teens are more likely to bounce back if they learn how to set boundaries, identify and express their feelings and strengthen their decision-making skills. Start thinking about how you can help your students apply these strategies to current crises so you can keep things in perspective, get back on track and move on so they can have some fun!

**Teach Teens to:**

* Set personal boundaries: Coach teens to tell friends and family when they are acting in ways that are unacceptable or hurtful. Communicate that they have the right and personal responsibility to protect themselves.

* Express themselves: Encourage students to communicate feelings honestly and openly, voice them in an assertive, direct fashion.

* Be a dynamic decision maker: Linda Graham MFT says the neural networks underlying your coping strategies and behaviors can be shaped and modified by your own choices.

* Define the problem.

* Gather all the information.

* Seek advice or guidance from those who know more about the issue.

* Use all possible resources.

* Brainstorm for possible outcomes and consequences of each alternative, evaluate if those alternatives meet your values, goals and attitudes.

* Decide what the best solution is and proceed, confident you’re making a well-informed decision.

Here are some other tips to help students develop new ways to respond to pressure and tragedies quickly, adaptively and effectively. Encourage teens to be their own best friend, to believe in themselves and to take good care of themselves physically, mentally and spiritually. They should also always take time to acknowledge and celebrate their successes.

Encourage students to live & learn! They should learn from hard times and letdowns so they become valuable life lessons and opportunities for growth that better equip them to face future trials and tribulations. Also encourage them to take a break. Do something fun to distract them so that they can come back refocused. Examples include watching a romantic comedy, starting a new hobby, writing in their journal, going for a walk or exercising.

Encourage students to get connected! Convey that kids shouldn’t hesitate to lean on their support system and express their feelings whether it is talking, chatting online or IM with friends. They should choose to connect with those who listen to them, have their best interests at heart and support them. They should seek out a mentor, clergy member, or teacher/counselor too. Other options that can help are to join community organizations such as the 4H club, Girl Scouts or a Church youth group.

Students who have high expectations of themselves typically will persevere. This tenacity to accomplish goals and the courage to take risks develops independence, sense of power over life and the belief in a bright future. You can help them prepare for these ultimate letdowns so they are ready for them and can easily move forward to tackle their next challenges as they become adults.

*Dawn Marie Barhyte is a widely published freelance writer and former educator who continues to touch the lives of young people through her writing.*
The National Center for Education Statistics states there are 4,298 degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the U.S. When exploring the option of other countries, that number increases substantially. As the saying goes, “there is a college for everyone,” and it truly is no matter which part of the world one is looking. Working internationally, I’ve become well-informed of the abundance of options for students wishing to study outside the U.S. According to the most recent data from the Institute of International Education, the United Kingdom is the most popular destination, followed by Australia, Spain, Japan, Canada, and Germany. These countries have also made the highest investments in University Education. This article will highlight some of those regions and elaborate on why encouraging students to expand their university horizons may be a good thing.

More Bang for the Buck

Obtaining a degree abroad is much more affordable than at an American university. The average cost of college among public and private institutions continues to increase at a slow and steady pace each year. Tuition and fees vary from college to college. U.S. News annual data reports the average tuition at an in-state public college is $9,716 for the 2018-2019 year compared with $35,676 at private institutions, and $21,629 for out-of-state students at state schools. According to tuition and fees data reported to U.S. News by 737 ranked private institutions, more than 100 private colleges charge at least $50,000 or more in the sticker price.

On the contrary, the average cost of tuition in the UK overall is $21,450 per year. In Canada, it’s $16,746 and in France, it’s $247. England, specifically, is one of the most popular destinations for Americans who opt to attend college abroad. In England, international, undergraduate students pay tuition and fees that start around £9,500 ($12,235) for lecture-based courses. That cost increases to £35,000 ($45,077) or more for an undergraduate clinical degree.

However, even when the costs of some universities are comparable to prices in the U.S., the degree programs are much shorter. Many three-year programs in the United Kingdom and Europe charge less for tuition than at many private U.S. institutions. Some countries – like Germany and Norway – charge low to no tuition at all, even to international students. So over time, students will end up paying less.

United Kingdom

The UK is one of the world’s most popular destinations to study higher education, second only to the U.S. The United Kingdom is made up of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales. Each country has distinct regions, each offering large cosmopolitan cities, towns, and countryside villages. UK universities are among the best in the world and have a strong reputation for world-class research. UK higher education degrees and qualifications are recognized by employers and academics worldwide.

The UK hosts more than 395 universities and colleges, allowing students the option to choose from over 50,000 undergraduate-level courses, in...
more than 25 subject areas. As previously noted, UK courses are generally shorter than other countries, which helps to reduce overall tuition fees and accommodation costs.

The UK is a great place to live and study. The UK has a multicultural society, with a diversity of cultures, rich cuisine, easily managed transport system, languages, and faiths.

### Italy

Besides the obvious reasons a student would want to study in Italy, such as fashion, delectable food, breathtaking landscapes, and rich collection of arts, culture and literature, Italy has much more to provide. Students may seek higher education in Italy if looking at the field of Architecture and Design, Sciences and Engineering, New Technologies, Economics and Management, Agriculture, Human Sciences, Conservation and Restoration of cultural assets, Cinema, Dance, Drama or advanced musical studies.

The Higher Education System in Italy is composed mainly of two parts: the university and non-university sectors.

1. **The University Sector**

   The University Sector is currently composed of 89 institutions, including:
   - 58 State universities
   - 17 non-State universities (which are still legally acknowledged by the state)
   - 2 universities for international students in Italy
   - 6 schools focused on postgraduate studies
   - 6 telematic universities, with disciplines in technology and information

2. **The Non-University Sector**

   The Non-University Sector can be classified into four primary groups:
   - Design-related schools, including specialties in polytechnics for the arts, fine arts, applied arts, music conservatories and musical and choreographic studies
   - Higher education in language mediation
   - Higher Integrated Education (FIS), which provide Higher Technical Education and Training (IFTS)
   - Other miscellaneous disciplines (e.g. archiving, diplomatics, restoration, military studies, etc.) which are outside of the Education Ministry

Location aside, Italy boasts a plethora of options, regardless of interest. Furthermore, the quality of teaching and connections between Italian and many foreign institutions give students numerous opportunities for a fulfilling educational path.

### Spain

Every year thousands of students from across the world make their way to Spain to attend one of the 74 universities. Spain is rich in history and culture and provides the total package for any student coming to the area from foreign territories. Spain is the third most popular country for international studies with around 36% of those students from the US.

Some of the most common undergraduate degrees students choose in the country include:

- Arts & Humanities
- Sciences
- Business Law
- Engineering
- Social Law

In addition to academics, students can spend their leisure time exploring art galleries, museums, parks – or opting for a day trip to nearby, Paris and London.

Compared to other countries in Europe the cost of living in Spain is very affordable. Which is always an important factor for students to take into consideration when selecting a place of study. Tuition at some universities cost as little as 5,500€ per semester while others cost upwards of 12,000€ per semester, still far less than institutions in neighboring European countries, as well as the U.S. In addition to affordable costs of living, attending college in Spain enables students to attain an affordable tuition rate at any of the higher learning institutes in the country.

Spain has excellent learning opportunities,
surrounded by pristine living in the most immaculate of culture. Combined with great climate and plenty to do, Spain is certainly a place for students to add to their college list.

### Australia

Australian Universities are a magnet for international students with over 22,000 courses across 1,100 institutions. Australia has the third-highest number of international students in the world behind only the United Kingdom and the United States. Australia is known globally as being one of the world’s most diverse and welcoming countries, in which they take great pride. With more than 260 languages spoken in Australian homes: in addition to English, the most common are Mandarin, Italian, Arabic, Cantonese, and Greek.

Australia is known for its beauty, along with national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. They also have a reputation for building ‘big things’ – over 150 in fact from the Big Banana in New South Wales, to the Big Koala in Victoria, the Big Mango in Queensland, and the Big Ram in Western Australia. With all these wonderful attributes around Australia, it is no wonder they hold high rankings as being one of the happiest countries in the world.

Given their education stature, it’s no surprise that many of their former international students are among the world’s brightest. Australia has produced 15 Nobel prize laureates and people from around the world heavily rely on Australian discoveries and innovations – including penicillin, IVF, ultrasound, Wi-Fi, the Bionic Ear, cervical cancer vaccine and Black Box Flight Recorders.

Australia is the home to strong institutions and highly rated cities. Australia has five of the 30 best cities in the world for students based on student mix, affordability, quality of life, and employer activity – all important elements for students when choosing the best study destination. The average cost of an academic year is comparatively pricey — about $23,000 to $28,000 in tuition alone, so it helps that the Foreign Ministry is generous with scholarships. And with more than $200 million provided by the Australian Government each year in international scholarships, Australia makes it easier and accessible for students to take the leap to the “down under” and experience the difference an Australian education offers.

### Japan

With over 700 universities and 150,000 international students, Japan is a popular destination for international students. Tuition fees are comparatively cheap in Japan, public universities are a mere 535,800 yen (approx. $4,900 USD) a year.

Furthermore, a wide range of scholarships are available, both from the university, and from public and private organizations. Partial and full tuition scholarships (fee waivers) are even possible for high achieving students from low-income backgrounds. A wide range of other scholarships are available, with some directed towards specific nationalities, women, minorities, or those with high level Japanese proficiency.

