



Lessons Learned: NACAC 2015

**Notes from Sessions Attended
at the National Association for College
Admission
Counseling Annual Conference**

By Counselors of Collegewise

Dear Counseling and Admissions Colleagues,

We've just returned from this year's NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling) conference in San Diego. While this was the most well attended NACAC in conference history, we know thousands more were unable to attend because of budget cutbacks or the demands of senior season.

At Collegewise, we see the NACAC conference as an exemplar of all we hold dear in this profession: connecting with colleagues old and new and sharing information to better serve students. This year's conference also reflected the growing changes in the admissions landscape – from Salman Khan's approach of self-directed, independent learning at Khan Academy, to the inclusion of prior-prior year for financial aid, to the building of a new Coalition Application (details on that discussion [here](#)). Things are certainly changing, and the discussions at NACAC reflected an urgency to both convey those changes to students and to continually question how these changes impact access and affordability in higher education.

It's a small thing, but in that same spirit, Collegewise wanted to make sure counselors who weren't there had at least some access to information being provided in sessions. So, we decided to do the following:

1. Take good notes at the sessions we attended.
2. Type up our notes at the conclusion of the conference.
3. Make them available to anyone who might want them.

It's been awhile since we were in college, but we dusted off our note-taking skills and tried to capture as much of the information as we could. Of course, all credit for the content here should go to the presenters themselves. They did all the work—we just wrote down what they provided.

We know that reading a collection of notes is not the same as attending the conference in person, but nevertheless, we hope you find the information useful. Please feel free to forward it to anyone you feel might benefit.

Thanks for reading and sharing it, and we hope to see you at NACAC next year!

Sincerely,

The Collegewise Counselors

P.S.: For more on the **Coalition**, read on...

A Note on the Coalition Application

Ever since the Common Application's woes in the fall of 2013, there has been talk of alternative application platforms. Despite regular media coverage of The Coalition's work, when the PR releases launched in the late days of September, they arrived as a shock to the collective consciousness of the admissions world. Reaction was swift and oftentimes brutal.

Collegewise was founded in 1999 and in our existence, we've seen many changes to the ways in which students apply to college. More often than not, these changes were heralded as harbingers of doom, only to prove inconsequential in the larger scheme of things. Still, we're a company rooted in making the admissions process more joyful and less stressful for our students, and The Coalition's plan was cause for concern and felt different. Like so many of our colleagues within high schools and so many of our friends at non-The Coalition schools, we wondered what it would mean to not only our students but every student who doesn't have the resources of a strong school or independent counselor.

With a dozen of our counselors attending NACAC 2015, it's safe to say, the jury is still out. Like everyone else who is part of the admissions landscape, we're following along closely—not too closely because that is stalking—and doing our best to soak up the details to best advise our the students and families we work with.

In that spirit, we encourage everyone with a stake in something so significant to invest their own time and energy (and emotions!) in learning more about The Coalition's work.

Here's the official website: <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>

It's worth poking around. In particular, the **FAQs** provide for a nice overview of the intentions and motivations of The Coalition. <http://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/faq.html>

It's also worth noting that within a week of their original grand announcement, they have already announced their intentions to postpone the original launch in January 2016 and push off by a few months. It's clear they have their ears open and are seeking input. If you want to add yours, don't hesitate to email them at info@coalitionforcollegeaccess.org.

In addition to what The Coalition's own website, we've found that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education* have had excellent coverage. If your time permits, we consider the following a good start to understand the where it all stands—as of early October 2015.

Coalition's Plans for New Application Platform Stir Debate: <http://chronicle.com/article/Coalition-s-Plans-for-New/233628>

Coalition of the Willing or the Wealthy?:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/10/05/admissions-leaders-debate-coalitions-plan-offer-new-application-and-portfolios-high>

And while we at Collegewise would like to pretend we're Switzerland, the reality is, many, many of us have been reading the words of DePaul's Jon Boeckenstedt with great curiosity. One post in particular we'll highlight that resonated with us:

High School Counselors, It's Your Turn: <https://jonboeckenstedt.wordpress.com/2015/10/06/high-school-counselors-its-your-turn/>

Much more ink will be spilled on this topic in the weeks and months to come. As college counselors deeply invested in not only the students we work with, but all those applying to college, Collegewise will be keeping a close eye on the conversation that's in full roar. We hope you'll do the same.

Table of Contents

A Note on the Coalition Application 3

College Abroad: A UK Case Study..... 6

Transitioning from Small High Schools to Large Universities 9

Affordability and Outcomes: The Coalition Application..... 10

Earlier Financial Aid Decisions? Preparing Yourself for the Implementation of
Prior-Prior Year Tax Data on the FAFSA 12

Transfer Students: How They Get In, Why We Like Them, and What They Add to
Our Institution..... 15

An Update on Online College Counseling Certificate Programs..... 18

Have We Reached the Tipping Point of Early Action?..... 20

Helping Your Student Identify a Body of Work for the Art School Application..... 22

What Admission Deans Think: Results on Hot Issues in the Field..... 23

How We Review: Insight on Presenting Information on the University of California
Application for Undergraduate Admission..... 25

Lifting the Veil on Athletic Admission: An insider’s look at how athletics influence
the process..... 28

The Trend Toward Gap Years: An Idea Whose Time Has Come 33

How America Pays for College 2015: What Counselors Need to Know 45

Want More? 49

NACAC has uploaded most official session materials and presentations [here](#).

College Abroad: A UK Case Study

The UK is a study destination of growing interest for independently minded students who are seeking a high quality education that offers both tradition and great value for their money. Hear from UK university representatives and the British Council about the various higher education systems in the United Kingdom so that you can guide students towards an academic system that suits them well, and develop strategies to help students build a list of British universities. Learn where to find the most objective information online, degree models, mode of assessment and the UK's academic culture. Find out how universities review university applications and what makes American students stand out and get accepted.

Presenters:

Tessa Birley, University of Edinburgh

Eleanor David, University of Oxford

Donna Houghton, De Montfort University

Tamsin Thomas, British Council

Introduction to UK Higher Education

- 12+4 programs in Scotland
- 13+3 programs in rest of UK
- General education doesn't exist in UK- go directly into a concentration
- Students in the UK have a much clearer idea of what they want to study
- Scotland not as rigid as rest of UK
- 300+ institutions in UK- universities, university colleges, special institutions, colleges
- 134 universities, 4 private colleges

UK Admissions Philosophy

- Students need to know best fit course at time of application
- Adult learning environment- students will have some self-directed study, not a lot of hand holding, learning outside of the classroom
- Subject expertise- expected to have some previous knowledge (sat subject tests can help show that)

Differences from the US System

- Course or program = major
- Course and entry requirements first objectives in determining where to apply
- Professional degrees available at undergraduate level (architecture, medicine, veterinary, law, etc.)- take slightly longer in duration, apprenticeships- can transfer degree back to US- with some guidance from college advisors
- Can transfer into some similar programs after year one, otherwise would need to start again
- Program duration varies- some professional courses are longer
- Internships can add a fourth year outside of Scotland
- One subject majors, interdisciplinary degrees, combined and joint honors (like double major or major and minor)
- Sandwich years- between second and third year- work placement for full year, paid (like co-op)

- Teaching and assessment- mix of tutorials, seminars, lectures, group work, labs, industry placements
- Presentations, coursework, dissertation, exams, orals
- Grades- 70=a, 60=b, etc.

Why choose the UK

- World class academics- top rankings, research excellence, courses taught by professors, 86% in student satisfaction
- Value for money- tuition 12k-58k (not inclusive of room and board)- cost varies by major- sciences are much more expensive, scholarships and U.S. federal aid can travel to UK, cost of living can be lower, and only three years to degree
- 80%+ completion rate
- Employability- employer engagement in curriculum planning, career support, global professional recognition, post grad career support
- International community
- 25% international students across UK, most colleges have 10%+ international
- Academic talent also very international
- Experience of a lifetime

UCAS Application

- Common application for ALL UK universities
- Processes apps, data collection, information and advice, fraud and verification, training, education sector events
- UCAS doesn't make admissions decisions
- Can apply to five schools/programs at once
- Medicine, vet, dentistry- max of four apps
- Cost is \$18-35
- Colleges can't see where else students apply
- 10/15- med/vet/dentistry and Oxford/Cambridge deadline (all deadlines in UK time zone)
- Often rolling decisions for international students
- Best time to get apps is in October/November- would hear back by holidays
- Degree specific requirements
- Edinburgh doesn't look at GPA or class rank
- Some AP exams and subject tests may be required
- UKCAT required for medicine
- Education section- test scores, list tests completed and pending (need to list all scores)
- For counselors- section to add predicted grades- very important for some universities- put in reference section
- Outcomes- unsuccessful, unconditional offer (legally binding on college end), conditional offer (subject to achievement of grades or test scores)
- Wait for all decisions before choosing where to go- choose one firm and one insurance (backup plan)

Personal statements and essay writing

- Important not to repeat information from rest of application
- Academic achievement and potential - predicted test scores - personal statements- recs- (for some universities) specific admissions tests - written work - interviews

- Personal statements- for student to make their case, same for all colleges, 4000 character max.
- 75-80% academic, 20-25% extracurricular, motivation for program, current studies, outside reading, specific examples with reflective, not descriptive approach, work experience, future plans, activities that focus on particular skills
- Need to link transferable skills they have gained from activities to program they are applying to
- Don't be too quirky, avoid quotes, don't play too much to one university, show evidence through examples

Teacher Recommendations

- Teacher's reference- additional information on academic suitability of candidate, potential for specialized degree
- Best reference written by someone who has an overview of student, but can engage multiple voices (from teachers)
- Not a character or personality reference
- Only care about potential for the program they are applying to
- Mitigating circumstances can be shared in references

Transitioning from Small High Schools to Large Universities

Can students who have attended a small high school successfully transition and thrive at large universities? What areas are important to them as they consider a large institution and fit? Which types of students will flourish and which types will wither? Investigate the factors of this selection process from both a college counseling and college admission perspective. Practical research, data, and examples provide helpful tips in working with both students and parents. Watch video interviews of current students at large universities and learn how they have made the transition from their small high schools. To learn how other professionals address this topic, audience participation and questions are encouraged.

