THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

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ENTERING UNCHARTED TERRITORY

After a vacation spent in Hawaii, Barak Obama's mother allowed him to stay there with his grandparents for high school and returned to Indonesia, his previous home, without him. She explained her decision: **"***Somehow, wandering through uncharted territory, we might stumble upon something that will, in an instant, seem to represent who we are at the core."* Life is a continuing search for that "something" which might seem to represent who we are at the core. For graduating high school seniors, this search is particularly intensified because it is so new and so fraught with questions. For seniors, there is only one way to find out. Every college application or post-high school plan is a thrust out into unknown territory. The results of these efforts will further define the search. For college-bound students, use the month of March to prepare yourself mentally and emotionally to focus your positive energies on making the most of your opportunities. For some, disappointment and regret may go with the territory. Cry and shout and commiserate for a day, then choose what seems to represent who you may be at the core. Closely read letters from your accepting schools (69.5% of freshmen attend their first choice school) and checkout websites for visitation days in April. If at all possible, try to attend a school you have visited. The purpose of this March 2013 issue is to help you stay grounded in the process, until the excitement of April when college responses and senior year-end plans provide renewed momentum toward the finishing/starting line of high school graduation.

Financial Aid Caught in Congressional Crossfire

("Wall Street Journal", 2/19/13)

The fiscal-cliff compromise reached by Congress postponed $350 million in federal financial aid cuts until March 1. With many schools sending out award letters in coming weeks, experts say that will leave many parents and college-bound students uncertain about the size of their financial-aid packages—and whether the promised aid will materialize in the fall. Financial advisers have traditionally recommended that parents compare packages from different schools to determine which one had the lowest out-of-pocket costs. But experts say that makes little sense in this environment, since some colleges are assuming the spending cuts will happen, while others aren't. If cuts are implemented, some students may find their aid is scaled back after they've picked a school. Experts say colleges with larger endowments or bigger tuition revenues are more likely to use those funds to make up for federal cuts. But most colleges and universities depend on the federal government for financial aid. Such cuts would definitely affect work study and need-based grant programs. Congress may also make cuts in the Pell grant, the most popular federal college grant, says Mark Kantrowitz, publisher of FinAid.org. The Pell grant reached about nine million students in 2011-12, according to FinAid.org. For now, parents should review financial-aid letters and look for contingency statements or discrepancies in awards (for example, if one school claims the student will receive a federal grant but another school doesn't). If discrepancies appear, parents should contact the financial-aid offices to find out what assumptions they are making about aid, and what to expect if those assumptions don't pan out.

Quote of the Month

"We can all agree that college applicants and their families need to make informed college choices. Yet I am among many economists who would suggest that taking a short view of what college graduates earn early on in the job market is troubling for several reasons:
The First Job May Not Predict Lifetime Earnings; Professions Are Changing, Evolving and Disappearing; Some Students Go Straight to Graduate School, Not Work; Earnings Are Not Everything." (*Catharine Hill, President of Vassar College, Full article: NY Times, 2/20/13)*

FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTER WORKSHEET

	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	SCHOOL 4
Name of school	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Cost of Attendance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Grants & Scholarships				
Pell Grant	_____	_____	_____	_____
SEOG	_____	_____	_____	_____
State Grant	_____	_____	_____	_____
College-based Grant	_____	_____	_____	_____
Merit	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal 1: Grant & Scholarship Aid	_____	_____	_____	_____
Work Opportunities				
Federal Work-Study	_____	_____	_____	_____
College Work-Study	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal 2: Work Opportunities	_____	_____	_____	_____
Loans				
Stafford Loan	_____	_____	_____	_____
Perkins Loan	_____	_____	_____	_____
Institutional Loan	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____
Subtotal 3: Loans	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Financial Aid (Subtotals 1, 2 & 3)	_____	_____	_____	_____
School Comparison				
Total Cost of Attendance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Financial Aid	_____	_____	_____	_____
Total Contribution from Family Resources	_____	_____	_____	_____

SENIOR CHECKLIST FOR MARCH

_____ Ask your guidance counselor to alert you if any of the colleges you applied to plan to visit your school in the coming months. Early March to mid-May are travel months for many colleges.

_____ Spend your time doing what needs to be done. For example, don't forget to finalize your financial aid application by making any corrections or additions to the Student Aid Report (SAR). Many institutes have March dates for submitting your family tax returns and any other forms required to qualify for aid. If you need an extension, ask for it in writing.

