

Selecting for Fit Rather than Reputation

November, 2006

4th - SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

Seniors - File Early Decision/Early Action applications
Work on remaining college applications

Seniors - get a FAFSA from your counselor or look online at www.fafsa.ed.gov

30th - Usual application deadline for California's public colleges

December, 2006

Soph's and Juniors- Review PSAT score report with your counselor

2nd - SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

Seniors - file any additional college applications before deadline

9th - ACT and ACT plus Writing



Brown University

The proliferation of college rankings and onslaught of magazine and newspaper articles proclaiming the increasing selectivity of college admissions leads students to believe that

“most selective” means the “best.” But a college education is not a “one size fits all” purchase; what’s right for one student may not be right for another with similar characteristics. Your ultimate success in life is not determined or limited by the college you attend. Select your school not for its reputation, but by how well it fits your requirements.

A degree from the most prestigious college will not guarantee you a higher-paying job, more chances for advancement in your career, or success in any way you might define the term. Indeed, studies have shown that students who have been accepted

at one of the most prestigious institutions but choose to attend lesser known schools attain the same degree of financial success as those who chose the more selective college. It is not the college that makes the difference but rather the innate attributes of the applicant. Drive, intelligence, work ethic, and leadership qualities will later translate to a successful career.

In selecting your college, you need to be attuned to those characteristics that you value the most. Look for colleges that help students find their own voices; those at which students are most engaged in the learning process. Try to look beyond the buildings and beauty of the surroundings, and focus on the students and professors with whom you’ll share your time. Find the colleges that support the way you learn best, and where the institutional mission and philosophy fits your goals for your own education. If you look first to who you are and understand the person you wish to be, you’ll be able to choose wisely and find the college that best fits you.

Sending Supplements to College Applications

Test scores and grades, even with the addition of essays and letters of recommendation, can’t begin to provide a true assessment of students with special talents. How can such students enhance their application for admission?

Visual artists often supplement their application with a portfolio demonstrating their best work, usually in 35 mm slide format or on a CD. Check with the programs you’re considering to find out what type of work they’d like to see included, and how it will be evaluated. You can learn more about portfolios at www.artschools.com.

Writers may wish to submit some samples of published or prize-winning work, or even a particularly

good essay written for a class. Performing artists might include an audition tape in video or audio format. With these, include a written resume that highlights any honors, awards, or experience you’ve had in your chosen field.

Athletes may be asked to send a highlight tape showing them in competition. Speak with the college coach first to find out if he (or she) would be interested in viewing your tape.

Run the supplemental material by your counselor before submitting it. By showcasing your special talents in this way, you may increase your chances of admission.



Spotlight on Majors: Environmental Science/ Environmental Studies

Do you enjoy the great outdoors? Are you concerned about the effect of man on our environment? Are you interested in preserving our natural resources for future generations? You can get the credentials you'll need to make a difference through a major in environmental science or environmental studies. Environmental science programs focus on the natural sciences, while environmental studies also considers the political, economic, and social aspects of life as they relate to environmental issues. The major you select will be determined by the path you hope to take in order to make a difference.

Environmental scientists conduct research to identify and remedy the sources of pollutants that affect people, wildlife, and the environment. Thus, they need a working knowledge of biology, chemistry and physics. Studies in atmospheric science, geology, hydrology, and ecology are supplemented by courses that emphasize the student's primary area of concern. Laboratory research, field experiences, and summer research internships all help to provide the hands-on experiences that are vital for practitioners in this field. Computer skills are essential—environmental scientists are often called on for data analysis or are expected to be

Environmental Studies

Environmental studies majors are more focused on the impact of man on the environment. In addition to courses in the natural sciences such as biology, chemistry, and geology, environmental studies majors take about half their coursework in the social sciences and humanities. Rather than just identifying areas of concern, environmental studies emphasizes a problem-solving approach, focusing on the economic, political, and social aspects of tackling environmental issues. Environmental studies professionals may be engaged in studying global issues such as the greenhouse effect or acid rain, as well as more local and national problems.

In addition to science courses, environmental studies programs may include courses in environmental health, energy policy, wildlife management, land use planning, environmental politics, and environmental philosophy and ethics. The focus of programs differ from university to university, so look closely at the college's catalogue of courses when choosing a college for this major.

As with environmental science majors, research

able to use digital mapping and geographic information systems (GIS). Because much of the work is collaborative in nature, environmental scientists should perfect their writing and speaking skills.

Environmental science majors often find jobs in areas like environmental protection, natural resource management, or environmental health. The many areas of specialization include air quality management, aquaculture, biodiversity, coastal management, conservation biology, ecotourism, environmental education, fire ecology, and hazardous waste management. Still other specializations are hydrology, landscape architecture, meteorology, natural resource management, outdoor education, range management, recreation & parks, soil science, sustainable development, wetlands science, and wildlife science. Many individuals find work in large and small environmental consulting firms, or in governmental agencies, or education. A master's degree is needed for most entry-level research and teaching positions; a Ph.D. for higher level research and college instructors. Learn more about careers in environmental science at www.enviroeducation.com and check out opportunities for paid internships at the website of the Environmental Careers Organization (www.eco.org).

experiences, field work, and internships greatly enhance student learning. Although entry level careers are available for people holding a bachelor's degree, further graduate training and specialization greatly enhances career opportunities.

Environmental studies majors may find careers in environmental law, fisheries and wildlife management, or community recycling and conservation programs. Others work as park naturalists, environmental educators, in toxic waste disposal, as journalists, or for environmental organizations.