Presenters:

Sherri Geller, Gann Academy

Terry Knaus, Indiana University

Kristen Learner, The Benjamin School

Melissa Michaud, Burr and Burton Academy

Patrick Winter, University of Georgia

- Students are attracted to larger schools- extracurricular activities, sports, rankings, family tradition, specific majors, diversity
- Assumptions- that they'll meet a lot of people, have access to lots of majors, flexible curriculum
- Picture a whole school assembly- then multiply by one, two, three, etc.
- Picture a lecture hall of 300 (divide whole school assembly if needed)
- Picture a professional sports stadium that's full- 30k at Fenway- never meet a person on the lower level
- Parents may worry about access to advising
- Students may not realize that they may not be able to apply undecided
- Students may like ability to be anonymous at large school
- Student advice- get out of shell, embrace the diversity
- Students need to be aware of rolling admissions, how admissions handles first and second choice majors, etc.
- Also should talk about safety/security on campus, public transportation
- Encourage students to get on campus jobs, became part of campus community

Affordability and Outcomes: The Coalition Application

A coalition of American public and private colleges and universities has begun the design and organization of an online platform that hopes to recast the nature of applying to college in the 21st century. Attendees will be given an early glimpse of the features of the Coalition Application, emphasizing the three integrated parts of each application: the Digital Profile; the Collaboration platform; and a personalized college application. This presentation will outline the progress the Coalition has made in the past year of development, and highlight the benefits of this new application platform, and point to the road ahead of a full launch in 2016.

Presenters:

Audrey Smith, Smith College

John Latting, Emory University

Barbara Gill, University of Maryland

What is the Coalition?

Coalition for College Access began as conversation in late 2013

Incorporated in June 2015

First meeting was a month ago

Public announcement one week ago

Iterative process, adjusting based on feedback

83 colleges and universities- meet full need or affordable instate tuition, 6-year grad rates over 70%

What is the Coalition Focusing On?

Believe technology can level the playing field

Focus on early engagement to support under resourced students

Competition as positive force for change

January 2016 kickoff for online tools

Work grounded in research

Process of assessment and continuous adjustment

Potentially a big change for counselors

Response to Common App issues in 2013

Colleges and universities felt like spectators on sidelines of application

Also technology delivery problem

Feel focus on just transaction of applying to college misses the mark

Vowing to do better

Want to be part of the solution

What will the Coalition Application Portal consist of?

Free online tools for high school students, so they can prepare for college earlier

Share developing work and get feedback

3 tools

- 1- virtual college locker to store information (activities, life experiences, store essays from school, upload videos)- want students to be thoughtful, planful, reflective
 - 2- share locker with others and get feedback
 - 3- application portal to communicate with colleges and select items to share
- Focus tests with students this fall
Application portal available for class of 2017

Earlier Financial Aid Decisions? Preparing Yourself for the Implementation of Prior-Prior Year Tax Data on the FAFSA

A policy change in Washington appears likely to allow students and families to use tax data from the prior-prior tax year to complete the FAFSA. While this change seems highly technical, the ramifications are far-reaching. Students and families could be presented with complete admission and financial aid decisions earlier in the admission cycle, which could alter the traditional timeline for college applications. NACAC and NASFAA, among other organizations, have endorsed this policy change, as it stands to assist students who are most at risk of being left out of the college process by providing earlier notification of financial aid. In addition, the change would align the admission and financial aid processes in a way that would assist all families in making informed enrollment decisions. Attendees at this session will learn more about the change, and about the likely implications for school counselors and college admission officers. Panelists will explore ways in which institutions, as well as professional associations, will need to prepare for the effects of this policy change.

Presenters:

Eileen O'Leary, Stonehill College

Todd Rinehart, University of Denver

Sarah Summerhill, Michigan State University

Overview: PPY is the largest issue to hit financial aid in many years and will have a very positive impact for consumers (students) while causing some pain for high school admissions counselors and college admissions officers. The mood of the meeting was upbeat as everybody feels that this is fundamentally the right thing to do

Notes:

- The joke was made that the Class of 2017 needs to be renamed the Class of the Apocalypse because they get to deal with the New SAT, a new way of going through Federal Financial Aid (PPY) and are also the first class that will be exposed to the Coalition App (which you'll read about later in this notepack)
- Acronym update: PPY stands for Prior Prior Year and is a recent policy change that will permit families to use an earlier tax return when completing FAFSA (free application for federal student aid). The reason it is significant is it means that families can file a completed FAFSA form much earlier in the admissions cycle (eg October of the Senior year) rather than waiting until March or even April of the Senior year.
- NACAC endorses the use of PPY as does the National Association of Financial Aid (NASFAA) folks. One interesting fact was that the Dept. of Ed has had the right to impose PPY since the last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act about 10 years ago, but never chose to act on it until now.
- The NASFAA people in conjunction with the Gates Foundation ran in-depth statistical analyses to see what would be the impact on Financial Aid given this shift. They reviewed 70,000 financial records with a focus on Pell Grant recipients
- Only 16-18% of Pell Grantees saw a significant shift in their awards (+/- \$1000)
- More Pell Grant money will be awarded because more kids will now have the ability to complete the forms on time, not because the existing grantees will get more money

- NASFAA also completed research on other areas of concerns for governments and colleges
- 85% of the states saw no regulatory or administrative difficulties using PPY instead of PY (Prior Year)
- There will be an increased administrative burden on both colleges and high schools as the financial aid pressure will move directly into the same cycle as the admissions reading and application season
- Colleges who use home grown software systems to manage their aid programs probably need to throw those away and go with one of the larger enterprise systems because the changes are going to come thick and fast
- These changes will stress the system for 1-2 years while we get used to them and the software providers catch up
- Editor's Note: What made this session so useful was that the dialogue (as you can see above) was balanced, reasoned and open. It made for a much more compelling session as it was clear that the presenters and the organizations that were backing them had done their homework.
- NACAC and NASFAA are recommending that the eventual release date of the FAFSA be moved back from the current January 1 to September 1. This earlier completion allows for:
 - Better alignment with existing recruiting and admissions schedules
 - Better data accuracy from the IRS (family verification is much quicker and easier)
 - A much stronger sense for families about their Expected Family Contributions much earlier in the process while those families still have the opportunity to make application decisions

Key fact: The official release date for next year's FAFSA will be October 1, 2016 for students who will begin college in the fall of 2017.

How will these changes impact admissions professionals?

For Colleges

- Admissions and especially outreach staff will need to be cross trained in understanding their institution's financial aid approaches since they are going to be asked questions about this while they are on their fall recruiting and tabling trips.
- University tuition and budgeting meetings will probably have to take place earlier in the cycle.
- Recruiters will have to adapt their messaging as it is likely that several people in their audiences will have a much better sense of what they are supposed to pay in early October.
- There will have to be a much tighter intersection in the communication between the aid and admissions offices.
- Likely to be an increase in EA/ED programs so that students can be packaged earlier.
- Yield projection accuracy is likely to change as "summer melt" just moved from 3 to 10 months.
- Recruitment in the junior year will get much more aggressive and marketing will move earlier in the cycle.

For High Schools and IECs

- Financial aid nights at high schools will have to be earlier! They should probably be in the Spring rather than the current November/December zone.
- College admissions reps are likely to request earlier visits to the schools.
- Fall workload will increase as you will have to be ready to deal with FAFSA issues much earlier.

Two Final Notes

- These quotes appeared on one of the power point slides:
 - “I’m worried that students will receive info from our competitors and they’ll decide to not even apply to us.” And “Let the games begin.”
- What was interesting about these two quotes is that they were from 2011 when the Net Price Calculator Federal Mandate came into being. So these concerns are not new for admissions and aid officers.
- There was a brilliant question/comment made at the end of the session:
- “PPY is the new Federal method, but colleges can continue to use PY for their internal institutional awards. Won’t this just confuse everybody?”
- There was a College Board rep there (remember, they run Profile, the other financial aid instrument used by almost all private colleges) and she said that CB was in consultation with its member colleges about whether Profile would move from PY to PPY. The panel members had a highly intelligent response that was basically, “We are in a competitive business and there’s no way we want to lose a kid because we have to wait for PY when our competitors are using PPY. You should expect us to all adopt PPY internally because waiting is very bad for us.”
- Like I said, a very good and open session.

Transfer Students: How They Get In, Why We Like Them, and What They Add to Our Institution

Transfer policies and procedures have tremendous variations. Learn a series of approaches to attract transfer students, get them to apply, and then admit and support them in the transition. Help students graduate in a timely manner by aligning transfer admission requirements with graduation requirements. Look beyond minimum admission criteria to ensure that students' previous course selections meet transfer requirements and has prepared them to succeed in their majors.

Presenters:

Kirk Brennan, USC Director of Undergraduate Admission

Gary Clark, UCLA Director of Undergraduate Admission

Jim Rawlins, University of Oregon Director of Admissions

David Burge, George Mason University Vice President for Enrollment Management

Daniel Nannini, Santa Monica Community College Transfer Center Director

The presenters addressed 3 main topics: who are transfer students, why colleges like them, and how transfers are admitted. Each presenter spoke about how the transfer process works at his particular institution. There were marked differences in the way these institutions admitted transfers—see the particulars below.

