



THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

FOR HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

A Publication of Future Focus Educational Services

January 2011

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 5

THE FINAL SEMESTER: TIME TO COAST?

An anonymous, wise man once wrote, "Going to college doesn't make you educated any more than standing in a garage makes you a car". 2011 graduating seniors may begin to feel that once they have completed the college application process, the task of preparing themselves for higher education can be put on the back burner. Among the best lessons offered by college freshmen returning home for holiday break are heartfelt stories about their sudden emersion in the deep end of the academic swimming pool. Many have related harrowing tales of near-drowning before grasping the life-saving concepts of time management and study organization. Use the final semester of high school to develop or sharpen the kinds of survival skills that will allow you to hit the ground running, once those feet touch the campus of your choice. Education does not happen by osmosis. As [ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com) advises: "Make your voyages of self-discovery (and academic mistakes) now while your teachers care about your personal growth." For excellent ideas on getting ready for the rigors of college academics, look at #1-5 on: http://www.ehow.com/how_2181132_college-as-high-school-student.html. Of course, there are still some nuts and bolts issues remaining in the college admissions process. For example, the now shorter and simpler online version of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is now available at: <http://www.fafsa.gov>. The earlier this financial aid application is submitted, the better the chances of receiving financial aid from both government and institutional sources. And check-out the Tracking Sheet on p. 3 and Senior Checklist on p. 4 for keeping application requirements and materials organized and updated.

2011 Legislative Update

***The recent congressional December compromise tax bill will extend for two years a series of expiring tax breaks, including tax credits for college tuition. The tuition tax credit is an extension of the American Opportunity Tax Credit which is worth up to \$2,500. There is also a student-loan interest deduction worth up to \$2,500. Individuals will also be able to continue contributing up to \$2,000 a year tax-free to Coverdell Education Savings Accounts.

***Because lawmakers underestimated a surge in students going to college, a gap in funding for the Pell Grant could impact students as early as the fall of 2011. Some needy students would still receive grants, just much less than they might expect. Some students toward the top of the income eligibility scale would not qualify for aid at all if available money shrinks. For a student who qualified to receive the maximum amount, the **maximum Pell grant** would decrease from \$5,550 to \$4,705, should congress not act to increase funding.

LISTING COLLEGES ON THE FAFSA

The FAFSA online application allows you to search and find the Title Code numbers needed for each college or university (maximum number ten) that you list on the FAFSA. **Helpful hint:** "List colleges that are to receive your data in alphabetical order. All your colleges will see the names of all schools on your FAFSA list. Sometimes colleges assume that the order of the schools is the order of preference. Listing alphabetically will remove this assumption.

HELPFUL FAFSA REMINDERS

1. Families can estimate 2010 figures when first submitting the online FAFSA during the first week of January. You will be able to change estimates to actuals on the online SAR (Student Aid Report), then resubmit it. You will need your 2010 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ Federal tax return form to clarify and document the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) and taxes paid.
2. Don't forget to report all the required sources of untaxed income. These include Social Security, child support and Aid to Dependent Children (ADC). Students planning to file as married, must be married on or before the date that the FAFSA is submitted.
3. If you're filing as a dependent, both you and your parents must sign. Be sure to get a PIN for both of you at www.pin.ed.gov.
4. Use your legal name as it appears on your Social Security card. Nicknames or aliases will cause a processing delay.

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COLLEGE NEWS

◆ For fall 2011 Stanford has admitted 754 restrictive early-action (REA) applicants to the Class of 2015 and deferred about 500 more. 5,929 students applied, a 12.7% acceptance rate. The intended freshman class for 2011 is 1725. 44% of those have already been accepted. Only 10% of REA applicants were deferred to the regular admissions pool. Two-thirds of those accepted students were either international (7%), students of color (50%) or first-generation college (10%).

◆ Anthony P. Monaco, a geneticist whose research on the genetic basis of neurological disorders led to major breakthroughs, has been appointed the new President of **Tufts University** (MA). Monaco has been a professor of human genetics at the University of WOrford since 1997. He attended **Princeton University** on a scholarship, becoming the first person in his family to attend college.

◆ The number of Chinese college students in this country jumped by 30% to 127,628 in 2009-10, pushing past India, according to the annual "Open Doors" report from the Institute of International Education. So sharp was the rise in Chinese enrollment that the U.S. saw a 3% overall gain in international students to 690,923 students, even though more than half of the top 25 sending countries saw declines.