From peaceful temples and shrines; the home of the bullet train, instant noodles and karaoke, Japan allows students to immerse themselves into the thousands of years of fascinating history. Plus, they want international students! The government is set on attracting more international students and has set a goal of gaining 300,000 foreign students in the country by 2020. As a result, universities are focusing on making life easier for international students, from the university application process to assist with securing a job after graduation. Japan is also one of the safest countries in the world, so this will provide a sense of ease for prospective students.

### Germany

Though English-speaking countries call it Germany, natives call it Deutschland. German universities are valued for the diversity of study programs, excellent conditions for studying, modern facilities, world-class teaching staff, and career opportunities. Besides these perks and benefits, there are hundreds of universities that have free or very low tuition fees available for international students. For instance, RWTH Aachen University, University of Mannheim, and Wismar University, to name a few. There are also private universities in Germany, and they usually require tuition & fees. However, compared to the US, a fee of €6,000/year is a great bargain. Whether a student wants to study Engineering, Medicine, Architecture, or Business; combining high-quality
education with unique cultural experiences, values, and customs, Germany is a very sought-after study location.

**See the world, develop as a person**

Obtaining a degree abroad gives students an unparalleled opportunity to live, work and explore a different culture. It’s a great way for students to expand their knowledge, meet new people, and enjoy new experiences. Students will not only learn about the people and culture, but also the history and language of one countries’ unique attributes. Living and studying overseas will help students develop as a person, become independent and take responsibility. It will allow students to see things from new perspectives, and appreciate the differences between cultures, while also noticing similarities between people. Learning isn’t restricted to a classroom setting; meeting people from around the world is also an important part of growing up.

In addition to the benefits noted for the respective countries, students may earn a quality education, travel (it’s much easier to “country hop” especially in Europe), expand their network, gain independence, and develop a sense of cross-cultural understanding. Of course, wherever a student decides to pursue their post-secondary education it’s a must that they conduct thorough research of the admission requirements, application procedures, and expenses. It’s important that students focus on choosing the right subject and course – and not solely focus on the overseas experience.

Dr. Shanell Leggins has been in the field of education for 20 years. Her experience with diverse student backgrounds spans from public, private, and higher education institutions, domestically and abroad. She currently works as a guidance and university counselor at KIS International School and IB world school in Bangkok, Thailand.

**References**


In the coming weeks, excitement and anxiety will once again fill the air as high school seniors begin navigating the college application process. Driven by the appeal of electronic platforms that profess to meet all needs, a large number of colleges have subscribed to either the Common App or the Coalition App or both. For some, this has added simplicity, uniformity, and standardization to the college application process. For others, the college application process has become more complicated, difficult to navigate and much more confusing. School counselors will be encouraged to know however, that the promise of these platforms can be achieved and the perils can be avoided by reviewing and understanding the application formats before the school year begins.

Attracted by the appeal of a single, universally accepted platform through which prospective students can apply to college, many colleges and universities have lost sight of the end-user, the student applicant. As a result, the high stakes process of applying to college has become more difficult, not less. Unfortunately, the competition between the Common App and the Coalition App has intensified, and the nuanced features of each have added a degree of commotion to the challenging college admissions process. Add to this the fact that some colleges only use parts of the application, supplement the required essays with essay topics of their own, accept both the Common App and the Coalition App, or use their own internally generated application, and you have created an unintended problem for prospective students.

Through enlightened advice, school counselors can assist a new cohort of high school seniors by helping them avoid the commotion that frequently characterizes the college application process.
Here we discuss the promise and perils of the two most widely used electronic college application platforms. The Common Application and the Coalition Application.

**Compare and Contrast**

First, it should be noted that these two platforms have clearly different purposes. The mission of the Common Application is to promote access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process. Started in 1975, the Common Application has had many years of experience and has refined their process considerably. Accepted by nearly a third of all four-year colleges in the United States, (more than 850 in 2019) the Common Application is the most widely accepted platform in use today. True to its mission, the Common Application seeks to make the process of applying to college as easy as possible for the greatest number of students. In contrast to this, the Coalition Application targets lower-income, under-resourced, and first-generation students.

Founded in 2015, the Coalition Application (MyCoalition) is much newer, has a broader mission, and targets a specific segment of the population. Its goal is to provide responsible financial aid and bolster student’s success in college and beyond. By focusing on a small target population, they strive to elevate the identified group by helping them achieve success in college and beyond. During the 2019-20 college admission cycle, the Coalition Application will be accepted by approximately 160 institutions who hope to reach this demographic. School counselors and the students they advise should make this distinction upfront.

Several other distinctions can be made when considering the two most widely used college application platforms. Specifically, this comparison addresses five variables including:

1) Number of Colleges  
2) Ease of Use.  
3) Reporting of Student Activities,  
4) Essay prompts and word limits  
5) Time needed to complete.

Without question, the Common Application is the most established and widely used college application platform. In 2019, more than 850 colleges will be using the Common Application.

"The mission of the Common Application is to promote access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process."
the ability to create a preferred college list. The Coalition allows students to identify and delete colleges in the My College feature.

Both platforms allow students to list their activities although they go about this in different ways. The Common Application permits students to list up to 10 activities, suggesting that these be posted at the start of the senior year and recorded in order of significance. For the Coalition Application, students are invited to compile a record of their proudest works starting in the 9th grade. These documents may be placed in a portfolio of sorts and submitted as part of the college application. A unique feature available only to Coalition Application users.

Another area of comparison relates to the number and word length of the essays. The Common App allows a student to choose from among seven essay topics while the Coalition Application uses only five. Fortunately, both applications use a wildcard topic as their last choice, allowing students to identify a topic of their own choosing. The Common App imposes a strict 650 word limit, while the Coalition App has removed all word limits. They do however recommend 500-550 words.

Finally, the element of time. While both applications require a concerted effort and it is recommended that a transcript, list of activities, school and home addresses, and e-mail addresses be secured ahead of time, the Common Application is easier to navigate and therefore demands less time to complete. On average, students can complete the Common Application in about one hour. The Coalition Application has a more modern interface and is appealing to those who prefer an alternative visual presentation, however it also takes longer to complete. Most students take approximately two hours to fill in all the information. (essays excluded of course).

Confusion may also be injected when colleges accept both the Common App and the Coalition Application. Each college should evaluate their own practices and choose which format will attract the type and caliber of students they want to enroll. They should choose one platform or the other by asking the question; which application best meets our needs and the needs of the potential students. This will help students by simplifying the process of applying to college and clarifying the parameters used as a basis for the admissions decision. In turn, this will increase the number of qualified applicants to the respective colleges and eventually yield a better result.

Additional Commotion is caused when colleges accept only parts of the Common Application or Coalition Application. If the format does not meet the college’s needs, then they should devise an in-house application that accomplishes this. One that is tailored to meet the college’s desired attributes. By accepting a particular format, students often assume that their application is complete when they fulfill the essentials for that application. If a college then requires supplemental information, this causes confusion and increases the potential and the number of incomplete applications. Applicants should easily understand what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated.

Finally, colleges add to the commotion when they require students to duplicate their efforts. This adds time, yet little value, to an already lengthy process. An example of this is when a student is asked to submit an official transcript listing all of their classes and grades. Some schools follow this by requesting a Self Reported Academic

The Causes of Commotion

As might be expected of a multi-step process, commotion occurs when there are too many choices and the directions are unclear. Most users spend considerable time just trying to figure out what is expected, regardless of the specific application being used. Different formats, vastly different interfaces, the required duplication of efforts and the use of confusing terminologies such as counselor, advisor, recommender, and guidance counselor, cause commotion and student anxiety. “Ease of use” should be the primary goal, not the addition of creative features to make the application appear more up-to-date. The focus should be on the utility of the application. The collective goal should be the ability of all students to access the application, understand how to apply to their desired college or university, and know what is expected of them, their counselor and their recommenders. It should be easy for a student to comply with the application requisites by submitting the required information and documentation. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.
Record (SRAR). To comply, a student is required to enter this same information by hand, item by item. This redundant activity is time consuming and unnecessarily burdensome on a prospective student. Much of the Commotion and frustration could be avoided if the college application platforms did not require students to duplicate their efforts.

What is Needed

What is needed from the two major platforms (Common App and Coalition App) and the colleges that use them is to simplify the process, add uniformity and clarity, and consider the fundamental purpose of the application. With a simplified, straightforward, intuitive and consistent format, application to college becomes easier, reduces barriers, and produces better outcomes. Through this, confusion, commotion and anxiety can be eliminated, more qualified applicants can be reviewed and the desired applicant characteristics can be evaluated and appraised. At the college admissions level, each college or university should decide which platform best meets their needs and decide to use one or the other, not both. By doing this, they will reduce the commotion and anxiety of countless numbers of aspiring college students and likely find a pool of applicants that meet both the institutional requirements and the best fit for the student.

Advice to Counselors

In preparation for the inevitable question; “Which application should I use”? Counselors would be wise to consider the purpose, appealing features, and shortcomings of the two most popular platforms. Using the chart (see sidebar) will help counselors compare the Common App and the Coalition App on a number of significant variables.

