

UC Davis Project

A Message from Su Yeong Kim, Chief Researcher

We are very pleased to share with you additional information on the college application process.

We are planning a follow-up study in the 2005-2006 academic year and we ask for your continued participation. If your address or phone number changes, please update us. Our contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

We hope that you find the newsletter informative and useful. We sincerely appreciate your participation in the project!

College Application:

PLAN OF ACTION



INVESTIGATE



EXECUTE

When the Time Comes

Just like the good work you have done in high school, you need to plan well to succeed in getting into the college of your choice. Here are some tips to help you plan and guide you through the process.

All Things Considered

A good college education is quite an expensive investment for most families, so it is only reasonable to conduct a thorough investigation before making a decision.

There are many factors that you need to consider in making college choices.

First of all: location. You should narrow down the parts of the country where you would be interested in attending a college. Second, a college's size also matters. A smaller school may offer a more personal learning experience, while a large one, on the other hand, can offer the diversity of people that you are likely to meet. Third, you should check what classes the college has to offer for the field(s) that you are interested in. Ask questions like: "are these classes offered every semester, how often do they add new classes, and is the program well planned?" Fourth, a college's freshman drop out rate is an important piece of information. Typical freshmen dropout rates range from 4% to 11% for most colleges. A high freshmen dropout rate should set off alarms. It may not mean that the college is bad, but it probably means that the college either misrepresents itself to students or that the college is unusual and students have trouble adapting to its

environment. Fifth, the social life on campus is also important to your college education. Before making your decision, visit, attend classes, and stay overnight on campus. Hang around one weekend during the school year to get a good feel for the campus life. Lastly, consider the crime rate on campus, as it is important to have a safe and tranquil environment to study and live in. Unfortunately, most colleges do not readily publish this kind of information. You may need to do a bit of a research, and ask a well-informed guidance counselor about obtaining some of this information.

In addition to gathering information from your high school guidance counselor, read a couple books with college listings and information. Also, search the websites of the colleges that interest you to get essay questions early. You can also search for financial information online. Do everything within your power to find out as much as possible about the colleges on your list, so that you can make a well-informed decision.



“The most important person in the college application process is you.”

People that matter

The most important person in the college application process is you. It is you who oversee the whole process and who prevent “accidents” from happening and who take measures when they do happen. Here are a few tips on keeping “accidents” from happening. First, you should always give people a deadline, even if it is several weeks into the future. Then follow up on the deadline. Second, create a checklist for every college of your choice. Check items off as they are finished. Do not assume that an item is finished unless you have personally investigated it. For example, do not assume a recommendation letter has been sent out because your teacher had promised to send it three weeks ago. Ask him again as the deadline comes up or call the admissions office to see if they have indeed received it. Third, remain calm even when things go wrong. Think about what you can do to mend the mistake, not how this could have happened to you! Lastly, the sooner you start the process, the more likely mistakes will not be made or can be fixed. Students who start completing applications three days before the deadlines may run into problems that can’t be fixed by the application deadline.

talking to them regularly and as early as possible. Ask them for guidance in your academic preparation, show them your progress and show how eager you are to learn and improve yourself. Stand out. Do everything within your power to have your counselor advocate and help you!

In addition to writing the important recommendation letter, your guidance counselor can also offer other assistance in providing information about colleges. Depending on the kind of high school you attend, there are different types of counselors. In some public inner-city high schools where less than 50% of the graduating class go to college, your counselor might be more concerned with class schedules, attendance and tardiness rates, detention and other administrative problems. If you are in such a situation, then it is even more important to start early since you would have to do more of the work by yourself. However, regardless of what your counselor’s priorities are, you should realize that most counselors are over-worked. Be nice to them and give them plenty of time for every task you ask them to complete. Give them specific deadlines and follow up. Be aware though, that if the counselor is indeed concerned about students going to college, then it is their priority to get as many students into college as possible. So you will likely be encouraged to apply for “safety” colleges, which are the colleges that will most probably accept you, but are not necessarily the best ones you could possibly get into. Last but not least, watch out for counselors that have little credibility with colleges. A counselor loses his credibility with a college by recommending a large pool of unqualified applicants to the college over the years. A college might tend to reject you simply because you are from a school whose guidance counselor has little credibility.