◆ Although **early decision** is binding, no college will hold a student to a contract if a family determines that the financial aid package is inadequate. It's not that colleges are being deceptive in failing to disclose this practice, but they certainly don't want to encourage students' "bailing" from an early-decision commitment based on the "I can't afford it" excuse. It is easier to get into the top-choice colleges through early decision because colleges really want qualified students who want them. Likewise, it is typically easier to get the aid needed.

◆ American Sign Language is close to surpassing German as the third-most-studied foreign language at America's colleges and universities. Only 4,500 more students study German than study ASL, and enrollment in classes for the gesture-based language used by the deaf increased 16% since the last survey three years ago.

◆ How many colleges try to use college rankings, such as the U.S. News & World Report, to an institution's advantage? A new surveys released by the National Association for College Admission Counseling has found that of the 80% of colleges that believe their institutions appear "favorably" in the rankings, 71% promote their rankings results in marketing materials.

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HELPFUL FAFSA REMINDERS

5. If your parents are divorced or separated, the parent with whom you lived the most during the past 12 months is the parent responsible for filling out the FAFSA. This is not necessarily the parent who has legal custody or claimed you on their income tax form.

6. Prepaid tuition plans are not reported as assets on the FAFSA.

***If you're unclear about a question or are having trouble filling out the FAFSA, this year you will have immediate access of online chat connections with FAFSA officials. If that promised system fails, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at **1-800-4-FED AID (1-800-433-3243)**.

STILL LOOKING FOR SCHOOLS WITH TIME TO APPLY?

For graduating seniors with 3.0+ GPA and 1200/1800+ SAT scores, many private schools with later deadlines are more likely to offer attractive financial aid packages. Even seniors applying to the most competitive schools, need to include one or two of such opportunities whether or not financial aid will determine the final choice. Colleges with later deadlines should not be viewed as less strong schools. They are seeking to attract as many qualified applicants as possible, and many times the college name does not carry the same national "product recognition" as the more highly recognized and marketed schools.

The best way to find these schools is to use: <https://www.commonapp.org/SearchEngine/SimpleSearch.aspx>, the search engine of the Common Application website. Select country and one or more states and distance of less than xxx miles from your entered Zip Code, and write: 02/01/2011 in "Deadline on or after" window. Then click "Search." For: "California, more than 100 miles from 97504," eleven private schools are listed with links to requests for info and to school websites. Don't put all your eggs in one basket!

THE NEW UNDER-REPRESENTED MINORITY

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some colleges and universities are favoring men by admitting them at higher rates than women to try to preserve a male-female balance on campus. Many admissions offices routinely look at male applicants' test scores and grades with lower expectations than they have when viewing those of female applicants. A sampling of eastern private schools show: **William and Mary** (VA) admitted 43% of its male applicants and 29% of its female applicants in fall 2009; **Vassar College** (NY) admitted 34% men who applied and 21% women; **Swarthmore College** (PA) admitted 19% men and 14% women; **Wesleyan University** (CT) admitted 30% men and 25% women. Female applicants far outnumbered male candidates at all four schools. Private undergraduate colleges may legally discriminate by sex, a protection that allows single-sex institutions to endure. Public colleges may not.

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Students:

Make a copy of this tracking sheet and staple it to the front of a manilla folder. Use one for each of the colleges to which you apply.

TRACKING SHEET FOR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

NAME OF COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY _____

APPLICATION DUE DATE _____

IF MAILED, GET A CERTIFICATE OF MAILING _____

COPY MADE OF APPLICATION _____

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION #1 SENT / DATE _____

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION #2 SENT / DATE _____

COUNSELOR / SCHOOL REPORT / TRANSCRIPT SENT / DATE _____

FINANCIAL AID FORMS SENT/DATE _____

SAT SCORES SENT / DATE _____

SAT SUBJECT TEST SCORES / DATE _____

ACT SCORES SENT _____

MID-YEAR REPORT SENT _____

7 SEMESTER TRANSCRIPT SENT / DATE _____

IF SUBMITTING FAFSA ONLINE:

PRINT ONLINE CONFIRMATION PAGE AND STUDENT AID REPORT (SAR) _____

UPDATED INFORMATION NOTES:

_____ DATE _____

_____ DATE _____

_____ DATE _____

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SENIOR CHECKLIST FOR JANUARY. . .