One consideration is the volume of applications that each college will be receiving and which application represents the bulk of their applications. There may be an advantage with familiarity. If the bulk of the applications are submitted using the Common App, or alternatively, the Coalition App, then it may be wise to follow suit. An admission office may have a preference for one format or the other. Likewise, students should choose the application format that will highlight their strengths. This should be balanced against the amount of time and effort required to meet the prospective college’s application requirements and deadlines. Finally, a word of advice to counselors looking to help students organize and successfully complete the college application process. Following a consistent and time tested process will result in a positive outcome with a minimum amount of commotion.

- Create a list of desired factors. (School Size, College Major, Distance from Home, etc.)
- Rank the Factors in order of importance. (1-10)
- Find the schools that best match these factors
- Determine Which Application Format to use, then create two lists.
- One list of colleges that use the Common App. Another listing colleges that use the Coalition App.
- Finally, apply to the respective colleges, always conscious of unique requirements, supplemental necessities, and of course, the deadlines.

By following these steps and recognizing the purpose of each application type, school counselors can readily identify the differences between the Common Application and the Coalition Application and help students reduce or even eliminate much of the commotion and confusion inherent in the college application process today.

Dr. Daniel J Geary has more than 25 years of experience as a teacher, school counselor and administrator in both public and private schools. He currently serves as the Director of College Counseling at Trinity Episcopal School in Richmond, Virginia and as an adjunct full professor at the University of Richmond. He can be reached at dangeary@trinityyes.org
2019 Comparison of the *Common* Application and *Coalition* Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Application</th>
<th>Goals and Purpose</th>
<th>Coalition Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Simplify the college application process by providing one standard method to apply for college admission.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1) Increase college access and affordability by targeting low income, under-resourced and first generation students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Reduce the time &amp; cost of applying to college.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2) Provide responsible financial aid and bolster the success of these students in college &amp; beyond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Increase the number of applicants to college.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3) College must demonstrate substantial financial resources targeted for low income students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Established</th>
<th>Adoption (use) by Colleges</th>
<th>Reporting of Student Activities</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>Encourages students in grades 9-12 to create on-going profile of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>850+</td>
<td>Encourages students to submit information at the start of 12th grade</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Modern interface but less intuitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reliable and intuitive interface but less modern.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interfaese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interface</th>
<th>Counselor (Ease of use)</th>
<th>Recommender (Ease of Use)</th>
<th>Student (Ease of Use)</th>
<th>No. of Essay Options &amp; Word Count</th>
<th>Application Completion Time (student)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy to use with complete reporting tools</td>
<td>Not as easy to use. Time consuming with limited reporting and tracking tools.</td>
<td>Less familiar format. Teachers and recommender should become acquainted with the process as early as possible. Students submit the e-mail address of the person writing their recommendation.</td>
<td>Ability to store high school work &amp; share with colleges as part of the application.</td>
<td>Five (5) from which to choose. The final option allows students to choose a topic of their choice. Word count no longer limited. 500-550 recommended.</td>
<td>Average 45 minutes to one hour with proper materials in-hand. (transcript, personal information, email addresses and list of activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ability to track the application status, receipt of transcripts and letters of recommendation.</td>
<td>*Unable to track the applicant’s status or determine when documents, transcripts or rec’s are received.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to online planning tools to learn about various colleges and build a list of preferred colleges.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Excluding the essay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Automatic warning of approaching deadlines.</td>
<td>*No capacity to submit mid-year and final transcripts and no deadline warnings. Initial transcripts may be uploaded, but the process is not intuitive. Often relies on US. Mail.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avg. two hours with proper materials in-hand. (transcript, personal information, email addresses and list of activities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Designated mid-Year and final transcript reporting tool for direct upload of transcripts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Excluding the essay)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daniel Geary, PhD.  Rev. 6/1/2019
A petite bundle of energy guided by intelligence best describes Dr. Sherin K. Isaac. She is the Engineering Advisor and AMP Advisor for Houston Community College (HCC). HCC is one of the nation’s largest public community colleges serving over 58,000 students annually.

Located along the Gulf Coast in the heart of the nation’s energy industry, the 15-campus complex is in close proximity to the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center and Houston’s famed medical center. The area is a hotbed for those seeking engineering degrees in the fields of petroleum, chemical, aerospace, biomedical, and ocean engineering plus a multitude of other specializations. HCC offers Associate of Science and Associate of Science in Engineering Sciences as preparation for transferring to a four-year institution.

Sherin helps guide students through the various HCC two-year STEM studies requirements and directs those who will be transferring to various four-year colleges. HCC has partnerships with three four-year universities including Texas A&M, the University of Houston, and the University of Texas at Tyler.

Multiple choices...

Sherin said the beauty of attending a community college, such as HCC, is that it offers so many choices for students. Not every student wants to get a bachelor’s degree. Some want to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to become an engineering technician. And, engineering technician is one option. She explained, “I always ask students what they want. What is their goal? Where do they see themselves five years from today? And, I always preface these questions with...”
the phrase, “There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am about to ask.”

Less traditional students, usually older, may come to HCC to hone their skills or to update their knowledge. Others may want to change career paths. But the traditional student, just coming out of high school, may need to know more about engineering in general. Sherin said students often fail to realize just how rigorous and time intensive engineering studies can become. “I first like to know how a student chose engineering as their area of study. Perhaps they have an aptitude for math, or family members are engineers, or perhaps they have heard engineering careers are lucrative because of the shortages in certain fields.”

When it comes to money, many technician positions in engineering offer median annual salaries in the $50,000 per year range while a B.S. or higher degree comes in at about double that or more. Although most would have you believe money is the primary motivational factor, Sherin has discovered that is not the case in many instances. “It is my observation that some students work for money, others for benefits, while others want flexibility in a career with time to grow a family or care for a family member. Many say they want ample time away from work to enjoy their hobbies. Still, others say they just want to pay their bills.” She stressed, “As I said, there are no right or wrong answers, but their responses help us define goals and give them something to think about and to strive for during their course of study.”

Sherin’s “skill/interest” method is similar to the “skill/will matrix” in that it is the educator’s job to help develop their student’s understanding of math and core skills. But it is the advisor’s job to help build and sustain the student’s will to proceed by identifying motivating factors and providing feedback and encouragement as well as alternatives after setbacks. To that end, Sherin also advises her students to take advantage of internships. She emphasized that being an intern at an engineering firm, even for just one summer, can be a real boost to a person’s understanding of how and why specific skills are needed and what role they play within an organization. She values the learning-by-doing method as being one of the best teachers.

The main role of a college advisor is to keep students on track. Completing general education and areas of study requirements come first before study electives and free electives. Since education is time intensive and expensive, it is in the student’s best interest not to get sidetracked by the many “fun” classes that satisfy outside interests. Sherin helps students stick to their core schedule and recommends only transferable engineering electives while keeping in mind that classes, such as drafting, might assist someone in getting an entry level or part-time job while completing a course schedule.

**Using the high/low method...**

To probe even more deeply into a student’s reasoning, Sherin likes to use the “high-skill/low-interest and low-interest/high-skill” method. She explained, “I am highly interested in sports but my level of athleticism is low. Since I am not skilled enough to become a professional player, but I am highly interested in sports, I could parlay my career as a lover of sports in a different way. I could focus on sports marketing, team management, broadcasting or any number of careers that would still keep me involved in the sports I love to watch.” She pointed out the same is true with engineering. “There are many careers associated with engineering and my job is to help direct students to the venue that is best in line with their skills, interests, and goals.”

**Delay gratification for future gains...**

“I try to explain to my students that engineering courses only get more and more difficult as you progress through the course of study,” she emphasized. “I also tell them that to succeed, they must defer gratification. If they do the hard work now, they will reap multiple rewards down the line.”
Sherin practices what she preaches. Before completing her doctorate in education and counseling, she received her master’s degree in counseling and student services administration. She also earned two bachelor’s degrees; one in sociology and the other in history. Her personal educational background and experiences as a student has proven helpful in guiding the students she now serves with a constant reminder to overlook distractions and to maintain a clear focus on educational and personal goals.

As an aside, it is imperative not to overlook the development of the soft skills while learning core subjects. Sherin’s development of her own soft skills as an advisor are immediately evident when you meet her. Her interpersonal skills are impeccable. She speaks quickly and can fire questions at you with pinpoint accuracy. She is also very organized; a necessity when consulting with so many students each with different abilities and goals.

Sherin’s soft skills are also useful when she and her colleagues participate in a number of college recruitment fairs at various high schools each October. This one-on-one allows them to interact with area high school college counselors and students while spreading the word about the many educational opportunities offered at HCC. Her first question to high school students may well be, “Where do you see yourself five years from today?” As she adds, “There are no right or wrong answers to that question.”

Connie Voss has been writing professionally for over 40 years. Her body of work includes a wide range of technical articles and human interest stories. She researched and wrote St. Thomas High School in the 20th Century an account of the first 100 years of a well-known Houston, Texas boys’ school. She writes a monthly column on advertising and marketing and assists a variety of industrial firms with their advertising communications.
Community colleges have gotten an increasing amount of attention in the last decade for their value as a starting point for students hoping to transfer to a four-year institution and, in the other direction, as they evolve to become a stronger link to high school, perhaps as a type of free extension of k-12 education.

It all means that professionals helping students with the move to higher education must continue to keep an eye on their growth and the changes taking place in the nation’s some 1,100 community college campuses, where now about 40% of all undergraduates are enrolled.