_____ Read carefully your acceptance notices to see when your transcripts should be mailed. Failure to provide transcripts could result in your admission offer being withdrawn. It is a good idea to double check with the university to make sure your transcript arrives.

_____ Have a contingency plan – look into the offerings of the community college and/or vocation/technical centers.

_____ It's not too late to apply to schools with rolling or open admissions.

_____ If you have not received your SAR online following your online submission of the FAFSA or have not received it four weeks after you mailed it, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800 433-3243 (1-800-4-FED-AID)

_____ Contact each admissions and financial aid office to make certain that your application is complete. Find out what else you need to do to establish and maintain your eligibility for financial aid.

_____ Universities of California send acceptance letters from March 1st to March 30th. UCLA and Berkeley send theirs March 30th.

_____ If you are applying to more than one college, carefully rank your preferences by location, academic program, and other important characteristics. Does their final ranking match your gut feelings?

INCREASE IN FRESHMAN STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

Some students preparing for their freshman year might need to add one more item to their suitcase—a passport. The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that an increasing number of colleges and universities are creating study abroad programs for freshmen that generally last from two weeks to a semester. Such programs are geared toward top incoming students—to introduce them to global cultures earlier and to recruit top students who might choose to attend the school because it offers such a program. Colleges are also creating such programs in order to have the capacity to increase the enrollment of their freshman classes without putting a strain on home-campus facilities. Some schools, such as Michigan State offer two-week summer programs before the start of the freshman year. For the right student, early study abroad might be the perfect way to help expand their horizons, develop strong study skills, and gain maturity during the early phases of college life in the United States. Check with your schools regarding such opportunities.

COLLEGE NEWS

+++According to a new report from the Center for Responsive Politics many members of Congress have firsthand knowledge of crippling student debt. It found that — taken as a whole — Congress owes somewhere between $1.8 million and $4.3 million in student loans. All told, 46 members of Congress — including 22 Democrats and 24 Republicans — listed student loan debt in 2011.

+++The latest salary survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers shows that average salaries for liberal arts majors are on the rise. For liberal arts majors who finished their degrees in 2012, the highest starting salary, $43,100, comes in the broad-ranging category of liberal arts and sciences/general studies. That salary is up 3.9% over 2011. The next-highest starting salary, $41,900, is for history grads.

+++Needy U.S. borrowers are defaulting on almost $1 billion in federal student loans earmarked for the poor, leaving schools such as **Yale University** and the **University of Pennsylvania** with little choice except to sue their graduates. The record defaults on federal Perkins loans may jeopardize the prospects of current students since they are part of a revolving fund that colleges give to students who show extraordinary financial hardship.

+++U.S. News & World Report has announced that it will not change the ranking of **Bucknell University** (PA) even though the institution submitted false data on SAT and ACT averages for several years. When the actual numbers are used, U.S. News says, the changes are so small that they would not change the university's ranking.

+++According to a new study from FICO which analyzed 10 million credit files in search of trends in student lending, 12.4% of student loans that were issued before the financial crisis (between 2005 and 2007) are 90 days past due while 15.1% of loans issued between 2010 and 2012 are at least 90 days late in payment–an increase in the delinquency rate of nearly 22%.

COLLEGE NEWS

+++As of January 2013, there were 30,000 applicants to law schools for the fall, a 20% decrease from the same time last year and a 38% decline from 2010, according to the Law School Admission Council. Of some 200 law schools nationwide, only 4 have seen increases in applications this year. In 2004 there were 100,000 applicants to law schools; this year there are likely to be 54,000. Such startling numbers have plunged law school administrations into soul-searching debate about the future of legal education and the profession over all.

+++The Obama administration has proposed that student health plans self-funded by colleges (rather than operated by insurance companies) qualify as "minimum essential coverage" under the federal health care law's requirement that individual Americans must participate in a qualified health plan.

+++The value of college endowments fell back to earth in 2012, just a year after soaring an average of 19.2%, according to the NACUBO-Commonfund Study of Endowments. The study, which looks at data from more than 800 education institutions in North America, found that endowments for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2012, were essentially flat, returning an average of minus-0.3%.