University of Oregon & Transfers

Quick facts:

- 1 of every 4 students at Oregon comes in as a transfer
- 50% of transfers from Oregon community colleges
- This year, there were more applicants from non-Oregon community colleges than Oregon community colleges

What they're looking for:

- Can transfer at any credit level (but at <36 units, they still consider HS transcripts and test scores)
- Require college level math & English
- Require foreign language credits
- No majors closed to transfers
- More accommodating to residents of Oregon
- Preference given to students with AA degrees

Recent innovations:

- Hired staff member just for transfer students
- Once a month info session for transfer students on the Oregon campus!
- Outreach to advisors
- Trying to identify future-term transfer applicants from freshmen admits who turned them down to go to CC—offer them transfer advisors at Oregon

- Continuing/expanding agreements with community colleges

Financial aid: Oregon draws a distinction between funding for transfers and funding for freshmen. They're able to guarantee money for Pell-Eligible freshmen, but not for transfer students.

UCLA & Transfers

- Transfers students add racial/ethnic/experiential diversity to campus
- Important: UCLA strongly prefers students who come from the CA community college system
 - 94% of last year's admitted transfers came from CA community college system
 - 3% came from other UC campuses
 - 3% came from everywhere else (Cal States, other 4 year colleges, etc.)
- Recruitment efforts:
 - In-person visits/programs at CA community colleges
 - Regional events throughout CA
 - [PrepTalk](#) sessions on process of applying, how to get housing, how financial aid works at UCLA
 - Bruin Day for admitted transfer students (6000 attendees in May 2015) – opportunity to connect with advisors, financial aid officers
- How to apply
 - UC Application
 - Assist.org – best way to look up articulation agreements, figure out whether your classes transfer
 - [UCLA's Transfer Admission Guide](#) – Clark called this the “Bible” for prospective transfer students interested in UCLA. It gives students a major-by-major guide to transferring to UCLA.
 - Can apply only to fall term, must declare major
- How transfer students are evaluated
 - Holistic admissions process – consider GPA in addition to what students do with time outside of class
 - Admission is major-specific – 60% of students apply to same 12 majors (UCLA offers 128). Students should consider other majors as well.
 - [Transfer Alliance Program](#) with community college is taken into consideration as well
 - Completion of course requirements by end of spring prior to transfer.
- Financial aid packaging is generally similar for transfers. Merit money is scarce.

USC & Transfers

Kirk Brennan spoke about how transfer admission at USC is part of their strategic vision to transform education by promoting access to higher education. USC sees its commitment to transfers as a commitment to society as a whole. By admitting transfers to the university, USC seeks to bring diversity of viewpoints to the campus.

- How USC admits transfers:
 - Major prep and degree progress are an important part of the evaluation process

- They require both college and high school transcripts, but assured us that the HS transcript would not be held against the student.
- Average admitted GPA is about 3.7.
- Do not require test scores, except TOEFL for international students
- No minimum number of units, but require 1 full year of English composition
- Quick facts:
 - Transfers are 25% of all enrolled students
 - Transfers are more likely to be Scions (children of USC alumni)

George Mason University & Transfers

- In Fall 2015, George Mason brought in a freshman class of 3193 and a transfer class of 2686. 70% of transfer students were from VA community colleges.
- Transfer students aren't necessarily more diverse at GMU, but they do help fulfill part of mission for career-ready graduates.
- Guaranteed admission agreement: 2.85 GPA required, along with AA or AS degree. Mason Core General Education requirements must be fulfilled for this guarantee. Maximum of 75 units transfer.
- Can come in at earlier stages—not just after AA or AS degree.
- Check out [transfer credit matrix](#) on their website.

Resources:

www.nacacnet.org/research/transfer

An Update on Online College Counseling Certificate Programs

Online College Counseling Certificate programs offered by a number of University of California Extension campuses have become one of the most ubiquitous sources of training and professional development for school-based college counselors and independent educational consultants. As these programs see dramatic growth, drawing more enrollments from around the globe, administrators and instructors are making decisions about curricula, practica supervision, and other administrative components. Join us for a panel discussion with key administrators and instructors from UC Irvine, UCLA, UC Riverside, and UC San Diego as we examine best practices in a burgeoning and evermore diverse domestic and international marketplace. Your feedback will shape programming and curriculum, as well as help identify new areas or platforms for professional development.

Presenters:

Steven Antonoff, Antonoff and Associates

Morgan Appel, UC San Diego Extension

Esther Hugo, UCLA Extension

Steven Mercer, Mercer Educational Consulting

Annette Webb, UC Riverside Extension

Overview: 4 different University of California (UC) schools shared information about each of their respective programs. It was a pretty dry session with a couple of interesting tidbits. Each of these programs gives a certificate of completion. Each is purely online and run through the respective UC's extension arm. UC Berkeley's program in counseling is live only and thus they were not present UC Irvine's program is designed exclusively for Independent Educational Consultants (IECs) and is the brainchild of Dr. Steven Antonoff, a longtime IEC in SoCal. Each class costs \$600 and they just added a course in counseling international students.

UCLA's program is the oldest and the largest with 60% of its attendees from outside of California with a pretty equal mix of high school counselors, parents and IECs). The certificate program costs \$3800 and 12% of the attendees are international.

- Must have a Bachelors
- Largest # of required courses to complete
- First generation students are discussed in every course
- Must complete a 65 hour practicum
- Two new courses: Counseling international and counseling transfer students
- 4 more courses in development
 - Using social media
 - Working with difficult parents
 - Working with special populations (eg. Athletes; LD; Performing Arts)
 - College List development

UC Riverside's program has 6 courses, costs \$3000 and takes 12-18 months to complete. This effort is very much linked to the overall pedagogy of the campus, so much so that the Academic Senate approves every course and every faculty member within it. UCR will be adding an elective course in Access & Equity in STEM education

UC San Diego's hook is that it is the shortest (3 classes) and cheapest (\$1505 - no idea where the \$5 came from) certificate option.

- Culminates in a highly individualized practicum project – basically you can do pretty much anything you want here, including any research that you find to be interesting
- They are contemplating offering an advanced certificate in college counseling

Final Note: For California folks, each of the programs above do count for Professional Development credit and appear on a transcript as Post-Bacc credits.

Have We Reached the Tipping Point of Early Action?

Early Action, Restrictive Early Action, Early Decision. There are so many early admission opportunities. How does one handle them? Is early the best way to go? The only way to go? How do students and families decide? Explore the pressures school counselors and admission professionals currently face with the proliferation of early applications and its impact on our students. Presenters share their own strategies from eliminating early programs to embracing them and everything in between.

Presenters:

Becky Bowlby, Lower Merion High School, PA

Misty Whelan, Conestoga High School, PA

Jim Van Blunk, Temple University, PA

Nathan Fuerst, University of Connecticut, CT

Linda Kemp, The Bishop Strachan School, Canada

Stephen Pultz, University of San Diego, CA

University of San Diego:

In 2013, they eliminated Early Action because:

- Even with an increase in applications, their yield was not improving. They actually increased numbers of deferrals, and this part of the population specifically hurt their yield.
- Population of students applying Early Action was not helping increase number of underrepresented groups.

What happened?

- Number of applications decreased by about 10%.
- Yield increased by about 2%.
- They were able to get admission decisions out earlier (by March 10th).
- Number of completed applications has increased (92%).
- Currently, their number of applications is still lower, but they are still meeting their enrollment goals.

University of Connecticut:

In 2013, they eliminated Early Action because:

- STRESS—not just the students who were applying, but the staff who processed the information and reviewed applications.

What happened?

- Applications initially dropped in volume, which the media noticed.
- Numbers have gone up with time.
- Yield has gone down a little bit.
- Quality and diversity of class has held steady.

Temple University:

They did the opposite of USD and UConn—they ADDED Early Action when they used to not have it. And their results have also been the opposite. Temple seemed proud that they now have Early Action and have no plans to move back to another deadline model.

Lower Merion School District:

The “early action” fever has spread to the lower grades.

- They now do presentations to elementary parents about planning to pay for college.
- Eighth grade meetings about how academics affects college admission.
- Started a program on Mindfulness through their guidance office—focus on doing things with meaning and being aware of impact. Helping manage stress and expectations.

Canadian High School Experience:

- It used to be that 10% of their students applied Early Action to college; now it is 90%.
- The US schools led the way, and now the Canadian schools are following.
- They have started doing more with students before junior and senior years:
 - 9th grade—Careers class, job shadowing parents
 - 10th grade—focus more on college selection/search
 - 11th and 12th grade—combined programming to help those who are ready to start early, but still catch those seniors who haven’t yet felt the pressure to begin the process

Take-Aways:

One universal theme is STRESS. Everyone is stressed with earlier deadlines. Students, the universities, high school counselors and teachers...is the benefit of getting things completed early, and maybe finding out a little earlier about a decision, worth the stress everyone is experiencing?

One high school counselor in the crowd suggested that there be a common application deadline for all colleges, similar to the National Candidate’s Response Date. High school counselors cheered; the college presenters were leery and did not seem in favor of this.

Helping Your Student Identify a Body of Work for the Art School Application

Understanding the application process for visual and performing arts colleges can seem like a daunting task. This workshop focuses on the most difficult to understand, singular piece of the admission process: the portfolio. Develop language to counsel young artists. Become the art critic so you can help students determine which art pieces should be considered for portfolio submission. Learn to help the artist showcase their best artistic ability and realize secondary counselors have always had the tools to look and speak about visual art.