“Students should be aware that they will get a competitive or better quality education here,” says Tina Hart, vice president of enrollment and student services at Indian River State College, a recent winner of an Aspen Prize for the best two-year institutions. “It’s available at a much lower cost compared with a public state university or at a private university – and they will do so while having a full and vibrant college experience on our campuses.”

By Jim Paterson

The president of the Community College of Baltimore County and the chairman of the board of directors for the American Association of Community Colleges says that they are improving but they need to keep changing to continue to become what she calls “democracy’s colleges”.

“A seismic demographic shift has occurred in America over the past 50 years, a shift none of us can afford to ignore,” she says. “None of us can deny that the community college of the 21st century must become a vastly different institution from those of our founding years.”

That’s how community colleges are seeing themselves—as an improved product with a big challenge. They are trying to provide a pathway for an increasing number of diverse young people, offering them more targeted supports and creative, new pathways to workforce training or a transfer to four years of college with a smaller financial burden.

Experts say, however, students should still take care when they make the choice about going to community college – and choose the specific school only after examining the options.
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RESPONDING TO NEEDS

A recent report from Percontor that surveyed 50,000 community college students showed that they face a “dizzying array” of personal demands and academic obstacles ranging from costly developmental classes of questionable value, to poorly designed online courses that don’t offer enough support. But its authors note that its students today generally are very satisfied with their experience.

“For example, we asked students whether they believed the education they were getting was a good value, and they overwhelmingly believed it was worth what they paid,” says Paul Umbach, a professor in the Department of Leadership, Policy, and Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University and one of the report’s authors. “They also overwhelmingly believed that their college was helping them meet their goals.”

The report shows about 95 percent were very likely or somewhat likely to recommend their college to a friend and about 95% also believe their community college education was worth what they paid.

Josh Wyner, a vice president of the Aspen Institute, and author of the book “What Excellent Community Colleges Do: Preparing All Students for Success” says that while students must thoroughly study the programs offered by community colleges, they are increasingly providing good opportunities for all types of students. He oversees the Aspen Prize, which provides a $1 million award to colleges like IRSC based on access, student success, graduation rates and outcomes in the workforce.

“Increasingly community colleges are recognizing that they have to provide more support for their students and they are doing it with guided pathways that efficiently get them into the workforce. And then they provide support, often in a case management structure that tracks them and provides individual guidance,” he says.

The Aspen Institute gave the top awards this year to IRSC and Miami Dade College. Three other colleges, Odessa College in Odessa, TX, Palo Alto College in San Antonio, and Pierce College in Lakewood, WA, were recognized as “rising stars”. And in all cases, the colleges had undergone changes to provide more support to their students and focus on workforce preparation.

PATHWAYS AND SUPPORT

For instance, at its eight campuses, Miami Dade uses clear credential stacking and maps that give students a guide to a specific career. Such guided pathways have been recommended by researchers and are the basis of a new project from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin.

Wyner says that is a feature students should look for in community colleges they are investigating. “In some form it should be a priority for these schools,” he said. Miami Dade has a proven strategy of providing more advising for its students, who graduate at 43%, compared to a national average of 35% and earn over $600 more after five years. That sort of concern is another item that should be on the checklist of high school students.

Cynthia Olivo, vice president of student services at Pasadena City College, says her school makes a significant effort to improve advising for its 2,600 students, even employing about 100 counseling department students from graduate programs nearby to help students with issues that may stymie and discourage them, but can easily and quickly be addressed.
“Many community college students have very different concerns and needs than a traditional student does, and they need better advising, and assistance that fits them,” she says.

Umbach agrees. “Student interactions with campus staff, administrators, and faculty are particularly important based on our work. In our focus groups, college students noted they wanted to interact with people who were available to help them, effective in solving their problems, and demonstrated that they cared about them.”

Community colleges also are moving to make their curriculum even more attractive in many cases, and more useful, with close collaboration with employers and with internships or other arrangements to get work experience. Any student considering one should ask about things like the school’s transfer levels, placement in jobs, opportunities for work experience and connections with local or regional businesses.

Hart says 94% of IRSC graduates are employed or continue their education soon after graduation. “We offer programs in in-demand industries, such as healthcare and advanced technology that lead to high-wage jobs, as well as programs in the humanities, business, education and physical sciences that are known for transfer to the university,” she says.

THE OTHER NEEDS

Two other areas have become a priority for community colleges and should be considered — traditional financial aid and support beyond that for things like parking, child care — or even housing.

First, the idea of free community college has been circulating for some time, given a boost by President Barack Obama’s endorsement of the idea. Earlier this year, West Virginia became the latest of about 20 states to offer free tuition and fees at community college or technical schools. Similar to other such plans, the funds are “last dollar” amounts applied after a student has acquired other aid. To be eligible the student must remain in the state for two years after graduation, maintain at least a 2.0 GPA and complete eight hours of community service.

In Rhode Island, a free college program caused twice as many high school graduates to enroll in its community colleges and Tennessee has reported that its first class of graduates in the program showed a 60% increase rate of obtaining a degree or credential. Michigan last month was the latest state to approve a free community college initiative. It is also approved a last-dollar plan but included a $2,500 scholarship for students attending a four-year institution.

Experts say students should examine the plans to see what they cover and what the requirements are. Some include work requirements or limit the amounts, while others are more generous and offer funds for books and supplies, other types of supports are sometimes available – ranging from money for parking or transportation to funds for food or shelter.

“Students are surprised at how many support services are available to them here,” says Hart. “We offer meals for students who are food deficient, the IRSC Foundation Emergency Scholarship for students that find themselves in a financial bind, free tutoring and a Professional Clothes Closet where they can help themselves to whatever articles they need. We know our students may have such needs, and we don’t want them to be a reason they can’t get an education.”

Jim Paterson has written broadly on career exploration, academic success and other education-related topics for several national and trade publications. He was a school counselor and was formerly named “Counselor of the Year” in Montgomery County, MD, a large Washington DC-area district. He is currently a writer for many education publications and websites, based in Lewes, Delaware.
The LINK Between Community Colleges and Universities:

Understanding the Role of a Transfer Receptive Culture

By Dimpal Jain, Ph.D., Alfred Herrera, Santiago Bernal & Janet Marling

The importance of community colleges in today’s higher education landscape cannot be underestimated. With over 1,000 community colleges across the nation serving over 12 million students, many who have been traditionally underserved by higher education, community colleges play a vital role in the personal, professional, and academic success of high potential students (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2018). It is well known that community colleges serve multiple missions, however, the focus of this article is on the transfer mission. In particular, we are focusing on the vertical transfer process, that is the process of transferring from a community college to a “four-year” college or university in order to obtain a baccalaureate degree (Taylor & Jain, 2017, Townsend, 2001).

Most students who attend a community college hope to earn a bachelor’s degree, yet most never do (Fink, 2016). In fact, nearly 80% of first-time community college students indicate they aspire to earn a B.A. degree, but only 23% transfer within 5 years (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011). When considering a student’s racial background, this disparity between aspirations to transfer and actual transfer becomes even more alarming, in what scholars have coined the “racial transfer gap” (Crisp & Nuñez, 2014). For instance, in a study that examined background factors that were associated with low transfer rates, Wood, Nevarez & Hilton (2011) found that White community college students were 71% more likely to transfer than students of color.

On a national scale, community colleges serve nearly half of all students of color enrolled in higher education (AACC, 2018). When examining the transfer function with these students in mind, we see that the partnerships between community colleges and universities are often severely underdeveloped or undervalued. The goal of this article is to explore how universities can better recruit, enroll, support, and graduate transfer students of color and be in true partnership with community colleges.

Transfer Sending and Transfer Receptive Culture

Community college counselors have a vital role in their institution’s transfer sending culture (TSC) which is defined as an institutional effort to normalize the transfer function so that all students who seek to transfer do so in an effective and efficient manner (Ornelas, 2002). A transfer
sending culture can be expressed in the messaging from administrators and faculty, signage on campus, dedicated funding for counseling and support services, and faculty initiatives with students. Overall, transfer is seen as a clear and streamlined process that anyone can choose rather than as an opportunity only reserved for a few.

Aligned with a transfer sending culture is a transfer receptive culture (TRC) which is defined as an institutional commitment by a university to support community college students to transfer successfully (Jain, Lucero, Bernal, Herrera, & Solorzano, 2017). This means that they are supported by university staff with navigating the community college, taking the appropriate coursework, applying, enrolling, and successfully earning a B.A. degree or beyond in a timely manner. Grounded in critical race theory in education, a TRC acknowledges the role of race and racism in the transfer process and has gained considerable traction in transfer scholarship and practice (Bahr, Toth, Thirolf, &Massé, 2013; Gomez & Santiago-Gonzalez, 2016; Saetermoe, Chavira, Khachikian, Boyns, & Cabello, 2015).

A TRC consists of five elements that span the pre- and post-transfer journey of a student. The five elements are: 1) establishing transfer as an institutional priority; 2) providing outreach and resources to students while at the community college; 3) providing transfer-specific financial and academic support once the student arrives on campus; 4) honoring a student’s intersectional identities and community and family support; and 5) assuring that there is ongoing research and assessment on transfer-related programming and initiatives. Overall, A TRC does not downplay or discredit the role of a community college in sending transfer students, but rather views a community college as an equal partner that it can learn from in terms of how to better serve and honor diverse students.