+++Certain colleges that have increased spending on high-end student amenities, like health clubs and smoothie bars, are finding that it appears to be economically harmful for them to put more money toward higher-quality instruction and better overall education for students. This is one of the findings in a new National Bureau of Economic Research paper entitled *"College As Country Club: Do Colleges Cater to Students' Preferences for Consumption?"* The findings indicate that if some colleges are worried about losing students, they shouldn't bother increasing academic spending. The money would be better spent on another climbing wall or smoothie bar instead.

+++ America's colleges and universities took in $31-billion in donations in the 2012 fiscal year, a 2.3% increase over 2011's total of $30.3-billion, according to a report released by the Council for Aid to Education.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

COMMON APP CHANGES FOR 2013-14

The Common Application, the standard form for college applications, has been updated for next fall. Common App officials have announced a series of changes for the 2013-14 application, including the removal of the "topic of your choice" essay prompt, and the removal of the short 150 word activities essay that was required for all applicants. Instead of the free-choice essay, the application will rotate every year between four or five topics. Here is a link to the 2013-14 planned essay prompts which you can expect to find on version 4 of the CommonApp when it appears online on August 1: **https://www.commonapp.org/CommonApp/Docs/DownloadForms/2013/EssayAnnouncementFinal.pdf**

The Common App's new format will include stricter enforcement of the new 650 word count limit. Students who had to apply separately for 10 different fee waivers last year, will now have the ability to apply for all of them at once, definitely simplifying the process. The Common App's most significant updates are an attempt to adapt to the website's heightened popularity. The Common App last year received and processed 2.8 million applications from 663,000 applicants and eight million school forms. The current system was not designed to handle the volume anticipated in coming years. 39 new members have been added to total 527 schools for 2013-14, including Purdue Univ. and Univ. of Colo. Boulder.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SUMMER PROGRAM

COSMOS is a four-week residential program for talented and motivated students who are completing grades 8-12. Students who love math and science have a chance to spend four weeks at **UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC Santa Cruz or UC San Diego** this summer, learning about astronomy, biomedical sciences, computer games, engineering, robotics and more. Students will work side-by-side with outstanding UC researchers and faculty, exploring advanced topics that extend beyond the typical high school curriculum. COSMOS courses are hands-on and lab-intensive, emphasizing current research underway at the University of California campuses. Out-of-state residents must pay $6000 to attend.

UNIVERSITIES EXPERIMENTING WITH OFFERING MOOC COURSES FOR CREDIT (MOOC = Massive Open Online Course)

The **California State University** system, looking for creative ways to reduce education costs at a time of budget stress, is turning to MOOCs to offer low-cost options for students. **San Jose State University** has announced an unusual pilot project with Udacity, a for-profit provider of MOOCs, to jointly create three introductory mathematics classes. The courses will be free online, but students who want credit from San Jose State will be able to take them for just $150, far less than the $450 to $750 that students would typically pay for a credit-bearing course. The **University of California** system may eventually decide to work with

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COUNSELOR'S CORNER

MOOC providers as well: Leaders of *Udacity* and *Coursera*, another for-profit MOOC company was scheduled to appear before the university's Board of Regents in January. The **California State University** project began when California Governor, Jerry Brown, e-mailed Sebastian Thrun, the founder of *Udacity*, to say "We need your help." Courses in the pilot project are aimed at high-school students and students enrolled at community colleges in the state. Professors at San Jose State will each be paid $15,000 to develop the pilot courses and retain the intellectual-property rights to the course materials. **San Jose State** is also working on another MOOC pilot with a nonprofit provider, *edX*, which is led by the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** and **Harvard University.**

CALIFORNIA SPRING COLLEGE FAIRS for Juniors (April 20-May 2)

San Francisco; Ventura/Tri-County; Greater Los Angeles; Orange County; San Diego; Inland Empire; Details at: **http://www.nacacnet.org/college-fairs/SpringNCF/Pages/default.aspx**

How to React to Colleges That Admit to Misreporting of Test Scores

("The Admission Game", 01/29/2013)

It has happened again. Another high profile university has admitted to irregularities in its reporting of the data used to describe its entering class. In the case of **Bucknell University** (PA), SAT information for entering students was apparently "misreported" from 2006-2012 resulting in inflated scores—scores that appeared in promotional materials, trustee reports and, yes, college rankings. As the popular consumer response to rankings has grown, the perceived grip of such rankings on participating institutions has grown with it. The increasing pressure many colleges have felt to maintain or improve upon their positions in the mythical pecking order has resulted in strategic and, at times, creative institutional approaches to "managing" their metrics. What to do about such questionable practices? **The solution:** Be diligent in conducting your own research about the colleges that interest you. Ignore the noise. Look beyond the rankings. What are your objectives? In what type of environment will you function best? How will you define a good college fit? Be cautious about allowing the presumed ethics of the reporting process to jaundice your view of any institution. The key is to find the truth of the opportunity for you that lies within each school. Many of these places, whether they have misreported data to a ranking guide or not, are fundamentally good academic institutions that deserve your well-researched consideration.