Presenters:

Robynne Royster, Mills College, CA

Arnold Icasiano, California College of the Arts, CA

MAJOR TAKEAWAY: Helping a student with their portfolio is like helping them with their essays.

What should portfolio be? Each school has different requirements, but:

- Direct assignments or projects. Even if a student is not in an art class, he can “assign” himself work, e.g., practice a particular skill/medium or keep doing the same piece to see improvement. Importance is rigor and discipline.
- Sketchbook ideas. This is where ideas can be processed.
 - WE SHOULD ASK TO SEE SKETCHBOOK. If they don’t have one? They should... Ask to see their doodles.
- Media. Shows diversity, exploration, and challenge. If you don’t see a lot of media, ask, “Have you tried working in ...?” Colleges want to see students who are multidimensional, not just an expert in one area.
- Quantity—10 to 20 pieces. Who are they as an artist? Focus on quality and cohesiveness. Don’t throw something in because they think they NEED to have something very different included. It is okay to take a risk with a piece if they stand behind the work and the risk is intentional.
- Narrative—What are they trying to say? Is it “I like to make xyz” or do they have a story to share? Draw the motives out of your students with questions, and don’t make them feel bad if the entire portfolio doesn’t tell ONE story.

Things to remember:

- Art is subjective. Everyone has a different opinion.
- Use words to describe what you EXPERIENCE when viewing their work, in addition to what you see.
- You don’t have to be an artist to help a student compile their portfolio. By knowing each school’s basic requirements and asking your students a lot of questions about their work, you can be extremely helpful.

What Admission Deans Think: Results on Hot Issues in the Field

Receive an overview of results from a 2015 Inside Higher Ed study of admission deans (conducted by Gallup) regarding diversity, admission strategies, out-of-state students, international students, testing and more. Discuss the findings, with responses from two admission leaders. Audience questions and suggestions for future surveys encouraged.

Presenters:

Scott Jaschik, Inside Higher Ed, DC

Pamela Horne, Purdue University, IN

David Hawkins, NACAC, VA

Scott Jaschik began by explaining the method and sample size of the survey (264 completed by those in the highest role in the admission office). The surveys were anonymous, but identifying factors such as “public or private” were noted.

Findings:

- 51% of colleges are worried about meeting enrollment goals
- 58% of colleges did NOT meet their enrollment goals
- 76% of colleges lost POTENTIAL applications because of concerns of debt
- 58% of public colleges and 64% of private colleges want to increase their out-of-state numbers
 - 21% say they are experiencing backlash

Interesting trends/issues to watch in the next year:

- Affirmative action—what will happen if it is restricted or barred? Not just for admission, but for financial aid and programs for women or minorities? Could mean huge drops in enrollment of African-American or Latin-American students. What policies could a school adopt in place of affirmative action? Ideas—1st generation students, socioeconomic groups, rethinking how they view standardized tests . . . could alumni preference play a role?
- Outside pressure to admit—overall, 25% of colleges are pressured to admit students based on their connections. It is higher at the private schools, and the private schools are more likely to think it is okay.
- Discipline records—private schools ask more about discipline, but a very small number actually change admission decisions based on discipline. More training is needed for admission counselors if they are going to look at discipline in the admission process.
- Sexual orientation/gender identity—more colleges are asking the questions.
- Should there be free community college? 100% of community college directors believe they are losing students due to cost.

Pam Horne’s two cents:

- We should be concerned that almost 60% of colleges are not meeting enrollment goals.
- The number of high school graduates PREPARED for college is not growing. Not all colleges can continue at their current sizes.
- Merit aid—80% of parents think their students deserve scholarships. Is it meeting need?

- Interesting reality? 90% of students to go a college within 50 miles of home.

David Hawkin's thoughts:

- Access is still a huge issue. We cannot be ignorant of disadvantages. Recruitment is where colleges can still have impact, and colleges need to expand where they are recruiting.
- What does it mean to be "admissible?" A lot of factors are not "merit-based."
- As the growth in online programs (even those at established universities) continues, the amount of debt is expanding. The bubble is about to burst!
- Affordability—NACAC is developing training specifically to help counselors educate families about college affordability.
- Asking the discipline question actually perpetuates inequality. These are sometimes the students who are not given the same opportunities initially, and then they are being punished again. More training is definitely needed.

Q&A:

What about mental health?

- Tricky because of discrimination
- Colleges need to finance mental health and campus security, not just after a tragedy.
- Electronic applications have made it more difficult for high school counselors to give a heads-up that is not going to be part of a student's record (the "sticky notes" that say "call me" are gone).

Retention issues

- Colleges and business offices are beginning to see the bigger picture.
- Admission professionals can help with retention by ensuring prospective students understand the expectations of college life, not just the "fun" stuff.
- Colleges need to focus more on life after the first year—retention from first to second year may be strong, but upperclassmen need attention, especially those who are lower income.

Effects of the media

- Sometimes the stories from the media take precedence in the minds of prospective students and families over the facts and data about a college.
- Some colleges worry that they are not able to get the "right" information to the students in this situation.
- Some colleges are embracing this and not worrying about the exact data—instead, they focus more on stories about students finding success of different kinds.

How We Review: Insight on Presenting Information on the University of California Application for Undergraduate Admission

Using concepts from the University of California's Comprehensive Review Policy, review applications and help us evaluate applicant files to help you guide future applicants and learn how students can better present themselves on the UC application.

Presenters:

Gary Clark, UCLA Director of Undergraduate Admission

Allisa Miller, UC Riverside Assistant Director of Undergraduate Admission

Patricia Morales, UC Irvine Director of Admission

Lia Youngs, UC Davis Director of Undergraduate Admission

There were 193,873 applicants to UC schools last year. UCLA alone received over 100,000 applications.

Basic admissions requirements:

- A-G courses (including Algebra I, Geometry, and Advanced Algebra, at least)
- Visual/Performing arts requirement
- Minimum of 3.4 GPA
- There is a difference between meeting the minimum requirements and being selected for admission, especially at the more selective UC campuses.

All UC applications go through a **comprehensive review**, which includes:

- Evaluation of grades, test scores, and course preparation (all of which should be strong)
- A review of the student's educational experience and context
- Review of the application, which should represent a longstanding track record of success. Applications are read cover to cover by two readers blind to one another. If there's a discrepancy between the way these two readers view the student, a 3rd reader may be introduced.

Review varies from campus to campus.

- Holistic review (UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, UC Irvine): no fixed weight is placed on any one criteria. 14 criteria are evaluated, including: GPA, test scores, courses completed/planned, honors courses, ELC (top 9%), quality of senior year coursework, etc.
- UC Santa Barbara – fixed weight is placed on particular criteria. 50% is placed on academics (grades, coursework, test scores), and 50% is placed on personal statement and extracurricular activities.
- UC Riverside and Merced also employ fixed weight models.

- At all UC campuses, each student is considered within the local context of high school. Consideration is given to opportunities each student has for success. Context matters for admission at UC schools!!

Personal Statements

- Used to clarify distinctions between applicants with similar academic records. These statements add richness and meaning to application.
- Essays are the place where students can self-advocate. The rest of the application is just a matter of reporting grades and involvement in activities. In the essay section, students should seek to explain something about themselves. If there has been a difficult circumstance, the essay should still be about the student rather than the circumstance. How has the student made a difference, learned from the circumstance, or gotten involved in something as a result?
- Students should share something that admissions officers wouldn't otherwise know about them. This can be something that isn't listed on the application, but it can also be a deeper explanation of something mentioned in the activities summary.
- Essays are meant to provide an understanding of the applicant as a unique individual and to provide information about the student that wasn't clear from the other parts of the application.
- Personal statements not meant to impress—meant to be an interview across the computer screen.
 - Students often make the mistake of quoting others (like Dr. Seuss) or otherwise not allowing themselves to be the focus of the essay. This is a mistake—the essay should focus on the student and her growth. The essay should get to the point as quickly as possible.
 - Students should do some soul-searching to figure out what's most important to share with the schools.
 - Students shouldn't use words like "plethora" in their essays—they should use these essays as an opportunity to talk about themselves, not try to impress the admissions officers with words they don't usually use!
 - Students should answer the following questions: What are you proud of? What makes you different from others? Then they should take the time to explain their answers.
- UC campuses will look for ways the student has distinguished herself within her community.

How they evaluate applications:

1) Establish school context – what kind of school is it? They look at everything from whether the school is urban/rural, small/large, student/teacher ratio, average GPA, what curriculum is available to the student.

2) Establish context within the family (size, education, income, language spoken at home) – none of this is used against the student!

3) Review GPA (10-11, weighted up to 8 honors/AP credits), test scores (ACT/SAT, AP scores, IB scores, SAT II scores), # of A-G semesters taken, and major. They can see how your numbers compare to the numbers of other students at your school and within the overall applicant pool.

4) Review coursework, rigor, improvement/trajectory of grades. They look at the comments section in academic history for explanations of holes in transcript. They also look for continued rigor in 12th grade.

- For repeated coursework, students should report initial course & initial grade along with secondary course and passing grade—they want to see the full record.
- For counselors at schools where students are limited in the number of AP courses, the counselor can write an explanation (i.e. although we offer 7 AP courses, students at ____ High School are limited to 3 AP courses in their junior year) and email it to their students who are applying to UC schools, along with instructions to paste this explanation into the Academic History Comments section.

5) Review awards/activities. Students should explain acronyms (never assume the admissions officer knows what an acronym means!) and be specific. Instead of “This award was given to students with outstanding academic achievement,” students should be as specific as possible. Better version: “This award was given to students who achieved a 4.0 or above every semester.” Colleges are looking for depth of involvement over length of resume. They look for longevity, progressive responsibility, developing leadership qualities.