A Transfer Receptive Culture and Community College Counselors

Preparation for community college should be the same as a university preparation. Community college is college. It is never too early to start discussing transfer with your students, even if they are unsure if that is the route they want to take. You want to ensure students receive accurate information regarding their degree, certificate, or credential goals and they are able to make informed choices rather than forced choices. It is also important to be proactive and remain current with the requirements for academic programs at your institution and those with which you partner. The cost of inaccurate information is high both in terms of expense and time for students.

This is where the synergistic relationship between a community college and a university is crucial. In line with a transfer receptive culture, a university should not simply tell community colleges how the requirements for majors or other admissions policies may have changed, but rather enter into a dialogue with academic counselors, admissions representatives, and even faculty to discuss said changes and policies prior to making the changes. Strengthening the lines of communication so that misinformation does not become common is an important goal. This also means while providing advising to students, community college counselors can take an inventory of their surrounding universities and attempt to assess whether or not there is a transfer receptive culture in place based on the 5 elements. The more you know about the universities your students transfer to, the more success you will have in helping students transfer.

While providing advice to potential transfer students, especially students of color, it is also important to ascertain the campus racial climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998) of that campus which can be gleaned from reconnecting with former community college students of color who now attend that university. We know that transfer is important and can change a student’s life, especially when that student has experienced so many systemic and institutional barriers during their educational journey. As a counselor you have a unique opportunity to be part...
of that students’ transfer story and to acknowledge the strengths and shortcomings of your institution’s transfer sending culture and a university’s transfer receptive culture.

Dimpal Jain, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Northridge. Her research centers on partnerships between community colleges and universities, most notably how baccalaureate granting institutions can create a transfer receptive culture for students of color.

Alfred Herrera is the Vice Provost and Director of the Center for Community College Partnerships at UCLA. He has spent over 35 years at UCLA focused on increasing access and success of community college transfer students.

Santiago Bernal is the Assistant Director of UCLA’s Center for Community College Partnerships where he has been instrumental in developing and maintaining a critical transfer peer mentoring program. He also serves as a Transfer Advisor at Pasadena City College’s Transfer Center.

Janet L. Marling, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS) at the University of North Georgia, an organization dedicated to empowering practitioners, faculty, and administrators through education, research, and advocacy to be transfer champions.

References


Transfers and Credit
By Jim Paterson

In the past, a transfer from one college to another was not necessarily a successful strategy, but increasingly post-secondary institutions at both ends are promoting it and making it easier for students to accomplish.

And higher education officials say it makes sense as a way for students to advance and save money – and is a bonus for both two-and four-year colleges to help them enroll more students and see them succeed.

A recent report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center has shown that more than a third of students who started college in 2011 transferred at least once by 2018 and about 1.6 million students transfer every year. The University of California system reported it had received a record number of transferring students over the last few years and the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students (NISTS) has reported the trend continues to grow. The huge University of Central Florida had more transfers among its incoming students last fall than traditional freshmen, 62 percent.

“At this moment in time, transfer students are receiving the most positive attention from higher education than they ever have,” says Janet Marling, executive director of the NISTS.

Transferring from a community college or a smaller or less expensive four-year institution to a more selective school or one with a specific major can be a good path for a high school student for a number of reasons, experts say.

Especially for students who may have limited resources and need to stay at home or keep a job, it may be a good way for them to complete some required courses more efficiently and at less expense. The small college or community college may offer more personal attention for some and more support. And it may take off some of the pressure to decide on a major because it can allow students to explore longer or at a slower pace since they aren’t bound to a requirement that they carry a certain number of credits or that they feel as pressured by the per credit cost.

But the headwinds

However, it is important that students hoping to transfer consider whether they can transfer the credits they have earned.

“Far too often, this process fails to live up to its promise. Member institutions often approve other institutions as meeting standards worthy of accreditation, yet they will later refuse to recognize that school’s coursework as ‘quality’ if a student decides to transfer to their institution,” a recent report from The Third Way warns. “A significant number of those institutions will not accept some, or even most, of the college credits earned elsewhere.”

A recent U.S. General Accounting Office report found that students who transfer lose about 43 percent of their credits on average and another recent study found that only a small percentage
of those in community college planning to attend four-year colleges do so, often because of issues related to credit or the expense the loss of credit causes. The GAO report found students could have trouble transferring credits if schools don’t have an articulation agreement that spells out how credits earned at one school will transfer to another, or may find that the credits earned don’t apply to a specific major they want to enter.

So what should students do to make sure they get credits that will transfer then follow through and obtain them? Here are five tips.

**Plan ahead:**

“Successful transfer requires careful planning and research; students should begin preparing for transfer as early as possible,” says Dean Schleicher, articulation and transfer manager for Montgomery College in Rockville, Md., noting that students need to do research on the process and procedures at the schools they might want to transfer from and transfer to. “Students should work closely with a counselor or advisor to ensure they are on track to meet their educational goals.”

Academic residency requirements may be in place at some universities, establishing the number of credits students must take at a school to receive a degree or require continuous residency on campus before graduating. St John Fisher College, for instance, requires a minimum of 30 credit hours and half the course work for a major be completed on campus. Others may require a certain level of course work be taken on campus.

Prior to making the decision to transfer, they may want to get familiar with the accreditation process and the status of the school they are expecting to begin with. Accreditation is the process that examines a school’s standards for student achievement, curricula, faculty, facilities, administrative capacity, compliance with government regulations, and much more. Accreditation is designed to assure academic quality and public accountability for colleges.

Sherman Dean, director of admissions at Ohio’s Hiram College, says the key thing is for students to check on the procedures.

“Requirements vary by institution, so it is important that students looking to transfer contact the prospective school to better understand the process,” he says. He also suggests that students consider cost of the new school and any change in financial aid that might occur with a transfer.

**Keep an open mind.**

A student is likely to change their future plans. Early in the process, they should broadly explore majors and the transfer process for any they are interested in. If they commit to one plan fully, they may close off their thinking about other options for careers and commit them too early to a path forward and limit transfer options.

**Look for agreements.**

The California State University shows students how to transfer on its website and the University of Wisconsin-Madison has transfer agreements with several in-state colleges.

For Montgomery College a collaborative arrangement called the Universities at Shady Grove nearby offers two-year completion programs from all of the state’s public universities for students from MC or others who want to transfer in. Maryland also has an agreement that allows MC students and others at community colleges to easily transfer to a four-year program at a state university if they maintain a certain GPA.

Enrollment is slipping at most universities and they see transfer students as a solution, so they are developing such agreements to make the process easier. “As long as students are not enrolled in remedial courses and maintain above-average grades, most accredited institutions will award some credit towards graduation,” says Dean.

**Explore.**

Check information carefully. Different programs at the same four-year school, for instance, can have different policies about transferring in credits – and some may want certain courses to be taken within their program.

“Students should always ask two questions about getting credit for their work when they transfer,” says Marling. “First, ‘How many of my credits will transfer?’ Second, and more importantly, students should ask, ‘How will those credits be APPLIED to my major or an area of academic interest?’ Too many students are assured their credits will transfer, only to find out they end up as electives
or excess credits that do not contribute to their academic progress.”

Dean says they should also get a feel for the campus.

“It is also imperative that students walk around on the campuses of the schools they are considering for transfer so they can ask themselves two questions: do I see myself succeeding here, and do I see myself being happy here? The answers to those questions, along with consideration of transfer factors, can help a student decide where to transfer.”

Expect changes

Higher education is changing rapidly in a number of ways -- from online learning to entirely different ways of thinking about what they offer and consideration of the liberal arts approach. It may very well change key structures in the process of enrolling and is likely to further erase boundaries between two- and four-year institutions, for one thing, credentials are becoming increasingly popular, where students are given a “badge” for material they know rather than a credit for time in a class. It is gaining popularity and may become the norm.

And within institutions, policies change.

“Program requirements change frequently and it can be difficult for institutions to keep information on the website current,” says Marling.

Speak up.

“Students should advocate for themselves if they feel they have not received the maximum amount of transfer credit they believe they deserve,” says Marling. “This may take a dedicated effort to provide extra documentation or to talk with multiple individuals at their sending and receiving institutions to make certain everyone is communicating well and has the same information. Students do not have to accept the first answer they receive.”

Jim Paterson has written broadly on career exploration, academic success and other education-related topics for several national and trade publications. He was a school counselor and was formerly named “Counselor of the Year” in Montgomery County, MD, a large Washington DC – area district. He is currently a writer for many education publications and websites, based in Lewes, Delaware.

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Tips for Successfully Securing Funding as a Transfer Student

By Denise Simmons Graves

Transferring from one institution to another is a very common occurrence in American higher education. The reasons why students transfer are as numerous as the number of existing institutions. Cost, financial need, bad geographical/cultural fit, severe academic challenge, severe psychosocial challenges, lack of academic challenge, family obligations, illness, lack of diversity, institutional climate, and military obligations are just a few of the reasons students transfer.