- _____ Submit your completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the processor as soon after January 1 as possible.
- _____ Keep copies of all forms you submit.
- _____ Ask parents to get income tax forms prepared early. Schools may request them to prove eligibility for financial aid.
- _____ If you have already sent applications, check with school admission offices to see if your application is complete, and that they have received your letters of recommendation.
- _____ At the end of January make sure your first semester transcript (sometimes called the 7th semester transcript) is made available to the colleges to which you have applied.
- _____ If applying to private schools, find out whether they require the CSS PROFILE supplemental financial aid form. Fees are required for filing the CSS. Check with your counselor for the CSS Registration Guide Booklet which explains everything and has a list of schools which require the CSS. Website: www.collegeboard.com or call 1-800-778-6888.
- _____ If still sending applications, don't leave anything blank unless the application tells you to. Make sure all information is accurate and legible (paper app. only). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the university's admissions office. Did you wait until the last minute? Submit your application online.
- _____ Some schools require six-semester transcripts to be sent with applications submitted before February. Make sure these are sealed. It usually takes 4-7 days, so if you haven't done it, order them immediately. Your school may charge a fee for sending transcripts, usually \$2-\$5 per transcript. Some colleges only require self-reported grades in the initial application, with a follow-up official seven-semester transcript sent after the first semester of senior year to verify grades.
- _____ This is the month for paying attention to details, keep an eye on application and scholarship deadlines, and make sure you have the right amount of postage. Get a Certificate of Mailing from the post office as proof of mailing.

COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT

CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

(Joey Pulone, "Chronicle OF Higher Education", 12/5/10)

California Lutheran University, with about 2,300 undergraduates, depends on students for 90% of its revenue and had a discount rate as high as 54% (42% national average) during the past decade. But for the incoming class in 2009, the rate was about 45%, and it dropped to just over 40% this fall. Changes in the university's financial-aid process helped lower the discount rate while improving California Lutheran's academic profile. So did the plight of the state's public universities, better outreach to prospective students, and appealing new buildings, says Dane R. Rowley, associate director of admission. After offering initial awards, the university invites the top admitted students to the campus to interview with the faculty for further merit awards. If they are willing to come, that helps demonstrate their interest. Admissions officials also use aid to compete with public universities, offering students who are admitted to any of the top five University of California campuses the opportunity to attend California Lutheran for the price of a public college. The size of this fall's freshman class shot up 13% from the year before, and the 2010 class average GPA went from 3.53 in 2008 to 3.62 in 2010. California Lutheran's comprehensive plan addresses students, once they are admitted. The admissions office then begins an onslaught of personal contact in which parents of current students call parents of prospective students, and professors write letters to students who are interested in their department. "We're getting more of the top students by doing this," says Mr. Rowley. A new fitness center and residence hall have also helped make the campus more attractive. <http://www.callutheran.edu/> (January 15 - Regular Decision Round I application deadline; Admission application deadline for Presidential Scholarship; Early Action Notification.)

Look at the Net Cost, Not the Sticker Price

(by Jane Bennett Clark, "Kiplinger", 12/10/1)

The average cost of a year at a four-year private school has lately run about \$36,000, compared with \$21,000 a decade ago. Over the same 10-year period, family incomes have mostly stagnated. But this is no reason to give up on considering expensive private colleges. The net price of a private college, the cost after financial aid, puts the total out-of-pocket cost, on average, closer to \$22,000. Colleges currently offering a net price below \$20,000 include some of the best institutions in the world, making them a downright bargain — and putting them at the top of Kiplinger's 2010-11 rankings for best values in private colleges and universities. **Princeton**, Kiplinger's No. 1-ranked university, reduces its \$49,780 price to \$16,352, on average, for students with need. Among liberal-arts schools, which focus on undergraduates, **Swarthmore** provides a first-class education for \$18,791, nearly two-thirds off its \$52,650 sticker price. Several Ivy League schools, including **Yale** and **Harvard**, define need very liberally. A few wealthy, highly selective institutions, including **Davidson College**, in Davidson, N.C., offer merit scholarships to 20 percent or more of their students. Princeton not only meets the full need of qualified students but also puts families with six-figure-plus incomes in its financial-aid pool. In this year's entering class, families with incomes of \$160,000 to \$180,000 qualified for an average grant (not loan) of \$26,450. The recession has affected endowments and forced such schools as **Williams College** (MA) and **Dartmouth University** (NH) to reinstate loans in some financial-aid packages. So far, Princeton and the others have managed to keep their loan-free pledge. <http://www.kiplinger.com/magazine/archives/best-values-in-private-colleges-2010-2011.html?si=1>