6) Review of personal statements (see above!)

Lifting the Veil on Athletic Admission: An insider's look at how athletics influence the process

Advising student-athletes on how athletics may affect admittance to their prospective schools can be a daunting task. Policies often vary by division, conference, and school, making for many unknowns in the process. Hear from an expert panel of professionals involved in athletic admissions on what their respective institutions practice. Included will be a nuts and bolts discussion of how an application is considered at different points during recruiting. In addition, a former All-American collegiate athlete and current high school college counselor will offer advice on guiding students throughout the process.

Speakers:

Charles Bachman, Lafayette College (Sr. Dir. Admissions, med size college)

Joel Hart, Pomona College (Associate Dean of Admissions, highly selective D3)

Kimberly Oden, Campbell Hall School (counselor, Olympian athlete, coached volleyball at Stanford, UNC, Duke, Iowa State)

Jennifer (J.T.) Thomas, Maybeck High School (college counselor, former athlete and women's soccer coach at Cal; was Alex Morgan's coach in World Cup)

Scott Verzyl, U of South Carolina (Assoc. VP Enrollment Management, D1/Big sports scene)

- Can't lift the veil entirely – too complex because it varies by sport, position you play, conference and division
- Process varies, from initial contact with an athlete through admissions, for each college.
- Student Athlete Advisory Committee is devoted to serving athletes and their families (put this session together).

Scott Verzyl, U of South Carolina (SEC/Southeastern Conference)

RE: Div 1 Sports

- Terms: PSA (prospective student athlete) / NLI (national letter of intent)
- Student should register with NCAA, get a profile, coaches start having contact
- Informal vetting: Schools prefer to have chance to have transcript informally reviewed by admissions office before student comes to campus.
- All sports are not created equal. Some are more high-profile than others.
- Admissions office can't talk about things publicly during the process for the high-profile sports.
- Vast majority of students go thru the process and meet the prevailing application requirements just like everyone else. Some, especially in the high profile sports, may not.
- Some admissions exceptions for certain students with talent (like those for art or music etc.). Referred to as an alternative admissions admit. Some sports may never get a special admit exception, like tennis.
- For some of the high profile sports, students may sign the NLI before the schools even see a transcript.

- If student is not going to meet the admissions requirements, the committee asks, 'can the student be successful on this campus with the appropriate amount of support?' Other things like character and behavior become part of the conversation and process.
- Best practices for athletic admissions – <http://www.acaopu.org/reports/best-practices-in-athletic-admissions/ACAOPU> - Assoc College Admissions Officers of Public Universities.
- Usually a policy in place – Nominate student for exception, goes to admissions, student is accepted.

Common misconceptions:

- Just because a coach has offered a scholarship to a student, doesn't mean they will be admitted.
- Just because a student has been certified to play at the Div 1 level, doesn't mean they will be admitted to play.

Charles Bachman, Lafayette College

- Member of the Patriot League (sister of the Ivy League)
- In the classroom, the Patriot League's full-member institutions, individually and collectively, consistently rank among the top Division I programs in the NCAA Graduation Rates Report.
- Since 1998, the Patriot League has ranked first among all Division I conferences offering scholarships in student-athlete graduation rates according to the NCAA Graduation Rates report.
- The League finished at the top spot with 96 percent of its teams reporting a graduation rate of 85 percent or higher in the most recent data.
- The Patriot League began as a successful Division I-AA (now called Football Championship Subdivision) football conference in 1986.
- Full League members include American, Army West Point, Boston University, Bucknell, Colgate, Holy Cross, Lafayette, Lehigh, Loyola Maryland and Navy. Associate members include Fordham in football, Georgetown in both football and women's rowing, Massachusetts Institute of Technology in women's rowing and Richmond in women's golf.
- Uses the AI (Academic Index). This league uses GPA, test scores and average of the first two to calculate the AI.
- Student-Athletes: Want the athletes to be representative of the student body as a whole. There's a floor they have to be above, but it does vary from sport to sport. Football and basketball have different calculations.
- At Lafayette, if students fall below the floor, they are not out of the running but have to be considered by the President who then has to write a letter to the league. Coaches think very carefully about whether they want to ask the President to do that.
- 33% overall admit rate for college. Coach will share info with admissions and do a preliminary read – decide if they are admissible, admissible with coach support or not admissible.
- Student athletes have been vetted early on in the process. Might read an app in admissions for a student who has already been vetted (long after decision has been made).
- Coaches and students have to understand that academics are priority 1, sports are priority 2 and you can fit other stuff in as long as it doesn't compete with 1 or 2.

Joel Hart, Pomona College

- 1600 students, one of the five Claremont Colleges (others: Pitzer, Scripps, Claremont McKenna, Harvey Mudd)

- Div 3 athletics. Largest of the athletic divisions. Student-Athletes. Want students to have the full student experience with classes, study abroad, art, and athletics.
- Pomona-Pitzer – shared athletic teams. Students/hs counselors need to know the admissions processes at both colleges. Colleges do not share info about who is applying where so it makes things complicated for coaches and students. For example, Pitzer is need-aware/Pomona is need-blind.
- Past: Didn't have a real process for evaluating athletes before and it confused admissions and colleges realized they were losing athletes to NESCAC schools and Ivies, who reviewed athletes early.
- Shifted their focus: Implemented an early read process. Coaches could reach out and get a transcript, and ask students to send senior curriculum, resume, transcript and test scores and make it into an early read (Process includes a territory read by rep to give coaches an idea of admissibility). Worked closely with coaches to fine tune the process and to help coaches understand the admissions process. Gives students more clarity, gives everyone more clarity. Now a more formal process.
- 15-20% of first years had some contact with coaches (not all early reads)

Kimberly Oden, Campbell Hall School

- Shared things she does as she works with her student-athletes.
- Ways counselors can help students:
 1. Academic eligibility – Is the student academically eligible to play sports at the college level – do they have the courses? Do calculation of NCAA eligibility. I
 2. Create a summer plan to help athletes bring up their GPA. If they are a number 1 recruit and can't make it academically, it's a problem.
 3. Use the NACAC eligibility website – student registers to play at any level, typically during junior year. Look up school by code and class name to see which ones are actually accepted by NCAA. Download the free guide - Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete.
Student needs 10 core courses before end of junior year and 2.7 GPA. Need to have a certain amount of rigor (varies depending on colleges)

How to tell student has been recruited:

- Student has received emails and letters from one or many college coaches.
- College has requested transcript. Talk to the high school coach to determine the student athlete's talent in a sport. Watch the student athlete play – is she a starter?
- Visit the college official athletic website along with the student/reality check – how tall are the basketball players in her position, for example? How fast do they run the 40? How much do the football players weigh? Swimmers and runners – show them the times of the college athletes. How many students are already in their position? Can your student really compete with them?
- Encourage student to speak to their club coach to determine which athletic division is appropriate.
- Advertising support is needed if no one is writing them (no email or mail from college coaches).
- It could be the coaches don't know about them.
- Sometimes it may be a matter of getting their name and statistics out there. Encourage the student to write the coaches!
- Ask student if coach has written or emailed him/her

- Help student email the coach (craft intro emails to head and assistant/position coaches)
- Have student attend the summer camp at the particular college. Looking for people who can help them win.

Admission Office Guidance:

- It can be confusing to a student to figure out if a coach is actually recruiting him/her and if the college coach will support the student's application (i.e. talks to the admissions office about the student).
- If they are not willing to take that step, they're probably not that interested in the student.

What the counselor can do:

- Pick up the phone and call the college coach to ask him/her about interest in the student.
- Call the admissions office to ask if the college coach is indeed supporting the student athlete's application (IMPORTANT if student falls below the student profile)
- Help the student athlete deal with high-pressure tactics from some college coaches.
- Strongly advise students against getting into the college to do sports, and then getting there and not doing it. Makes your high school look bad and hurts future applicants to that school.

MISC:

- Offer comes from Athletic Director, signs the NLI, student and family signs it.
- What about verbal commitment – what is it and what is it not? Students can commit back and forth. Pressure tactics and gamesmanship that is going on is not cool – it's happening at certain places.
- Students are verbally committing earlier and earlier – softball, volleyball and soccer - tends to happen in sophomore year. Nothing in writing. Risky, but it's happening. Coaches recruit multiple people for a position. If student needs coach support to get in, that may not pan out because coaches may have other students who could get in on their academics.
- But sometimes they have to give/get a verbal commit because they can't have them sign the NLI until a certain time due to NCAA rules.
- In the end - Only two things matter – NLI and enrollment deposit.
- Red flags that admissions officers in a D3 would look at – issues they did not know about before/things not disclosed previously - a disciplinary issue, for example. Inferior essay wouldn't really be a red flag, unless they wrote just a sentence or two for the Common App, for example. Discrepancies in test scores, courses they took, etc – red flags that are investigated by Southeastern Conference.
- AO's understand that athletes may not have lots of other extra curriculums; devote a lot of time to their sport; but they do expect them to do other things, not just athletics (Pomona) D1 schools may care less about this (U So Carolina)
- Gymnast doing sports outside of high school – how to advise those athletes? Student and parents should talk with club coaches – to know what division student should aim for. Coaches have contacts with college coaches, and that can help.
- NCAA website full of information– can search by sport, conference, college
- Advertising – what's a good time to tell families to send their info to coaches? It depends. In a way, it's never too early (freshman year may be a bit premature unless they are off the charts superstar). Sophomore and junior year = perfect time.