Professional Judgment Reviews: Asking for More

("Wall Street Journal")

More families are taking action to make sure their financial-aid packages reflect their current financial situation by requesting professional judgment reviews. This process allows families with special circumstances to have their expected contributions (EFC) recalculated based on what they're making currently — as opposed to the prior year's household income, which is typically what aid and awards are based on. Schools can now choose to re-evaluate students' financial-aid packages, typically qualifying them for more aid including federal grants, loans and need-based scholarships. The Department of Education has encouraged schools to make adjustments for people who need them. A September 2011 survey by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators found that nearly two-thirds of institutions saw judgment requests rise by 10% or more. Families who have experienced recent layoffs or salary cuts are good candidates for an adjustment because that qualifies as an individual circumstance. Also, families who took hardship withdrawals from their retirement accounts to cover medical bills might qualify because the withdrawal would normally count as income on their tax returns. But families who lost money in their 529 college-savings plans probably won't qualify because an entire class of students was affected. Every school has different requirements. Requests for reviews can be made over the phone and in person, but are best done in writing an email. All requests require documentation of the special circumstance, such as a pink slip or copies of medical bills. Many colleges and universities are helping struggling families cover college costs by increasing need-based financial aid. Two things to keep in mind when appealing for aid:

1) Consumer debt, although real, cannot be taken into consideration. So, if you have a high mortgage payment, no home equity, no equity line of credit, or credit card debt, it won't help your case.

2) In all of your dealings with the financial aid office, be nice. Don't let the aid administrator remember you for lashing out at them when the chips don't fall in your favor. By being nice, you increase the administrator's motivation to help you.

SCHOLARSHIPS & CONTEST OPPORTUNITIES

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION Open to all undergraduates, but 2013-14 college freshmen are urged to also apply.
Forty *non-need* $1,000 - $5,000 scholarships are offered for students who are committed to pursuing careers in the document management and graphic & media communications marketplace. These careers may include: computer science/engineering, web design, webmaster, software development, materials engineer, applications specialist, IT designer, systems analyst, business sales and marketing, project or product development. **Application deadline: May 1, 2013**. All details at: **http://www.edsf.org/**

FEEDING TOMORROW SCHOLARSHIPS
Sponsored by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), multiple $1,000 Scholarships offered to graduating high school seniors who demonstrate exceptional scholastic achievements, leadership experience and a keen interest in Food Science or Human Nutrition. Students must be planning to attend one of the approved universities listed on the website: **http://www.ift.org/community/students.aspx.** Click on "Scholarships" on the left, scroll down to "Freshman Scholarships." Students will also be eligible for the George R. Foster Memorial Scholarship in the amount of $1,000. Submit application to the Head of the Department of the IFT approved university you are applying to by **May 13, 2013**.

SCHOLARSHIP.COM "You Like Me" FACEBOOK SCHOLARSHIP $1,000 for one first-prize winner; "Scholarships.com" hats and t-shirts for second- and third-prize winners. Post on the wall: "How Scholarships.com is helping you" with your scholarship search. Then you are automatically entered to win the $1,000 scholarship. Winner will be determined by which comments best exemplify what the site is all about and which applicant is using their resources most effectively. **http://www.facebook.com/scholarships.com.info**
Deadline to comment is March 31, 2013.

BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP These $2500 scholarships are made available to American Indian high school seniors every year, who reside in AZ, CA, CO, MN, MT, NM, ND, OK, OR, SD, or WA. Must be majoring in business, engineering, math, medicine/health administration, natural/physical sciences, technology or education. **Must be a member of an American Indian tribe** or otherwise considered to be an American Indian by the tribe with which affiliation is claimed or is at least ¼ American Indian blood, have a 2.0 or higher cumulative GPA. Also must be a current member of AISES. **http://www.aises.org/ -** click on "Programs" under "What We Do", then "Scholarships".
Postmarked deadline: April 12, 2013
Also check-out the other 3 scholarships listed on that page. *Deadlines vary.*

2013 NAVY LEAGUE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM Awards six renewable $2500 4-year scholarships worth $10,000 each. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic record (minimum 3.0 GPA), leadership achievement, character, all-around ability, and financial need. Must be a dependent or direct descendent of Sea Service personnel. **Deadline for submission is April 1, 2013**. For Application and instructions: **http://www.navyleague.org/** Scroll to "NLFS Scholarship" under "Giving".

DARING YOUNG ARTISTS TO DREAM SCHOLARSHIPS Scholarships are awarded in the amount of $500-$5000. Scholarships allow economically disadvantaged **y**oung people to realize their artistic dreams. Though not a requirement, minority status is a factor considered in jury decisions. Must be pursuing a degree in one of the design/arts disciplines listed on the website. Requires online uploaded digital images of at least 10 examples of work and a mailed hard copy of the pdf application. **Deadline: Received by March 29, 2013**. All details at: **http://scholarships.worldstudioinc.com/**

WIRE REINFORCEMENT INSTITUTE SCHOLARSHIP Non-renewable $1500-$3,000 scholarships open to high school seniors planning to pursue a four-year degree in civil or structural engineering**.** Requires online submissions of academic transcript, two letters of recommendation, two short essays, and a completed application available at: **http://www.wirereinforcementinstitute .org.** All required supporting documents must be emailed. **Application Deadline: April 15, 2013.**

AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION A variety of scholarships ranging from $500 to $2000 available for **students of Greek ancestry** who are members or children of members of AHEPA, Daughter of Penelope, Sons of Pericles or Maids of Athena. The Application Package must be mailed by Certified Mail with Return Receipt Requested and **Postmarked DEADLINE: March 31, 2013** All information and application available on website: http://www.ahepa.org/athletics/ **Click on "Education & Scholarships" under "Programs".**

HEALTH OCCUPATION STUDENTS OF AMERICA (HOSA) SCHOLARSHIPS Scholarships are available for graduating seniors who are enrolled in health occupation/health science programs affiliated with HOSA. Applicants must submit a one page statement "describing three (3) exemplary qualities gained through your HOSA experiences, and how you plan to use them in your future college, community and career." The amount and number of scholarships will vary from year to year. **Application must be received by April 1, 2013.** Application at: **http://www.hosa.org/** Click on "Scholarships" under "News".

SCHOLARSHIPS & CONTEST OPPORTUNITIES

23nd ANNUAL VOICE FOR ANIMALS ESSAY CONTEST Prizes between $200 - $750 will be awarded to high school students whose projects best promote the humane treatment of animals, stressing active involvement in activities which strive to mitigate animal suffering. Entry online form, all Official Rules and Advice for Participants at: **http://www.hennet.org/contest.php**. ***Y****our Blog/ Facebook page must span a period of three months with at least three submissions a week.* **Entry deadline: May 31, 2013.**

THE EVALEE C. SCHWARZ CHARITABLE TRUST LOANS High school seniors! Interest-free Loan Awards of $15,000 are available to undergraduate students who demonstrate exceptional academic performance and financial need. You must have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $4,000 or less and attend school *in the state in which you reside.* **Y**ou must also have an outstanding combination of standardized test scores (ranking in the top 10% of scores nationally) and grades. **http://www.evaleeschwarztrust.org Application Deadline: April 9, 2013**

AYN RAND ESSAY COMPETITION Sixteen awards ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 are based on individual merit and ability. There are also 45 prizes of $100 & 175 of $50. 11th or 12th grade students submit an essay of no fewer than 800 and no more than 1,600 words on one of three topics concerning the theme and characters of the Ayn Rand novel: The Fountainhead. Essay topics and complete contest rules are available on website. Essay can be submitted online at: **http://www.aynrand.org/contests/tf.html APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 26, 2013**

OFA/CASEY SCHOLARSHIP Provides scholarships of up to $10,000 to eligible students who must have been in **foster care or a ward of the court** for at least one year (12 months) at the time of their 18th birthday. There are two parts to the OFA/Casey Family Scholars scholarship application. **Part I (online portion): deadline midnight March 31, 2013**. **Part II (printed portion): must be postmarked by Friday April 15, 2013.** Documentation for Part II will need to include the Financial Aid Award Letter from the college or university which the student will be attending in 2013-2014. Must register for application. **https://www.orphan.org/sch/**