The second most important person is your guidance counselor. A guidance counselor is your high school counselor who guides you in preparing college applications. Most students ask their guidance counselors to write a recommendation letter. Colleges look to this letter to decide who you really are. They look for information about you that is not evident from your transcripts. It also gives them a good idea of how you stand relative to your peers. Thus, it should be clear that it is extremely important to make a good impression on your counselor. Start

The next most important person is the college admissions office. People from this office review your application materials and decide on your admission. To make their lives easier, you should organize the application material well, so that it is concise, to-the-point, and easy to read. It is extremely important to double check your grammar and writing to make sure that there are no mistakes anywhere in the material. Everything should be typed. You should call the admissions offices to arrange for campus tours and to receive admissions information.

Friends and relatives can also be a good source of information if they attended the schools on your list. Ask about their personal experiences at the school. But don't ask them to write you an extra recommendation letter simply because they are an alumnus, unless they have something substantial and significant to say about you that is found nowhere else in your application materials. Most recommendation letters are positive reinforcements of the applicant's academic performance and character, so

an additional recommendation letter from a relative who happens to be an alumnus is not necessarily convincing. Furthermore, it only adds to the admissions officers' burden to read one more letter than they are expected to.

Lastly, if your family can afford it, private counselors are also a great assistance in college applications. They usually have developed great strategies and have good sources of information from helping many other students. However, you must keep in mind that most colleges regard private counselors as an unfair advantage available to only a few wealthy students. So, if you do hire a private counselor, it is best practice to keep them invisible. Reading a couple of books with college listings should also provide you with some additional information. You can also search for financial information online.



To the Parents

Like most other endeavors, a successful college application requires teamwork. Parents should be supportive, helpful, and guide their young adults in making an important decision.

First of all, parents are part of the plan. Parents should ask which colleges their teenagers have in mind. Parents should help their teenagers research and gather information on colleges. Parents can take their teenagers to college fairs, and tour the campuses of colleges that interest the students.

Secondly, parents should provide guidance without interference. Parents should talk to their teenagers, ask if they need any help, but recognize that deciding on a college to attend is their teenagers' decision. Parents should avoid calling colleges on their teenagers'

behalf, as it is a sign of lack of maturity on the part of the student. If the student is invited to go to an interview with a college admissions officer, parents can drive the student and have a short and polite conversation with the officer before making a graceful exit and then leaving the student to interview with the admissions officer.

Deciding on which college to attend is one of the most important decisions students will have to make. Parents should be supportive and be understanding of their students' choices, even if it is different from that of the parents'.

In summary, a successful college application starts early in high school. To be admitted to a good college, students need to work hard throughout high school, and choose wisely when the time comes.

"Parents should be supportive, helpful, and guide their young adults in making an important first decision."

Are you Moving?

Please update your address and phone number with us! We would like to keep in touch with you for a follow-up project in the 2005-2006 academic year.

Updating your information is easy:

By Phone: (415) 271-0390

By Phone: (866) 7-FAMILY (This is a toll-free number.)

By E-mail: projectfamilies@yahoo.com

By Web: <http://www.geocities.com/projectfamilies/davis/>



Reference

College Board (2003). *The College Board College Handbook 2004: All-New Forty-first edition*. New York: College Board.

Hughes, C. (2003). *What It Really Takes to Get Into Ivy League and Other Highly Selective Colleges*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Harvard Student Agencies (2002). *The Guide to Getting In: Winning the College Admissions Game Without Losing Your Mind*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

On-Line College Search:
<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/>

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