Appealing Early (ED) College Admission Decisions

(National Association of College Admission Counselors Listserve)

Direct advice from College Admissions Counselors:

"You can certainly call on behalf of the student to find out the reason for the decision (be prepared to get a standard answer). Usually there is a process for students to submit an appeal which varies from school to school."

"I would suggest not using the word 'appeal' but instead calling the admission office to ask if you can get some insight into the decision. When I worked in admission (19 years) we would be happy to talk to folks about this, especially with ED situations."

"Submit an appeal only if there is compelling NEW information about the student. For example, a parent/student who did not disclose a significant dyslexic diagnosis for a 3.5 GPA student."

"The actual appeal has to come from the student, not the parent."

"What I like to see is specific information about why the student's record is not a indicator of success in college. It should address any specific problems, like a downturn in grades, and why that happened. Any documentation that can be included is a plus."

"The short answer is no, they do not entertain appeals, especially for students who have been denied. To do so would make the process eternal, since everyone would try it."

"If deferred to the 'spring pool', a useful question might be what the student can do at this point to become a better candidate for admission to the institution in question."

COLLEGE NEWS

◆ For the last decade the number of minorities enrolled in Minnesota's 17 four-year, liberal arts schools has increased by 112%. This year, 17% of incoming freshmen statewide are minorities, as are nearly 23% of transfers.

◆ This winter, thousands of college students nationwide will cut their sleigh riding and hot chocolate sipping short to travel around the country and the world on service trips. About 72,000 students went on "alternative" break trips in 2009, most of them spring break. Others took winter, spring, summer and weekend alternative breaks, according to Samantha Giacobozzi, of Break Away, an alternative-break resource that represents more than 140 participating colleges.

CAREER WEBSITES

<http://www.casro.org/careers/>

Students interested in numbers and interacting with people might enjoy a career in Survey Research. Survey professionals help their employers gather information on customer preferences via interviews, web polls, and focus groups. Backgrounds in marketing, psychology, sociology, economics or English are great preparation. Survey researchers work across the globe as international companies look to tap emerging markets. Employment of market and survey researchers is expected to increase 18 to 26 percent for all occupations through 2014. See website for more details.

<http://www.natcom.org>

Communication skills consistently top the list of desirable personal qualities companies seek from new college graduates. Students majoring in communication can concentrate in a variety of areas, such as: speech communication, media studies, advertising, business marketing, public relations, organizational communication, journalism, broadcast journalism and digital communications. This National Communication Association website includes an excel spreadsheet database of 351 Communication Programs at public and private school in the U.S. It also includes the department names of each school's communication program. Click on "Communication Database" at the bottom of the drop-down list under "Comm Programs" listed across the top.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS & CONTESTS

2011 NAVY LEAGUE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM The Navy League Foundation will be awarding four 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 March 1, 2011.** For Application and instructions: <http://www.navyleague.org/scholarship/#qualifications>

BEST BUY@15 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM The announcement of the 2011 Scholarship Program will be available in Jan. 2011. 1000 graduating high school seniors will be selected to receive scholarships for \$1,000. Scholarship recipients will be chosen based on community service and academic achievement. **Probable Application deadline: February 15, 2011.** Scholarship applications are available only to “@15 members” - you can become a member for free on website: https://www.at15.com/contests_scholarships/at15_scholarship.