- Students MUST return emails whenever a coach contacts them.
- What is a guaranteed walk-on? If you can get in on your merit, you're a guaranteed walk-on. Also called supported or invited walk on.
- What about athletes who the coach likes, but not enough to offer a scholarship and won't put coach support or money behind them? If student can get in on their own, coach will be happy to have them.
- If admit is a preferred walk on and if the student doesn't make the team in tryouts or decides not to play, they are still a regular student and can continue at the school.
- Not a firm commitment if a coach says "we'll take you with a PG (post grad) year."

The Trend Toward Gap Years: An Idea Whose Time Has Come

As the anxiety attached to the college admission process intensifies year after year, the prospect of taking time off between high school and college has gained more and more appeal, particularly as students (and their parents) and colleges have come to recognize that it can lead to more mature, focused, and balanced student bodies. The focus of this session will be to provide current and emerging data on the outcomes for Gap Year students, both academic and otherwise, how best to advise students and parents interested in this option, and how the Gap Year experience can improve college success. We will discuss outcomes, both personal and institutional, share guidelines for locating and vetting programs, and provide information on financial aid and low-cost program resources. We will also demonstrate some of the ways in which Gap Year graduates are better prepared for college, including ideas for how to leverage their experiences to benefit their campus community.

Presenters:

Bob Clagett, St. Stephen's Episcopal School (TX)

Mark Hatch, Colorado College (CO)

Jason Sarouhan, Center for Interim Programs (MA)

Ethan Knight, American Gap Association (OR)

Bob Clagett, St. Stephen's Episcopal School

- As more students have had their hands held, and viewing college as summer camp, many are not ready for life. They're ready for college but not necessarily for life. Gap years serve an important purpose in helping kids grow up.
- Myth – Students will lose academic momentum, drop out of college at higher rates, etc.

Middlebury study– average GPAs of students who took gap year vs those who didn't. Higher on average. Some who take gap years generally come from more affluent areas/high schools, and are not recruited athletes.

- Academic ratings at colleges (include test scores and less quantifiable things like fire in the belly, teacher letters of rec).
- Predictive value of academic ratings increased over the 4 years students were enrolled.
- Looked at how gap year students performed over 4 years – doing better than the colleges expected.
- Also studied results at UNC Chapel Hill – Same results.

Mark Hatch, Colorado College (*background: has been a high school counselor, VP financial aid and enrollment management at CC*)

Block Plan – Students take and professors teach one class at a time

- Opportunity to study one subject in depth at a time, to get the vantage point of your classmates

- 15-25 students per class, students have to bring it every day.
- Not unusual to have a professor assign a 300 page book on Monday and expect it read to be discussed by Friday.
- Requires very high level of ownership and authorship from students
- Need to be eager to be a partner in that exchange with professors and students.
- 800 traditional classes and 700 independent self-directed courses.
- One self-directed course: Had a student who wanted to study gap year data – gave her 4 years’ worth of data. Found that 8% elected to take a full year off (another 4% enrolled as Winter starts)
- CC stats: 8,062 applicants. 17% admitted, 44% enrolled.
- Application supplement asks students: Design your own block. Want to know what the student thinks about what would it be like to study one thing at a time?
- Invite students to talk about a gap year or gap semester and what they plan to do. Will it hurt students in the admissions process? In case of Colorado College – no – **they are looking for students who want to get off the proverbial treadmill.**
- On application - Just need some thoughtful paragraphs about what they’d do with their gap year, and an indication that they want to get off the hamster wheel. It will actually help your chances.
- GPA was higher for students who took a full gap year. GPA correlates highly with academic ratings.
- When males take a gap year they outperform their female students.
- CC places certain students in a winter start. These students do not make stupid 18-year old mistakes, according to the RA’s. Lower incidence of behavioral issues.
- Working hard to increase their gap year enrollees. Would like it to be 20% of applicants. Fifteen people make admissions decisions.

Jason Sarouhan – Center for Interim Programs

Organization works with 6,000 individuals to place them in internship opportunities and other programs. Talked about the time he took off school (UCSD) and went to Africa with his primatology professor. Changed the trajectory of his life.

Typical gap year student profiles – all shapes and sizes

- “The worker” – high scores, high GPA
- “Meaning seeker” – high scores, lower GPA
- “Pragmatist” – attend college with clearer focus
- “The struggler” – learning differences
- “The floater” – not fully engaged, on immature side

Benefits of gap time:

- Optimizes the natural break btwn high school and college
- Reignites the love of learning
- Connects the relevance of classroom studies to the world
- Deepens passions and expands interests
- Provides experience and skills for college and career
- Creates a clearer sense of college major and career path

Why is gap year so potent?

- Adolescence – the period in which one matures from a child into an adult
- Adulthood qualities – confidence + competence + resilience

- Students have been working so hard since middle school to get great grades so they can get into a great college but many are not independent. This is a critical time to become more confident, competent and become resilient.

Components of a gap year:

- Facilitated group programs
- Volunteer placements
- Room and board/work exchange
- Internships
- Specialty courses
- Work, personal 'pilgrimages', etc.

Advising Students & Parents:

- Gap year is a complement to, not a replacement for, college
- Early preparation is critical – need about 6 months to plan for this
- Student concerns – being behind their peers but remind them that their road with their friends ends at end of high school, everyone goes on to their own pursuits.
- Apply & defer or reapply? Trying to apply to college during a gap year is very difficult; best to apply during their senior year if they can. Some aren't ready.
- Some are using the gap year to re-apply to a college they didn't get into (colleges not fond of this at all).
- Program deadline flexibility – gap year programs have deadlines, most by May. Volunteer programs are later. Internships take 2-3 months to set up.
- Budget conversation – costs vary \$15,000 and down to something like getting a stipend working on a ranch. But need at least \$5,000-10,000. There are some scholarships available.

Potential Pitfalls & Challenges

- Forced Gap Year – Let the student lead the way
- Poorly designed gap year – if students go off and do the most independent thing, it typically doesn't work. Taking progressive steps with independence is the most successful way. Take the time to research the background of the gap program, don't just go with something you find online.
- Poorly run programs are common – find the experts who can lead you to reliable programs
- Students change; plans change – best-laid plans that are mapped out change so don't hold too tightly to it. Stay flexible.
- Affordability questions – make sure students know how to budget. It's expensive to plan a whole year.
- It takes work to create a great gap year. Can't plan it on the fly.

Ethan Knight – American Gap Assoc. (AGA)

- Gap year is not usually a year-long program– it's a semester, typically, and then students usually transition to a work experience.

AGA committed to:

- Raise awareness for gap years – Gap Year Conference
- Work toward socio-economic parity/fundraising/financial – look at how to help lower income kids have these opportunities.

- Research – national alumni survey. How do you justify gap year experiences? Parents save for 4 years of college, not 5 years. Some graduate college in less than 4 years if they take gap years.
- Safe and quality experiences using the US Dept of Justice-approved Gap Year Standards – takes 6 months to a year for organizations to pass this process.

Info for Counselors:

- About 70% of students taking a gap year are trying to cobble together something independently. Many are at risk, so that is why the standards were established.
- University Deferral Policies for Gap Years – can read these online on AGA website.
- Also have planning tools and gap year options.
- Structured – AGA-accredited programs
- Gap year universities – Tufts, Princeton, UNC, Elon, Duke (engage), St. Norbert's, American, PSU, FSU (offers scholarship to students taking a gap year), SCAD
- Gap year consultants – Interim Programs, EnROute, Gap Year Explorer, Taylor the Gap, Taking off
- Go it alone: for more budget conscious, independent, savvy. Remember to start with more structure and ease into more freedom

Funding a gap year:

- Almost \$3 million in scholarships went out from censused gap year organizations in 2014
- Back a Gapper Scholarships
- College credit for some (+FAFSA)
- Financial aid web page on AGA website
- Two sections of the gap year: higher-cost structured, and near zero-cost independent

Two reasons for taking a gap year:

- Burnout from the competitive pressure of high school and
- A desire to know more about themselves
- 90% are back in college within a year, more engaged, loving to learn and more independent
- connects you to the larger world
- helps you find purpose
- nibble around the edges of a career – give you the flavor of it

College Advice:

- Apply regularly. Get accepted and then defer (see list online at AGA) Best to advise students not to disclose on the application to colleges that they are planning to take a gap year (Colorado College is an exception)
- Then be forthcoming and disclose intentions early with admissions officer
- Stay in communication
- Spend some time figuring out how to tell your story when you're done with your gap year
 - If college plans change, be transparent with your admissions officer
 - Request a re-evaluation of your financial aid package

RESOURCES:

- www.americangap.org
- Haigler, K. & Nelson, R. Gap Year, American Style

- White, K. "Complete Guide to the Gap Year"
- 20 questions to Vet Gap Year Orgs
- AGA Accredited Organizations
- University Deferral Policies List
- Gap Year Counselors
- www.usagapyearfairs.org, www.teenlife.com, www.gooverseas.com

Four Comprehensive College Counseling Models

Does waiting until spring of junior year to start college counseling still fit the needs of your students and community? In this era of early applications, does it make sense? For many schools, the answer is no—they've felt the need to provide more guidance before junior year and even as early as middle school. "More" and "earlier" are not necessarily better. Four high schools with very different comprehensive college counseling models share highlights of their programs, how they were created, and how they are being received.

Presenters:

AhYoung Chi, Beverly Hills High School

Philip Petrone, Marymount High School

Jeff Shea, Pine Crest School

Craig Wittgrove, Cherry Creek High School

A comprehensive program assists students in all phases, beginning freshman year and culminating senior year in plans for college and other post-secondary experiences.