One of the most common and frequently cited reasons for transferring are the costs associated with attending college. When coupled with the desire to both reduce cost and secure funding, the cost of college is exorbitant. College scholarships are more likely to be designated for recent high school graduates attending four-year institutions on a full-time basis. With some diligence, time, research, planning, advocates, and respectable grades, transfer scholarships can be secured. Here are some tips for the best results when searching for transfer scholarships. Students should:

- RESEARCH AND PLAN: Take 9-12 months to research and plan, using an academic calendar. The standard calendar year goes from January-December. The most common academic calendar year goes from either August-May or September-June. Scholarship and financial aid application periods are most often between January-May for the next academic year. Looking for scholarships in May, for September or November, for January, is often a lost cause. Scholarship sponsors, whether they are government, institutional or private scholarship sponsors typically make decisions and award scholarships and other forms of financial aid in April - August. You must stay abreast of their application process to include deadlines. Being in sync with scholarship sponsors is vital to your efforts. Use institutional websites, scholarship directories, faculty, counselors, friends, family and co-workers and other verifiable sources to learn about scholarships.

- COMPLETE THE FAFSA: The most important tool to use is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or the FAFSA. Students often make the mistake of not completing and submitting the FAFSA. This is a particularly troublesome trend involving community college transfer students. If students applied for federal aid using FAFSA when they enrolled at a 2 year institution and did not receive aid, they make the mistake of not applying again when they transfer to a 4 year college/university. The problem with this logic is not recognizing that the cost of college varies from college to college. The tuition cost of community colleges is typically 50%-60% less than a four-year institution. The cost is lower at a community college and thus the need is less. The cost of tuition and fees is greater at a four-year college and thus the need is greater, improving the possibility of being FAFSA eligible. Another vital use of the FAFSA is how colleges and universities use it. Submitting the FAFSA is often the screening tool used for all institutional awards. If it is not submitted, the student is never considered.
• **BE ORGANIZED AND DILLIGENT:** Being organized and diligent are character traits most necessary in this process. The amount of information necessary to apply for and submit scholarship applications is as time consuming and involved as the college search process. Transcripts, letters of recommendations, resume, essays, financial documents and sometimes test scores must be available at a moment’s notice to upload, scan or mail. Having such documents ready and available is crucial. Develop a spreadsheet and a secure work area to manage this process.

• **READ THE FINE PRINT:** Researching and finding transfer scholarships is challenging. You will use a variety of research tools and methods to compile the list of scholarships to which you will apply. Most scholarship announcements do not use the word “transfer”. Commonly used statements include” applicant must be enrolled or expecting to enroll full or part-time at a two-year or four-year institution” or “scholarship for use in freshman, sophomore, junior or senior year in college”. Reading every scholarship statement very carefully is paramount. Students often overlook opportunities because they are searching for the word “transfer”.

• **APPLY FOR LARGE AND SMALL AWARDS:** It is perfectly acceptable to couple or stack scholarships. You may get a $1000 scholarship from one source, get a $3000 Pell grant from the federal government, $500 from your local legislator and $1000 from your mother’s labor union. Don’t expect to get 1 $5000 award but several smaller awards that can be coupled or stacked together.

• **APPLY FOR INSTITUTIONAL FUNDS OR PROGRAMS:** Make sure to research and apply for institutional funds. Each college or university has money used to attract students, even transfer students. Carefully review their financial aid and transfer webpages for transfer scholarship details. Make it a point to tell Transfer admissions staff and financial aid staff that you want and are seeking transfer scholarships. Ask about their institutional transfer scholarships. If the admissions or financial aid representative cannot speak to this need, you will have an understanding as to whether the institution wants transfer students or not. The Frederick Douglas awards at the University of Maryland College Park (Fds@umd.edu) are an excellent example of institutional awards for Maryland community college transfer students. Another example is the MARCU*STAR a university grant funded program, that seeks academically talented community college transfer students in select disciplines for full tuition, fees, room and board two-year awards. Students must meet certain GPA standards and be interested in pursuing a Ph.D. and career in biomedical research.

• **IDENTIFY YOUR SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES:** Another component of the research process is to take stock of who you are
as a person and your special attributes. There are transfer scholarships exclusively for transfer students, men, women, ethnic groups, specific majors, military members and their dependents, organizational memberships (social groups, religious groups, professional associations) residents of a particular state or district. adult learners and others. Scholarship sponsors are often corporations, labor unions, civic or community groups, banks or credit unions. Many public colleges and universities offer scholarships or tuition waivers for senior citizens, beginning at age 60-65. These age-based opportunities have stipulations about the number of credits one can take or when you register. Few include fees when calculating these awards. The state of Illinois offers the Senior Citizens Courses Act 110 ILCS 990. Students must be age 65 or older with limited income. This is a tuition-free program.

• INCLUDE YOUR CIRCLE OF FACULTY AND STAFF IN YOUR SEARCH: Discuss your needs with those in your social circle. Counselors and faculty are great sources of information about scholarships. Ask as many counselors and faculty with whom you have developed professional relationships to pass along any/ all transfer scholarships that can benefit you. Your institution might have a Transfer Scholarship Coordinating Committee and/or webpage that supports transfer scholarship efforts and information for its students can be helpful in the search.

• MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: Being academically able to join honors programs and organizations puts you in a circle of faculty and staff dedicated to supporting your efforts to further your education. Honors programs, particularly at community colleges align themselves with special transfer admissions, financial aid and academic programs at select institutions. Dickinson College in Pennsylvania has a special relationship with Howard Community College and Montgomery College in Maryland. Being invited to join Phi Theta Kappa, the academic honor society for community college students, is an honor and an opportunity. There are exclusive transfer scholarships for PTK members at hundreds of college and universities.

• CONSIDER STATE SPONSORED OPPORTUNITIES: Some states sponsor special opportunities that are not labeled transfer scholarships but can be used as such. One example is the Academic Common Market. The Academic Common Market is a program used by select southern states to include: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Students interested in very select undergraduate and graduate programs from member states have an opportunity to go to college out of state for the cost of in-state tuition in the host state. For instance, a Maryland resident interested in earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Design could transfer to Auburn University in Alabama for the cost of in-state tuition at Auburn if they used the Academic Common Market program. That’s a savings and an unlabeled transfer scholarship valued at $20,000 for an academic year. To learn more about the Academic Common Market, go to: home.sreb.org/Acm This program is managed by the Southern Region Education Board.

• PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS MATTER: Many non-profit groups sponsor transfer scholarships. The Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association has an Educational Foundation. Many of its chapters offer scholarships, grants and tuition assistance for aspiring engineers, technicians, programmers, military personnel and government officials. Assistance is provided for students living or attending school within each chapter’s local community. Mr. Cooke, a former owner of both the Los Angeles Lakers professional basketball team and the Washington Redskins professional football team, created an undergraduate transfer scholarship for academically superior deserving financially needy community college transfer students. This very competitive award is currently worth up to $40,000 a year. Check out institutional calendars for transfer events.

• ATTEND TRANSFER EVENTS: Some very prestigious colleges purposefully seek out high achieving transfer students. Smith College and Mt. Holyoke visit and recruit at select community colleges. There probably isn’t a rule that says you must be enrolled at a particular institution in order to attend their transfer events.

• WORK: Work at a college/ university and use tuition remission benefits. This will allow you to maintain the lifestyle to which you have grown accustomed and further your education.
Be mindful of institutional policies that require you to work at the institution for an equal number of years for which you used the tuition benefits. Another stipulation could be that you are only able to use the tuition benefit for majors that can directly benefit the employer. For example, Boeing Company, the airplane conglomerate may not understand the benefit or value in sponsoring a Criminal Justice major as much as the local police force.

**IN ALL MATTERS, PRESENTATION MATTERS:** Many different people will read your transfer scholarship applications, documents, and submittals. Whether they are college/university faculty, staff, corporate leader or volunteer, they will all pay close attention to neatness, proper grammar, syntax, spelling and organization. Make sure your submittals reflect well on your hard work and organizational know-how.

**FUNDING FOR MILITARY SERVICE:**
One of the benefits associated with successful military service are the educational benefits. Every branch of the military and its supporting auxiliary organizations sponsor scholarships for active service members, veterans and their families. The GI Bill, National Military Intelligence Association and AMVETS National Ladies Auxiliary scholarships are just a few examples.

Searching for funding as a transfer student is challenging. Securing funding, using many of the suggestions in this article, will be a rewarding experience felt for decades.

Dr. Graves is a member of the Counseling faculty at Montgomery College (Maryland). She has helped students earn substantial national scholarship awards to include the Gates Millennium and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarships. She has written and presented nationally about transfer students and college funding sources. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Louisville, a Master of Science degree from Indiana University-Bloomington and a Doctor of Education degree from Morgan State University. Most important, she has never had any college debt! She can be reached at DeniseSimmonsGraves@gmail.com

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Please check with show organizer to confirm dates, location and times or for further information.
Paying for college

There are huge numbers of scholarships, grants and other prizes available to all students. Financial aid and scholarships aren’t just for the valedictorian or varsity quarterback.

By following these tips, you can increase your chances of tapping into the billions of dollars available every year to students just like you!

Step 1 Fill out the FAFSA (www.fafsa.ed.gov)
Step 2 Research and apply for private scholarships
Step 3 Supplement with loans if necessary
Step 4 Repeat steps every year!

All this financial aid jargon have you confused? Here’s a vocab lesson:

• Grants: A grant is a financial award given to a student for the purposes of paying for all or part of college expenses. A college grant does not have to be repaid by the student.

• Scholarships: A financial aid award that does not have to be repaid. Scholarships are generally made based on an applicant meeting certain eligibility criteria.

Helpful tips as you fill out the FAFSA Application:

► Read all directions slowly and thoroughly.