HOSPITALITY MAJORS/MARRIOTT SCHOLARS PROGRAM Offers financial support of up to \$9,000 per year for four years for Hispanic students pursuing a diverse range of career opportunities in hospitality management, hotel management, food & beverage and culinary. **Application Deadline: March 1, 2011** <http://scholarships.hispanicfund.org/applications/> Click on: “Hospitality Majors Application/ Marriott Scholars Program”

TRIBUTE TO THE RESCUERS ESSAY CONTEST (9-10/11-12) Separate categories are open to grades 9-10 and 11-12 to win awards of \$750, \$500, \$250, with top 10% of winners receiving a personalized letter of achievement sent to their principal and teacher. In 750-1000 words, students are asked to write about an individual or group that shows moral courage. **Postmark deadline: FEBRUARY 25, 2011.** http://www.adl.org/tribute_to_rescuers/overview.asp

PHI DELTA KAPPA SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS
If you are a senior who is planning on **pursuing a career in education**, apply for this scholarship. Scholarship amounts: Approximately 50 scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$1,000. They are given yearly by local PDK chapters to high school seniors graduating in the top third of their class with at least a 3.0 GPA. Submit transcript, activities sheet, recommendations, essay relating to career goals to your local PDK chapter (contacts on website) which also distributes applications. **Application Deadline: March 1, 2011** <http://www.pdkintl.org/awards/prospective.htm>

BONNER SCHOLARS PROGRAM The Bonner Foundation provides four-year **community service scholarships of \$5,000** to approximately 1500 students who have **high financial need** and a commitment to service. You can apply for a Bonner Scholarship at any one of 27 colleges and universities listed in the Bonner Scholars Program at website: <http://www.bonner.org/campus/bsp/home.htm>. Then contact the admissions office(s) to ask for an application to the Bonner Scholars Program. The application process and deadlines for each school vary from campus to campus. **University of Richmond (VA), Stetson University (FL), Davidson College (NC) and Oberlin College (OH)** are among the Bonner Scholar colleges and universities. **(or call: 609-924-6663)**

AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL HS ORATORICAL CONTEST 53 awards offered annually. Amounts vary from \$1,500 to \$18,000, non-renewable. Must compose a prepared oration on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to the government, then ascend through the district and state levels to reach the national competition. Details at: <http://www.legion.org/scholarships/oratorical>. If interest, **immediately request information online** at: <http://www.legion.org/oratorical/request>. Local Department contest winners must be certified to the American Legion National Headquarters no later than **March 8, 2011.**

NATIONAL ITALIAN AMERICAN FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS Scholarships are awarded in two categories: 1) Italian American students who demonstrate outstanding potential and high academic achievements; 2) Students from any ethnic background majoring or minoring in Italian language, Italian studies, Italian American studies or a related field, who demonstrate outstanding potential and high academic achievements. Non-renewable Scholarship awards range from \$2,000-\$12,000. Application **Deadline: March 4, 2011.** Applications for NIAF scholarships can only be submitted on-line. <https://www.niaf.org/scholarships/about.asp>

AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIPS 80 to 100 renewable scholarships of up to \$5,000 for African-American, American Indian, and Hispanic high school seniors intending to major in chemistry, biochemistry, chemical engineering, or chemical technology; attend an accredited college or university on a full-time basis. Must have demonstrated high achievement in chemistry or science; show evidence of financial need for scholarship aid according to FAFSA guidelines. **APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 1, 2011** 1-800-227-5558 (ext. 6250) Can apply online at: <http://www.acs.org>. Click on “Education”, then “Student Programs”, then “more” under High School, then scroll down to “ACS Scholars Program”

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS & CONTESTS

A VOICE FOR ANIMALS HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST Eleven awards offered annually. Award amounts: 1st prize: \$1,000; 2nd prize: \$600; 3rd prize: \$400; Eight other awards from \$250-\$750 are also given. The contest usually **opens** for entries in **January** and **closes in March**. Your essay must be submitted online using a form which appears on the website only while the contest is open. Check website in January for all details (click on "Contest" at top): <http://www.hennet.org/>

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE EDUCATION & ASSISTANCE FUND More than 400 regional merit awards range from \$250 to \$2,500, plus 6 national awards of \$5,000 each. Open to seniors who are dependents of current civilian federal and postal employees with at least three years federal service by August 31, 2011. Applications are available January - March, with details on 500 word essay and other requirements at: <http://www.feea.org/> Click on "Scholarships." on the left. **Probable Postmarked Deadline: March 25, 2011.**

KFC COLONEL'S SCHOLARS KFC Colonel's Scholars enables high school seniors with entrepreneurial drive, strong perseverance and demonstrated financial need, to pursue up to four years of study at an accredited public institution in the state they reside. Students who meet the criteria may apply online to become a KFC's Colonel's Scholar. Students selected for this scholarship are eligible to receive up to \$20,000 to complete a bachelor's degree program. **Online Application Deadline: February 9, 2011.** All details at: <http://www.kfcscholars.org/>.