- Students who have these programs at their school (according to college admissions reps) are better prepared for app process, aware of timelines, financial aid, and differences among colleges. They can take the classes needed earlier to have more rigor and more opportunities.
- Can be harmful if it adds stress earlier. Need to be thoughtful about working with younger students.
- See PowerPoint for breakdown of example schools and their demographics

Pine Crest model: allows a collaborative yet independent focus on academics starting early. Starting in 9th can cause a ripple effect over the next few years.

- 9th grade: Meetings throughout year and a lot of programming around having a strong foundation.
- 10th grade: Transition a bit into college process. They do a mini college fair and do case studies with small groups of parents.
- 11th grade: Bring in deans and VPs from colleges to have a panel for parents and families
- 12th grade: College essay review starting in June of 11th, application workshops.
 - o Monitor the students throughout to identify those who are struggling.
 - o Moved college counseling office under same umbrella as academic advising so it's more holistic, and office is open in the summer so people can ask questions rather than having questions build up before the fall semester.
 - o College fairs throughout the year, overview of financial aid process, a day with athletic recruitment specialists.

Marymount model: has a STEM initiative and conservatory arts program and offers summer internships in local area for students. 97% of students go to four-year schools

- 9th grade: Establish college-going culture so they know expectations and start building a portfolio. Allows them to start recognizing what they are good at.
- 10th grade: Plan college nights to help manage the crazy and keep the message sane. Bring in panelists and encourage exploration of different types of colleges

- 11th grade: help students establish what their values are and what they value in a college. Programming just for parents and teach them how enrollment management works so you can manage the parents' expectations. Develop a list and work on testing plan with each kid.
- 12th grade: App workshops, how to behave on a college visit, more parent nights, keeping track of deadlines, review essays.
- All of this is to address anxiety and make the process sane. Keep an open door policy and the entire counseling staff collaborates.

Cherry Creek model: 3500 kids, public school, goal of high school that 100% will apply to college. 93% are graduating and go to four year school from class of 2015. Their model lets counselors work with large number of students in efficient way. Started as a split-grade model but then switched to alpha model to stay with kids through all four years.

- 9th grade: Advisory program (one day per week the advisors discuss things like gpa, transcripts, and the four-year plan), getting the kids' feet wet. Mostly introducing them to stuff without adding to stress.
- 10th grade: Focus on who that student is Students are given tasks and meet with the counselors in a cohort/class-like group. Family nights for parents that talk through financial aid and testing early - just familiarize and do not add stress!
- 11th grade: Finding the fit for the kid. Meet more individually with students and parents and update academic plan, and reach out to those who fail to come to meetings. Parents want to know how to pay for college through not just need-based scholarships. Started program on how to pay for school. Case studies with college deans.
- 12th grade: Just the counselor and student in meetings. Parents want to come but they try to keep parents out so counselor can get to know student more personally (helps with letter of rec). Senior day to celebrate where they are going, talk about college decisions -- make it fun!
- When they first started the events the attendance wasn't great but now they have really good turnout. Use social media to promote things.

Beverly Hills model: 6 guidance counselors with 250 roughly per counselor. Families assigned one counselor as main contact.

- 9th grade: Mostly exploration with college day, Naviance intro, and programming. (9th grade is for building good study habits, getting involved at school, and learn to use their resources.)
- 10th grade: Want them to continue exploration and start to discover what they want, and to invest in themselves (getting more involved, finding a passion), and understanding some of the options available for them after high school. Some talk about testing in the spring.
- 11th grade: Start defining what they are learning about themselves and making connections to their future. Start taking leadership roles in their activities. Get familiar with all aspects of application: essays, apps, tests, etc.
- 12th grade: Time to work! Doing the applications, making decisions on which schools, what schools are a fit. Providing a lot of individual guidance for those decisions. Want them to be engaged so they know they made their decision while informed. Monthly counselor coffee for parents so they can help provide info and answer questions.

The Middle Schooler and College Interest

Admission counselors often groan at the site of a middle school student at the college fair or in a college tour. Middle school counselors believe this is a valuable endeavor, otherwise they wouldn't take time out of the student's day or school resources to attend such visits. Still the questions remain: How early is too early? Do middle school students glean valuable information from these visits? Do the college admission representatives provide information the students understand and can use at a later date? Debate the pros and cons of early college visitors at fairs and your schools. Presenters include middle and high school counselors, as well as college admission counselors. They also discuss the use of swag in college advertising.

Presenters:

Robert Bardwell, Monson High School

Palmer Muntz, Consultant

Jeffrey Smith, St. Mary's College of Maryland

Kristin Paddock Krycia, George Fox Middle School

Why talk about this in middle school?

- Maximize the window of developmental growth. Other than toddler age, middle school is the most susceptible age for learning.
- Defining point in life and it can prepare kids for high school challenges.
- Teach them about the process:
 - o Explain the vocabulary. What is a bachelor's degree?
 - o Play GPA game (available on NACAC site: <http://tncollegeaccess.org/sites/default/files/GPA%20Game%20NACAC.pdf>)
 - o Middle schoolers don't know what they don't know. Teach them the elementary things first.

How can a student prepare in middle school?

- Get good grades, develop study habits, go to vocational camps, learn about STEM/STEAM/AVID/ROP, get involved in activities and find out what you are interested in.
- Options other than college: mortuary science, culinary arts, military, beautician, welder mechanic, masonry, etc. Let them tell you what interests them and then bring those people in to speak to kids.
- Bring in a lawyer to talk about ramifications of social media so they know before getting to college.
- You can have them write short essays based on Common App prompts because they are reflective and it gives them a way to learn to write that type of essay.
- We know that early learning of a language helps someone learn better and retain the info. Why is it different with college and career readiness?
- Research shows that not all students go to college and out of those that do a good number don't finish. Starting earlier makes them aware of the opportunities and it becomes a goal at an earlier age and allows them to prepare.
- Create partnerships with local colleges and take them on tours of local schools. Colleges can provide tutors and get kids involved with the college sports.
 - o Idea: Middle school kid gets to sit on the bench with local college team to experience the feel of college life (pick the kid that might need that extra boost).

What High School Counselors Should Know about the Transfer Process

A growing number of students are choosing the transfer path. Examine transfer data and hear about the process from perspectives of high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges. Learn about success strategies and resources available to transfer students. Audience members are encouraged to share stories about what works, with an eye toward recommending solutions.

Presenters:

Kathy Klein, Colorado State University

Rhonda Macy, Red Rocks Community College

Craig Wittgrove, Cherry Creek High School

- No difference in the diploma once you receive that 4-year degree.
- 3.6 million 1st-time students in fall 2008: only 37.2% transferred by 2014
- Of all bachelor's degrees in 2014, 46% started at a 2-year school
- When students go in with a 2-year degree, they tend to graduate at a higher rate than those who come in with credits below a 2-year degree-level.

High School Perspective

- Challenges and concerns with transfer option:
 - o Fear - What will my friends think? Can I successfully transfer?
 - o Stigma/perception - Oh, you couldn't get into a 4 year? Can't afford a 4-year?
 - You can help with this with family nights at your school. Have the conversation early on with families so they understand the process.
- Not residential or traditional
- Is a transfer student valued on a 4-year campus?
 - o Is the degree the same as a BS from the traditional route? Tied to that is whether they will get the same job. They fear that it's not the same.
- Key factors for counselors: Still need to send transcripts and test scores (including AP/IB) to community college, still stay engaged in rigorous courses senior year of high school (sometimes kids slack once they decide they will go the 2-year route), counselors should connect more with community college, and make sure they are reaching ultimate goal (AA or BA), and celebrate that success!!

2-Year Perspective

- Why it's a good option: cheaper, flexible schedules (can choose schedules and have a 3-day weekend!), small classes, easy transition to college, accessibility to support services (writing centers and help to become proficient in math/writing)
- Dual enrollment can mean going into college with a year or two of classes already.
- Successful hand Off to 4-Year
 - o Statewide academic communication and common course numbering makes this so much easier.
 - o Transfer fairs with local colleges, and developing strong transfer programs on campus.

4-Year Perspective

- How to help transfer kids
 - o LEARN the requirements - it can be complicated. There can be really specific deadlines and requirements for each school. It's about personal responsibility on the part of the student.
 - o Four-year schools should have a point of contact for transfer students and provide clear online resources for transfer students. Offer transfer student days and tours to highlight those transfer opportunities.
 - o Offer online equivalency tools – www.transferology.com for example (Colorado school web site)
 - o Offer individualized evaluations to transfer kids and help them understand how to transfer to your college. Show them a map of classes and requirements.
 - o Address financial aid concerns (clearly state transfer scholarship options online, share the work-study and student employment options with transfer kids).
 - o Once admitted, it's not over. They need to be supported through that transition like traditional students. Ideas: transfer mentors, living/learning communities specifically for transfer kids, student organizations, transfer honors and scholars programs, transfer student association to address transfer student concerns.

Answering Parent Questions about ROI and Career Placement

The escalating cost of education partnered with a sluggish economic recovery has led to numerous headlines questioning the value and validity of a four-year college degree. Recent data released by Chegg, in collaboration with its Internships.com and Career Services teams, shed some light on the debate and can be used to better inform families about opportunities for placement for today's career-focused learners and provide context into how enrollment managers can implement a parent engagement plan to alleviate one of the biggest challenges in the college recruitment process.

Presenters:

Mildren Johnson, Virginia Tech University

Teeg Mettelle, Northland College

Gil Rogers, Chegg Enrollment Services

Ben Van Roo, Chegg, Inc.