FiSCA NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM Available only to deserving college-bound high school seniors from families in areas served by FiSCA members (all western states included.) Awards cash grants of at least $2,000 to at least two students selected from each of five geographic regions across the nation. Criteria is based on academic achievement, financial need, leadership skills in school and the community, and a 200 word essay on "Profile a person or event that has influenced you, and explain how this has made an impact on your life." Finalists will be contacted for interviews. Application on website: **http://www.fisca.org -** click on "Community Outreach." **Application deadline: Postmarked by April 15, 2013**

EXCITING NEW FIELD OF STUDY: Biological Physics

(Dr. Jane' Kondev, Brandeis University (MA)

Biological physics is an interdisciplinary field of science that merges physics and biology. It looks at life using concepts that are familiar to physics, such as motion, force, temperature, electricity, light. For example, when we think about the bacterium E.coli searching for food by swimming through water we would like to know how does it generate the forces necessary for its motion by twirling its flagella? How does the microscopic motor that powers these flagella work? How does the bacterium sense whether it is moving toward the food source or away from it? What is particularly exciting about biological physics is getting to see how mathematics and physics can be applied to living things. In ground-breaking research, some students at **Brandeis** study single molecules, their motion, and how they combine with other molecules to create nature's nanotechnology, in other words, machines that make cells work. Others study individual cells and how they make decisions about where to go, what to eat, and what to become. Or they study ion channels in cell membranes and how their activity leads to a functioning nervous system. There are also a number of students who are interested in the program who are planning on going to medical school after college, but most want to pursue a career in science research, and they go on to graduate school in biophysics, bioengineering, systems biology, or they plan to work in a biotech company. Students who are trained in biological physics are well prepared to join in on the evolving scientific revolution which also includes emerging patent law and the financial sector regarding investment in biotech companies. For more: **http://www.biophysics.org/**

Five Colleges Misreported Data to U.S. News, Raising Concerns About Rankings, Reputation

("Washington Post", Nick Anderson, 2/6/13)

Tulane University officials were preparing to send statistics to U.S. News & World Report for its annual graduate school rankings when they noticed something peculiar in early December: sharp drops in admissions test scores and applications to their business school. Their curiosity became alarm and then embarrassment, as the New Orleans university discovered and disclosed that the business school's admissions figures from previous years had been falsified. Soon afterward, **Bucknell University** (PA) announced that for several years it had reported inflated SAT scores for incoming students. The university says a flaw in its methods resulted in overstating the high school academic credentials of students, a key variable used in national rankings. These and similar revelations in the past year have come from **Claremont McKenna College**(CA), **Emory University** (GA) and **George Washington University** (DC), which was stripped of its ranking, which had been 51st among national universities. In each case, the highly regarded schools acknowledged that they had submitted incorrect test scores or overstated the high school rankings of their incoming freshmen. Much of the information colleges present about themselves to U.S. News, other analysts and the federal government is not independently verified. That makes it impossible to know how many might have misreported data over the years as they angle for prestige to stand out in a crowded market. In some of the recent cases, college officials said an employee intentionally submitted inaccurate data. In others, it was unclear whether the mistake was intentional. GWU attributed its errors to a flaw in data-reporting systems that dated back a decade. A survey of 576 college admissions officers conducted by Gallup in summer 2012 for the online news outlet Inside Higher Ed found that 91% think other colleges had falsely reported standardized test scores and other admissions data. A few said their own college had done so. The rankings are based on complex formulas that U.S. News invented and that it tweaks from time to time. Critics contend the rankings are highly subjective and give students a misleading sense that the college experience can be boiled down to numbers. Some colleges refuse to participate in U.S. News surveys — and receive rankings anyway. Some have declined because they say the rankings are counterproductive. Raymond A. Brown, dean of admission at the private **Texas Christian University** (TX) said there is a simple way for schools to ensure data accuracy: Hire an auditor. Brown said he has done that with TCU admission statistics for the past decade, a practice apparently unusual for colleges. "Kids and families need to be able to rely on the information we're putting out. It is truly that simple. If the information we're producing is garbage, that's not helping anybody."

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER
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