► Note your state and school deadlines for filing financial aid. Apply early, if possible, before you even know if you’re accepted to a new school.

► Estimate your income if you are unsure of the actual amount.

► Do not use the term ‘N/A’ or leave a question blank. Both of these responses can slow the filing process.

► Make sure you sign or e-sign all submitted documents.

► Keep copies of your financial aid documents for future FAFSA filing.

► For more information, check out: www.finaid.org/ fafsa.

• Loans: Financial aid awards that the student or parent borrows from a lender, the school or other third party. Loans must be repaid by the borrower according to the terms of a promissory note, usually with interest.

• Work-study: A work-study program allows a student to earn money by working part time during the school year as a component of their financial aid package. These jobs are usually on campus.

Read more!
Get more tips on how to pay for college at LINKForCounselors.com
The admission essay is an important part of any college application. Some schools give more weight to the essay than others, but if an essay is required, you can bet it’s going to be used in the admissions decision to some degree. Even if you have a high GPA, the essay provides an easy way for you to distinguish yourself from the other thousand applicants who have similar grades and activities as you. Writing an admissions essay that works will increase your chances of being accepted. To help you out, we have put together this easy list of do’s and don’ts for writing your essay.

I once had a student that had perfect scores in math; all courses in high school were 100% and the math sections of all state and national tests were near perfect. That student wrote about their love for math. As an admissions counselor, I could have inferred from the transcript and test scores that the student loved math or at least was brilliant in the subject. That’s all I knew about the applicant and while his grades stood out and his essay matched, I was left not knowing anything else about the applicant. The essay is an opportunity to shine, tell a story and it’s where you can bring your application to life.

Focus!
Do: Your topic should be specific. Your essay itself should have three parts - an introduction, body and a conclusion. Create an outline, decide what examples you want to include and write your first draft. Don’t worry about making the first draft perfect. Get your thoughts on paper. You can refine it later! Remember that this is a process that may take some time and several revisions.

Don’t: Don’t just create a list. Your goal should not be to include all of your accomplishments and activities (that is what an activities resume is for). The most engaging essays tell a story and have a clear focus. A thoughtful and detailed narration of a difficult time in your life tells more about you than a list of competitions won and honors achieved.

Be Creative
Do: This is your time to shine! Identify a topic or talk about something that is unique and different. Or, breathe life into a mundane subject by approaching it differently.

Don’t: Do what my former student did (see story above).

Get Feedback!
Do: Write multiple drafts of your essay and have it reviewed by a fellow student and also by a parent, relative or teacher. This will help you ensure the topic has been covered. Write as well as you can, edit as needed. Finally, know the essay word limit and stick to it.

Don’t: Write a novel. Essays that stick to the requirements and are positive are easier and fun to read.

Make a List
Do: Make a list of your positive qualities, strengths, personality characteristics and traits. What makes you unique? What makes you think? What makes you content? Have you experienced failure? Has a belief been changed? Use this list to narrow the focus of your topic.

Don’t: Don’t choose offensive topics. Topics that may be offensive are those that surround religion, racism and even personal opinions on world issues. You won’t be doing yourself any favors if your essay leaves the admissions officer feeling offended or worse, angry.
Apply to college

When it comes to applying for college, your application is a major component to meeting college admissions requirements. Your grades and academic history obviously factor into the equation, but the application itself is what admissions officers see first. Make sure you get it right! Luckily, ensuring your application is everything it should be isn’t difficult. Check these 10 things before you submit any college application:

1. **Follow directions carefully**
   One of the most common errors applicants make is simply not following the directions on the application. As you begin filling out your app, be sure that you follow the directions thoroughly.

2. **Write legibly**
   If you don’t apply online, the first thing that will be noticed is the way you write. Your application should be neat and readable. We strongly urge you to type your essays and all other documents to prevent any issues arising from your messy handwriting.

3. **Reread everything**
   Be sure to reread everything you wrote carefully. Doing so will ensure that you don’t send the wrong message because of an error or oversight.

4. **Check spelling and grammar**
   Spelling and grammar are very important on your college application. Making errors on things you learned in grade school will give a bad impression.

5. **Ensure everything is filled out**
   Be sure that everything is filled out. You likely won’t have to fill out every section of the application, but you do want to ensure that you complete the portions that are pertinent to your acceptance.

6. **Fill it out yourself**
   You can get your parents or friends to help you brainstorm if needed, but fill it out yourself. If you allow someone else to write any portion of the document, it will be apparent to the admissions officers.

7. **List extracurricular activities**
   Be sure that you list extracurricular activities you have actually participated in. Some colleges will verify your activities.

8. **Check the date and signature**
   Don’t forget to sign the application and date it correctly. On some documents, the place for the signature will be on the back—don’t forget to look for it!

9. **Attach all pertinent information**
   Ensure that you attach every document the application requires: your ID, admissions essay, and any other documentation to meet the college admission requirements.

10. **Ensure your online application gets submitted**
    If you are applying online, be sure that you reach the confirmation page. Save the confirmation e-mail.

Read more!
Get more tips on how to apply to college at LINKForCounselors.com
BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR AIR SCIENCE

Location: Waco, TX
Website: www.baylor.edu/aviation
Year Founded: 1845

Type of Institution: Four-year Private, Christian University

Student-Faculty Ratio: 15:1
Tuition Costs: $21,421
Room & Board: $6,362

Baylor University offers the unique combination of a professional aviation degree and a stellar education from a world-class faith-based university.

At Baylor University’s Institute for Air Science, we offer you an aviation Bachelor’s degree along with opportunities to enjoy a fulfilling college experience and student life on a tradition-rich campus. Soar to new heights and discover Baylor’s one-of-a-kind spirit of community and faith!

Telephone: 254-710-3563
Email: aviation@baylor.edu

GANNON UNIVERSITY

Location: Erie, PA
Website: www.gannon.edu
Year Founded: 1925
Type of Institution: University
Student-Faculty Ratio: 13:1
Institutional Designation: Private - Religious

Tuition Costs: $31,180-$33,060
Room & Board: $11,450-$15,060
Avg. Student Aid Package: $21,128
Avg. Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $19,494
Avg. Work-Study Aid Awarded: $2,300

At Gannon University, we’re focused on students’ academic success by ensuring a high-quality education is within reach for all who are seeking to find their path and advance their career.

Gannon offers over 100 innovative online and traditional Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral academic programs where students practice hands-on, real-world application in exceptional learning environments on campus and in the community. More than 4,000 academically talented and diverse students enjoy a personalized experience through Gannon’s low student-to-faculty ratio of 13:1. Our faculty experts inspire students and prepare them for the careers of tomorrow.

Telephone: 814-871-7407
Email: admissions@gannon.edu
HAMPTON UNIVERSITY

Location: Hampton, VA
Website: www.hamptonu.edu
Year Founded: 1868
Type of Institution: Private
Student-Faculty Ratio: 13:1
Institutional Designation: Coeducational
Tuition Costs: $24,950
Room & Board: $12,366
Average Student Aid Package: $32,128
(Averages include Loans, Plus Loans, and all Aid)
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 48.1%
Average Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $11,500

At Hampton University “Inspiration to Impact” are more than words. We offer a rich academic environment that cultivates leaders. Through global scientific collaborations and modern research projects, our professors and students are asking questions and finding answers. We offer our students innovative courses that lead to 50 bachelor’s; 25 master’s programs; 1 post-master degree; and doctoral or professional degrees in nursing, physics, atmospheric/planetary sciences, business leadership and administration, educational leadership and management, physical therapy, counselor education and supervision, architecture, and pharmacy.

Telephone: 757-727-5000
Email: admissioncounselor@hamptonu.edu

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Location: Hempstead, NY
Website: www.hofstra.edu
Year Founded: 1935
Type of Institution: University
Institutional Designation: Private/Non-profit

Hofstra University can help you get where you want to go, with small classes, dedicated faculty and a beautiful, energized campus, plus all the opportunities of New York City within easy reach.

Find your future by choosing from about 160 undergraduate programs and about 165 graduate programs, in Liberal Arts and Sciences, Business, Communication, Education, Health Sciences and Human Services, Engineering and Applied Science and Honors studies, as well as a School of Law and School of Medicine. The student-faculty ratio of 13 to 1 and a priority on teaching excellence ensures you’re part of creating your own success.

Student-Faculty Ratio: 13:1
Tuition Costs: $45,700
Room & Board: $15,708
Average Student Aid Package: $32,455
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 100%

Telephone: 516-463-6700 or 1-800-463-7872
Email: admission@hofstra.edu
KEAN UNIVERSITY

**Location:** Union, New Jersey  
**Website:** www.kean.edu  
**Year Founded:** 1855

**Type of Institution:** Public University  
**Student-Faculty Ratio:** 20:1

**Tuition Costs:** $6,297.50 (full time, in-state per semester); $9,885.50 (full-time, out-of-state per semester)

**Application Deadlines:** First-year Early Action, January 1; Preferred Regular Action, April 30; Preferred Transfer Action, August 6

**Application Fee:** $75

Students come to Kean University with a singular purpose: to get the world-class education they need to climb higher in life. They acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the classroom, in the workplace and in the world. Help your students find their passion and a path to success that lasts a lifetime.