HISPANIC METROPOLITAN CHAMBER SCHOLARSHIPS Available to any person of Hispanic ancestry in Oregon or Clark County Washington interested in continuing their education in a community college, four-year college or university, must have at least a 3.0 GPA as evidenced by a certified high school or college transcript. **Postmark Application Deadline: January 29, 2011** Application available at: <http://www.hmccoregon.com/scholarships/apply/>

OPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST High school students who are in the 10th, 11th or 12th grades write short essays on the yearly topic.

2011 Essay Topic: "How My Education is the Key to a Successful Future" Contact your local Optimist Club in early January. Club winners advance to the District contest to compete for a \$2500 college scholarship. Each District winner is automatically entered into the International Essay contest where a panel of judges select the top three essays. Scholarships awarded are: first place-\$6,000; second place-\$3,750; and third place-\$2,250. **All Club-level contests are held by early February** because **Local Club Deadline is Feb. 28, 2011** for submitting winning essay to the District level. <http://www.optimist.org/e/member/scholarships3.cfm>. To locate a contact near you, e-mail the Programs Department at: programs@optimist.org.

Beware!

(from "College Impressions Newsletter", Kingston, MA)

Six signs that a scholarship opportunity may not live up to it's promise:

1. "The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."
2. "You can't get this information anywhere else."
3. "May I have your credit card or bank account numbers to hold this scholarship?"
4. "We'll do all the work."
5. "The scholarship will cost you money." "There is a small handling fee which must accompany the application."
6. "You've been selected by a 'national foundation' to receive a scholarship", or "You're a finalist" in a contest you never entered.

CAREER WEBSITES

<http://www.berklee.edu/careers/default.html>

This Berklee College Music website contains information on more than 50 careers in 13 music fields such as Film Scoring, Music Education, Songwriting, Business/Management, Tours/Roadwork, Performance, and Production & Engineering. There is an extensive section on the music therapy major and career. Also includes other Music Career Resources and links to Music-Related Associations.

<http://www.healthmanagementcareers.org>

Healthcare is one of today's most dynamic and growing fields, with a wide range of opportunities and challenges. This Internet resource will assist you in exploring a career in the healthcare management field and provide you with information so that you can make a more informed career decision. Includes video segments of successful healthcare executives, teachers and students discussing careers as leaders of hospitals and other healthcare organizations.

Tufts University (MA) Takes a Comprehensive Approach to Freshman Applications

(“Washington Post”, 11/21/10, Robert J. Sternberg, author of “College Admissions for the 21st Century”)

SAT scores and GPAs are much of what make or break a college application. And yet, over the course of my years in the Yale admissions office, I found myself continually surprised by how many of the students we accepted had sky-high SAT scores but seemed to lack basic practical and creative skills, whereas others with more modest scores were stunning successes at Yale, both academically and personally. We can do a much better job of college admissions if we start thinking about student abilities differently than we have for the past century. We should assess and value analytical, creative and practical skills and wisdom, not just the ability to memorize or do well on tests. And we should admit people on the basis of their potential for leadership and active citizenship - people who will make a positive, meaningful and enduring difference to the world. Of course, many admissions offices try to do this already, through essays and the like, but their applications nonetheless remain anchored on test scores and grades. This is in part because scores and grades can be quantified and therefore get more weight than more abstract qualities. To measure these intangibles, in 1997 **Tufts University (MA)** designed a project whose goal was to determine whether including a mix of creative, analytical and practical questions on a college admissions application might have positive effects on the admissions process. Since 2005, about two-thirds of Tufts's roughly 15,500 annual applicants have chosen to answer one of the optional critical thinking/creative questions. Tufts found that the new admissions questions improved prediction of college grades. But some schools, in their rush to improve their U.S. News & World Report rankings, are moving in the opposite direction. They are stripping their applications to the bare bones, removing essays and other components that provide insight into a student's character and talents, so as to make their applications easier to fill out. They hope to thereby increase application numbers, and thus rejection rates and the appearance of “selectivity.” But they should ask themselves how, exactly, this approach makes their schools any better.

Editor's note: *What this means to potential college applicants is that the more creative the essay questions, either on the school's website application or on the college supplements of the Commonapp, the greater likelihood that the school is interested in looking at the whole student, rather than merely the hard data of test scores and grades.*

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

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