There are many other related careers for students with similar interests. You might also want to consider such majors as global studies, forestry, urban planning, political science, geography, geology, environmental engineering, oceanography, soil science, or petroleum engineering. More information is available at the Bureau of Labor Statistics website at www.bls.gov, the American Geological Institute at www.agiweb.org, and the National Wildlife Federation at www.nwf.org.

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Focusing on Finances: Beware Scholarship Scams

Tens of thousands of students and their families become the victims of scholarship scams each year. According to www.finaid.org, families lose more than \$100 million annually to the unscrupulous companies that they've looked to for help. Protect yourself by becoming an educated consumer; know how to recognize scholarship scams.

Often, scam operations have quasi-official sounding names; they use words like "National", "Federal", or "Foundation" as part of their name. Typically, they promise that they can find you scholarships or grants; some even offer a "money back guarantee." (Small print conditions make it pretty impossible to qualify for a refund.) Many pitch their product at financial aid seminars and then use high-pressure tactics to convince their audience that they need the company's help to win college money.

Conquering Test Anxiety

Sweaty palms, racing heart; test anxiety, kept under control, can help you to focus on the exam and allow you to do your best. However, some test-takers find that a high level of anxiety keeps them from demonstrating their true potential. Getting control over your anxiety level will help you to increase your score on high-stakes exams like SATs, ACTs, and finals.

Being prepared will reduce feelings of anxiety. Begin to review for college admissions tests eight to ten weeks before each exam. You'll want to become familiar with the test format and timing by practicing with actual exams released by the testing company. Material covered can be reviewed either through an organized test prep program like those offered by Kaplan or Princeton Review, or by using a book or online course such as those by the College Board or Barrons.

Knowing what to expect on test day also helps. If you haven't been to the test site before, make a practice run earlier in the week so you know where to go and how long it will take to get there. Set out all the materials you'll need the night before - registration form, photo id, calculator, pens and pencils, watch, and snacks. Relax the night before the exam with an early movie and be sure to get a good night's sleep. Get up early enough to eat a well-balanced breakfast; the new exams are long and you'll need stamina to get through

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) suggests that you watch for these tell-tale signs of a scam:

"The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back."

"You can't get this information anywhere else."

"We'll do all the work."

"We just need your credit card or bank account number to hold this scholarship."

Remember—no one can guarantee you a scholarship. Free information is readily available at sites like collegeboard.com, finaid.org, and fastweb.com. Students must apply for scholarships themselves—no one else can enter competitions or write essays for you. Never give out credit card or bank account information unless you've initiated the contact.

For more information or to report a scam, contact the FTC by calling 1-877-FTC-HELP or click on www.ftc.gov.

them. Try avoiding caffeine; it's been shown to increase anxiety. If you're feeling nervous, employ anxiety-reducing techniques. Deep calming breaths and visualizing yourself doing well may help.

Each section of the SAT is generally arranged with the easiest questions at the beginning. Start with these, thinking of your own answer before looking at the choices provided. If necessary, eliminate the answers that you can and make an educated guess from among the remaining choices. (Guess on SAT questions if you can eliminate at least one of the choices; on the ACT, answer all questions.) Clearly mark on the test booklet those questions to which you'll return if time permits.

For essay questions, organize your thoughts in a brief outline. Start with a short summary or topic sentence that clearly states your position, and then make your points, using examples to back up your position. If you begin to feel nervous, close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and then return to complete the exam.

Eat during testing breaks to keep your energy level up, but try a protein bar rather than candy which may increase anxiety. Fruit and vegetables are good choices for break time. Remember, a bit of anxiety will help you to maintain the energy you'll need to do your best.

"Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love."

David McCullough

The Undergraduate Experience at Liberal Arts Colleges

The College Advisor

3123 W. Sierra Drive
Westlake Village, CA
91362

Phone / FAX:
(805) 496-3949

E-Mail:
gailgrand@
thecollegeadvisor.net



Sarah Lawrence College

With small class sizes, an emphasis on individualized instruction, and a focus on learning in a residential environment, the experience of students at a liberal

arts college differs from that of students at large public institutions. The intentionally small size of liberal arts colleges fosters the active engagement of both students and faculty in the process of learning.

Liberal arts colleges focus on the undergraduate. They aim to provide students with a broad based knowledge and understanding of science, the humanities, and art. Students are encouraged to be actively engaged in the learning process. Critical and analytical thinking are stressed and

students learn to communicate both effectively and persuasively.

Classes at liberal arts colleges are more likely to be seminar style rather than large lecture format; faculty, not graduate assistants, are most likely to do the actual teaching. Interaction between faculty and students is encouraged both in and out of the classroom. Each individual is expected to share his or her talents and skills with the college and surrounding communities.

Does this type of education really work? A 1998 study found that although only 3 % of all American college graduates were educated at residential liberal arts colleges, they accounted for 19% of U.S. presidents, 23 % of Pulitzer Prize winners in drama, and 8 % of Forbes magazine's listing of the wealthiest CEO's in America. Liberal arts graduates are twice as likely to earn a Ph.D in science, and are disproportionately represented among leaders in education, public service, and business.

Web and Print Resources: www.studyguidezone.com



Studyguidezone was made possible through a grant from the McNamara Educational Trust. The site provides free study guide resources to help students prepare for exams, along with tips for more effective learning.

Click on the *ACT exam* under *Admissions Exams* and you'll find

an extensive study guide for this test. Similar guides are available for a large number of other admissions tests such as the SAT, the CLAST, the ISEE, the GRE, the SSAT, and the MCAT. Study resources address issues such as fear of math, test anxiety, effective studying, note taking, forming a study group, listening, and test-taking techniques.

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3123 W. Sierra Drive

Westlake Village, CA 91362