**Telephone:** (908) 737-7100  
**Email:** admitme@kean.edu

LANDMARK COLLEGE

**Location:** Putney, VT  
**Website:** www.landmark.edu  
**Year Founded:** 1985

**Type of Institution:** Four-year, two-year liberal arts for students with learning disabilities and attention challenges  
**Student-Faculty Ratio:** 6:1

**Tuition Costs:** $59,100  
**Room & Board:** $12,900 per year (based on standard room and meal plan)

Landmark College is for students who learn differently, including students with a learning disability (such as dyslexia), ADHD, or autism. LC champions a strengths-based model and gives students the skills and strategies they need to achieve their goals. Landmark College offers bachelor’s and associate degrees, as well as a Bridge Experience, online dual enrollment courses for high school students, and summer programs for middle school, high school, and college students.

The Landmark College Institute for Research and Training conducts groundbreaking research on learning differences and shares that knowledge with educators around the world.

**Telephone:** 802-387-6718  
**Email:** admissions@landmark.edu
LYNN UNIVERSITY

Location: Boca Raton, FL  
Website: www.lynn.edu  
Year Founded: 1962

Type of Institution: Independent, nonprofit, coeducational, residential institution.  
Institutional Designation: Private, Nonprofit

Student-Faculty Ratio: 21:1  
Tuition Costs: $35,260  
Room & Board: $11,970  
Average Student Aid Package: $24,185  
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 58.70%  
Average Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $11,150  
Average Work-Study Aid Awarded: $2,039

Lynn University is an independent college based in Boca Raton, Florida, with approximately 3,000 students from 100 countries. U.S. News & World Report ranks Lynn among the most innovative and international schools in the region. Lynn’s Dialogues curriculum and award-winning iPad program help graduates gain the intellectual flexibility and global experience to fulfill their potential in an ever-changing world.

Telephone: 561-237-7900  
Email: admission@lynn.edu

MERCYHURST UNIVERSITY

Location: Erie, PA  
Website: www.mercyhurst.edu  
Year Founded: 1926

Type of Institution: 4-year, Catholic, liberal arts  
Student-Faculty Ratio: 14:1  
Tuition Costs: $37,500  
Room & Board: $11,000 - $13,000 (depending on residence hall)  
Student Aid Package: $21,500  
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: More than 90% of students receive financial aid.

Mercyhurst University, founded in 1926 by the Sisters of Mercy, is a fully accredited, four-year, Catholic comprehensive institution, in Erie, Pa. The university offers more than 100 majors, minors and concentrations as well as unique post-baccalaureate, advanced certificate and master’s degree programs. In addition, Mercyhurst provides certificate and associate degree offerings at branch campuses in North East, Corry and the Booker T. Washington Center. Inspired by our motto, “Carpe Diem” (seize the day), our faculty and students are busy making a difference on and off campus — from “the Hill” to the far corners of the world.

Telephone: 800-825-1926 x2202
MIDWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Location: Wichita Falls, TX  
Website: www.msutexas.edu  
Year Founded: 1922  
Type of Institution: Comprehensive higher education system  
Student-Faculty Ratio: 18:1  
Tuition Costs: $4,510 (in-state); $5,665 (non-resident)  
Room & Board: $4,135 per semester based on a semi-private traditional residence hall with highest meal plan

Student Aid Package: $11,142  
Avg. Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 68%  
Avg. Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $5,653  
Avg. Work-Study Aid Awarded: $1,877

Midwestern State is recognized as a public liberal arts university with strong programs in the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences as well as accredited professional programs in mechanical engineering, social work, nursing, radiologic science, respiratory care, athletic training, and business, among others. MSU offers the individual attention of a private education but the affordability of a public university. Classes average fewer than 30 students, and most are taught by fulltime faculty, not graduate assistants. Students are active in more than 100 organizations and bring a spirit of competition to 13 NCAA Division II athletic programs.

Telephone: 800-842-1922  
Email: admissions@msutexas.edu

SALISBURY UNIVERSITY

Location: Salisbury, MD  
Website: www.salisbury.edu  
Year Founded: 1925  
Type of Institution: 4-year public comprehensive  
Student-Faculty Ratio: 16:1  
Tuition Costs: $9,824 in-state; $19,526 out of state  
Room & Board: $11,950 (based on “all day, every day” meals and double occupancy renovated dorm)  
Average Student Aid Package: $7,395 (need based)  
Average Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $2,773 (non-need based)

Nationally recognized for academic excellence, Salisbury University is a proud member of the University System of Maryland offering 43 undergraduate majors, 15 graduate programs and 2 doctorates in nursing practice and education. SU is ranked among the nation’s “Best Value” colleges by Kiplinger’s Personal Finance, Money, Forbes, The Princeton Review and U.S. News & World Report. Washington Monthly also named SU among America’s “Best Bang For The Buck” Colleges. Sea Gull athletes have earned 20 NCAA Division III national team championships. Founded in 1925, SU is just 2.5 hours from Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

Telephone: 410-543-6161  
Email: admissions@salisbury.edu
TEXAS A&M CORPUS CHRISTI

Location: Corpus Christi, TX
Website: www.tamucc.edu
Year Founded: 1947

Type of Institution: Four Year Public
Doctorate
Institutional Designation: Hispanic Serving - HSI
Student-Faculty Ratio: 18:1
Tuition Costs: $9,272 annual
Room & Board: $11,024
Average Student Aid Package: $10,376
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 56%
Average Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $3,858
Average Work-Study Aid Awarded: $4,640

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is the premier doctoral granting institution in South Texas. More than 43 undergraduate, 33 masters, and 9 doctoral/terminal degrees make the Island University the intellectual hub of the Coastal Bend. Nationally and internationally known institutes, research center and labs, and award-winning degree programs draw approximately 12,000 students annually to the Island University.

Telephone: 1.800.4.TAMUCC
Email: recruitment@tamucc.edu

TOURO COLLEGE, NEW YORK SCHOOL OF CAREER AND APPLIED STUDIES (NYSCAS)

Location: Brooklyn, NY
Website: www.nyscas.touro.edu
Year Founded: 1971
Type of Institution: Comprehensive higher education system
Student-Faculty Ratio: 19:1
Tuition Costs: $15,150
Average Student Aid Package: $9,000
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 90%

NYSCAS is ideally suited to reflect, and respond to, the challenges of this new era. Our tradition of academic excellence has given us the foundation and confidence to reach for new and unimaginable knowledge, while the diversity of our University system community makes it possible for students, faculty, alumni, and neighbors to interact with — and thus be transformed by — the multiplicity of human perspectives. At the same time, our numerous locations in the world’s most global city offers us a unique laboratory in which to study the evolution of modern society, attract and learn from the remarkable people who make New York home and, in doing so, fulfill our responsibilities as active, engaged citizens.

Telephone: 212-463-0400 ext. 55500
Email: admissions.nyscas@touro.edu
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - VICTORIA

Location: Victoria, TX
Website: www.uhv.edu
Year Founded: 1973
Type of Institution: Four-year, public university
Student-Faculty Ratio: 16:1
Institutional Designation: Bachelor's & Master's
Tuition Costs: $8,328 Annual Tuition and Fees (2019-2020 in-state rate, 15 hours/semester)
Room & Board: $8,502
Average Student Aid Package: $10,152
Average Percentage of Financial Aid Met: 63%
Average Scholarship/Grant Aid Awarded: $4,711
Average Work-Study Aid Awarded: $2,167

The University of Houston-Victoria offers courses leading to 70 bachelor’s and master’s degree programs and concentrations in the schools of Arts & Sciences; Business Administration; and Education, Health Professions & Human Development. UHV provides face-to-face classes at its Victoria, Texas, campus as well as a teaching site in Katy, Texas, and online classes that students can take from anywhere. Since its founding in 1973, UHV has provided students with a quality education from excellent faculty at an affordable price.

Telephone: 361-570-4848
Email: recruitment@uhv.edu

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Location: Wilmington, NC
Website: www.uncw.edu
Year Founded: 1947
Type of Institution: Four-year public
Institutional Designation: Masters
Comprehensive University
Student-Faculty Ratio: 17:1
Tuition Costs: In-State $4,400/Out-of-State $18,508
Room & Board: $6,790

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) is divided into 5 academic units: the College of Arts and Sciences; the College of Health and Human Services; the Watson College of Education; the Cameron School of Business; and the UNCW Graduate School. Through these institutions, 54 undergraduate degrees and 33 graduate degrees are offered.

The “US News and World Report” consistently ranks UNCW within the top 15 overall universities and within the top 10 public universities in the South. The “Princeton Review” recognized UNCW among the Best in the Southeast.

Telephone: 910-962-3243
Email: admissions@uncw.edu
UTICA COLLEGE

Location: Utica, NY
Website: utica.edu
Year Founded: 1946

Type of Institution: 4-year, private, residential college
Student-Faculty Ratio: 11:1

Tuition Costs: $20,832
Room & Board: $11,248
Average Student Aid Package: $28,209

Utica College is a uniquely personal, private institution that specializes in professional education with a strong foundation in the liberal arts. UC offers innovative, career driven programs in 16 of the 20 most desired majors and an 11:1 student to faculty ratio. One hundred percent of faculty-recommended pre-med students are admitted to medical school and hundreds of internship opportunities available nationwide. Utica College awards merit scholarships or need based aid to 95 percent of students.

Telephone: 800-782-8884
Email: admiss@utica.edu

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uncw.edu/applynow