- Chegg asked students to grade their schools and they kept the data.
- College rankings are harming students and institutions:
 - o Asked students about rankings. 77% of students think the rankings are important, but most of them don't know what they mean.
 - o 93% of employers said rankings isn't important at all.
- Colleges don't think they communicate the value of their institutions well.
- What parents are really asking (when they bring up rankings) is, "Will my kid get a job when they graduate?"
- Happening because of rankings:
 - o More than 9 in 10 admissions officers think their fellow institutions make up numbers to help their rankings. It means admission people think they all have to do it to *their own* rankings.
- The U.S. News rankings are made up mostly (80%) of things that don't benefit students (reputation, what high school counselors think of colleges, test scores, average money spent on students, faculty salaries).
 - o To boost rankings, schools are making classes smaller, which means kids can't get into classes, which means it takes longer to graduate, which isn't a benefit at all.
 - o Average spend per student includes recruitment money spent but does NOT include money spent on libraries, or tech centers, which are more beneficial to students...certainly more than brochures mailed to high school students.
- Rankings don't address important things
 - o Increasing dropout rates (50% roughly of students drop out)
 - o 27% are getting jobs related to their major. They are going to school, 1/2 are dropping out and then 1/4 get jobs related to their majors.
 - o Student-debt ratio has only gone up, and pretty drastically. We aren't using this as measure of a college.
- Questions that we need to ask:
 - o What do recent grads do? We need stats.
 - o Are recent grads SATISFIED with experience?
 - o What's the average debt load? More important than average salary of grads!
 - o How many grads work in their field?

- What is the average debt for students in my major?
- What % get jobs immediately after graduation?
- Parents want a hard number for things but that doesn't show the entire story.
- Whether or not the school has a high rate of medical school acceptance isn't important. That student has the same chance at ANY school, it depends on how hard they work.
- You can't compare an Ivy League school with another school that has a larger number of LD students or specialized programs.
- College Scorecard is a step: its measuring some of the things that need to be measured (like debt, average loan payments), but this is just the tip of the iceberg.
- Colleges talk about that ONE kid who worked with NASA or did something amazing. Well... most millennials think the next Bill Gates is in their generation, and 66% of them believe they know that person personally, and 25% think it's THEM. Think about how that kind of mentality reacts to a school that says that touts their ONE kid that did something amazing. It can be irresponsible to be relying on those stories and marketing with the rankings when that isn't the reality.
- All those CRMs, SIS/LMS, databases, alumni CRMs... They are difficult to measure and are fragmented, and don't actually measure anything. So how can you make sure the students that come to your school are successful?
 - We need to connect the systems above so that it can be more predictive.
- Alternatives to Rankings:
 - The Outcomes Survey - www.theoutcomessurvey.com
 - College Factual Badge - www.collegefactual.com (even badges individual programs within the college)
 - When students see these third-party endorsements, its making them feel comfortable with their choices. They may already like this school and it helps them feel good about picking the school, because of peer pressure or parental pressure.

How America Pays for College 2015: What Counselors Need to Know

Discuss results from How America Pays for College, an annual study from Sallie Mae, conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs, an independent market research company. The project, which has surveyed 800 students and 800 parents of college students each year since 2008, provides information about the resources families use to put together their paying-for-college package—including savings, scholarships and grants, and loans—and examines their attitudes toward attending and paying for college. The study depicts changes over time in funding choices and amounts paid. Funding differences by institution type and region of the country are highlighted. Presenters provide an overview of the 2015 study and lead a discussion on the potential implications for admission offices and high school guidance counselors.

Presenters:

Liz Robinson, Sallie Mae, MA

Marie O'Malley, Sallie Mae, MA

Kent Hopkins, Arizona State University, AZ

Meg Mahoney, Collegewise, MA

Kim Chaffer Schroeder, AGS Partners, LLC, KY

Overview:

- Sallie Mae annual survey studies the trend over time behaviors and attitudes related to the purchase and value of higher education.
- Parent income and savings became the No. 1 source used by families to pay for college in 2014/15.
- Only two in five families (40%) created a plan for paying for ALL years of college before their student enrolled
- Fewer than half of families are saving for college

How the “typical” family paid for college, 2014-15:

- Parents contribute more toward paying for college than other parties—last year paying 38% of college costs.
- External resources paid 35% of costs
- Students paid 27% of costs
- Families are reaching into their pockets to spend more on college than in 2014.

Interesting Outcomes of Study:

- The majority of college students are working while in school. (73%). Although only 5% of this work is in an “internship or desired field”. The majority of students work in the retail industry.
- Six out of ten families didn't borrow for college in 2014/15.
- Families are less worried about their student finding a job after graduation than in 2014.

- 88% of families are willing to stretch financially to afford college
- 35% of families are making loan payments in school to cut costs
- 89% of families have filed FAFSA vs. 78% of non-borrowers
- Students take primary responsibility for borrowing. Students signed for nearly three-quarters of the dollars borrowed

Advice for Counselors, why How America Pays can benefit School and Private Counselors:

- NACAC's Step-by-Step curriculum
- Encourage families to plan
- Access to annual *data-driven* information to share with and to educate stakeholders at schools and families in the private setting
- Tools to help empower counselors, parents and students to be informed, act responsibly in the college admission process.
- Deliver counseling that is aligned with NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice.
- Don't Avoid the \$\$ Topic
 - Parents are stressed about how they are going to pay. Many counselors avoid the conversation.
- Data driven information shared with stakeholders at school enhances Credibility and Confidence in counselors. Informed counselors help families.
- Counselors can help reduce stress in parents and students
- Counselors can help students frame context of what college will be like (e.g. working)

Higher Ed Side:

- Freshmen Disproportionately Employed
- Incentivize Depts. to Augment Student Staff
- Mentorship and Professional Skill Development
- Nearly three fourths (74%) of families had students working, the majority year-round, and for an average of 22 hours per week. Students from middle-income families (\$35k-110k) were more likely (76%) to work year-round compared to low-income (<\$35k) students (63%)

The Role Recommendation Letters Play in Highly-Selective College Admission

Letters of recommendation (LORs) are beyond students' control; once references are requested and the forms provided, the responsibility lies with the educators. In a pool of thousands of seemingly "ideal" candidates, strong letters of support can have significant impact in distinguishing students within highly-selective admission processes. Join us for an engaging discussion on what colleges seek in LORs and strategies for counselors and teachers to write letters that both effectively and efficiently represent your students' unique assets.

Presenters:

Lauren Avalos, MIT, MA

Debra Johns, Yale University, CT

Nadira Hairston, Community Charter School of Cambridge, MA

Emery Sykes, Achievement First Amistad High School, CO

Overall:

- LORs are incredibly helpful to institutions.
- In a season, at Yale, an admission officer will read about 34,000 required pieces of applications. 1,300 applications in one season. This is why one page LORs are preferred. Length matters!
- Be careful with acronyms. Do not assume we know what they mean. And if they are very important to a student's story, make sure AOs know what they are.
- Talk about potential of student, student as citizen, student's attitude toward learning, how the student will be as a part of our housing system, how they deal with adversity, how they manage their lives. At Yale, students are very busy and AOs want to understand how they have done with their busy lives.
- Do not use a whole string of adjectives! Show don't tell!
- Summarize, do not duplicate what AOs will read in other parts of the application.
- Provide anecdotes. Anecdotes are valued.
- When you use the form and check boxes, we value those checked boxes (at Yale).
- If you need to reach out to us, do so. If you write it in the letter and do not hear from us, call us.
- It is beneficial if you detail the demands of a student's schedule.
- At highly selective institutions, bullet point letters are not preferred. We would like detail and depth if possible.
- Make sure you
 - Sign your letters!
 - Proofread your letters!
 - Avoid physical description of students
 - Do not address letters "dear Sir"
- Including quotes from teachers or "others" or including long quotes is something to avoid. Don't stray too far out into the weeds. Including other quotations makes a counselor letter disjointed. AOs want to read a counselor rec not another teacher rec.

What MIT looks for:

Students who demonstrate resilience, a deep commitment to STEM, collaboration, and are adept at solving problems. "Way beyond test scores and grades."

What Yale looks at:

Yale asks the larger questions, how will a student thrive? How will they grow at Yale? What will they add? Yale looks for students that are adventurous, collaborative, curious, open minded, confidence, one that will lead and follow, community minded.

- At Highly selective institutions, every piece of the application is vital to us.
- We read, reflect and take everything counselors send very seriously.
- LORs provide great clues on how a student will transition to Yale. Fit, at Yale, is taken very seriously

Want More?

Collegewise is a private college-counseling company that holds two beliefs: (1) The college admissions process should be an exciting, adventurous time for every family, and (2) accurate, helpful college information should be made available to everyone. So, even though we are private counselors who work with families who can afford to hire us, we also enjoy working with anyone who is interested and willing to listen, whether we're writing, speaking, or teaching as much as we can.

In return, we ask counselors to please consider the following:

Order some of our [free resources for high school counselors](#).

You can also share any and all of them with your colleagues or students.

Sign up for our [free email newsletter for counselors, students, and parents](#).

We don't send out sales pitches—just great college planning advice. And if you change your mind about subscribing, one click is all it takes to opt-out.

Check out our founder's blog, wiselikeus.com.

Hundreds of counselors around the world read (and share) it, and it's a streak Cal Ripken would admire in that Kevin's blogged his wisdom daily since 2009.

Read our book, [If the U Fits: Expert Advice on Finding the Right College and Getting Accepted](#)

It's not just any book—it's our book, preaching the Collegewise ways that can students find the right colleges, get in, and actually enjoy the process.

Invite us to help you.

We're really good presenters both live and online and there are very few college-related topics we cannot handle. And yes, we also do amazing professional development. If you'd like to set something up where Collegewise can hopefully help, please email our CEO, Paul Kanarek, at paulk@collegewise.com.

Questions?

If you or your students would like more information about Collegewise or our college counseling programs, visit collegewise.com.