

## COLLEGE PLANNING MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ***Failure to plan adequately.*** The biggest mistake! Successful plans should incorporate the five standard elements of college planning: self-awareness, career exploration, college exploration, college admission, and scholarships/financial aid. Adequate time, preferably several years, should be taken to develop your plan.
- ***Putting your parents solely in charge.*** When you go away to college, your parents stay home. Your immediate and long-term future is what's on the line. It is vital you, at least, share ownership of the process.
- ***Failure to develop a counselor-student relationship.*** Your HS counselor has access to your files, writes a college "Counselor's Report" for you, and is your school's contact person for colleges. Get to know him/her.
- ***Failure to meet your admissions representative.*** Each college assigns a person to your high school. That person is vital in determining your admission and merit scholarship success, in that he/she is often your link to the admissions committee. Keep in contact!!
- ***Considering a college solely for its reputation.*** Selecting a college solely for its reputation, without mixing in all the other factors important to you and your family, is a good predictor for transferring after one year. A college's "fit" and "feel" are perhaps the most important factors to consider in your choice of colleges.
- ***Automatically ruling out private colleges because of cost.*** You probably won't pay the sticker price, given scholarships and other incentives frequently offered by private (smaller) colleges. Such additional factors will often narrow or eliminate the cost difference. Consider the benefits of attending such colleges.
- ***Visiting a college without an appointment.*** Always contact the admissions office prior to your visit and ask them to schedule a guided tour and an appointment with a faculty or staff member who is knowledgeable about the academic field(s) and opportunities you wish to pursue. Prepare your questions in advance.
- ***Applying to a college you haven't visited.*** Your comfort level is vital in determining whether you stay, and succeed, at any college. Each college has a different "fit" and "feel". Be sure both are positive, otherwise you are probably better off not considering the college.
- ***Missing application deadlines.*** Meeting deadlines shows your level of interest in the college and your ability to organize yourself, both vital qualities to colleges. Missing deadlines will frequently result in your losing out on a college's admissions and scholarship opportunities, regardless of your credentials.
- ***Lying or exaggerating.*** Colleges are adamant about applicants' honesty and will customarily verify evidence of lies or exaggerations in your verbal or written statements.
- ***Submitting a messy application.*** Messy work creates a negative impression on the admissions officer.
- ***Ignoring letters of recommendation.*** They provide insights about you not given elsewhere in your application. When requesting a recommendation, it is helpful to give the recommender your resume, reasons why you are interested in the specific college, a stamped, self-addressed (to the college) envelope, and 2-4 weeks to write the letter.
- ***Not applying for financial aid or not searching for scholarships.*** Myths: 1. Financial aid is only for the poor. 2. Financial aid is not available to families earning more than \$100,000. 3. You must have a high GPA to get a scholarship. There are offsets in the federal financial aid formula such as: number of children in college, parents' marital status, not counting your home equity or retirement funds, and special family circumstances. Parents should be in charge of financial aid, whereas you should search for scholarships.