



# Your College Navigator, LLC

Admissions by design, not chance!

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## Summer 2018

### Do Something Interesting

Job, internship, or community service; summer program

Prepare for Summer SAT II's (Aug 25th)

### Explore Colleges

Use websites, guidebooks, virtual online tours and on-campus tours, meetings and interviews

### Rising Seniors

Begin to work on Common Application and other applications as they become available

Narrow college list

Build your application—piece by piece

Focus on your message

Craft your essay

Prepare for fall SATs and/or ACTs

Detailed college tours, meetings & interviews

July 14<sup>th</sup>—ACT

(not offered in NY)

Aug. 25<sup>th</sup>—SAT

### Underclassmen

Prepare for fall PSAT

Make the most of your summer activities

## College Admission Trends

Several trends established during previous years are continuing, each of which should influence your college planning:

### Rise in the number of colleges to which students apply:

Even though the number of US college students applying to college has dipped slightly from previous years, the number of applications continues to rise. This increase is primarily due to students applying to more colleges. A significant contributor to this increase is the additional colleges that accept the Common Application. Students are taking advantage of the ease of submitting applications and applying to additional colleges, inadvertently contributing to the problem. Since the number of colleges is not increasing, and colleges are not getting any larger, something has to give. What gives is the acceptance rate, which once again is down at many top colleges. And, as students apply to an increased number of colleges, the quality of their applications frequently suffers as well. The solution is not more applications. It is to do a better job on the applications you do submit - it is **quality** versus **quantity**.

**Wait listing:** With more applicants, colleges are placing a growing number of students on the waitlist. Since students are applying to an increased number of colleges, many colleges now face additional uncertainty. To protect themselves, colleges have grown the size of their waitlists. In fact, at least two of the top 20 colleges in

the country routinely put more students on their waitlist than the number of students accepted.

**“Fit” and “Contribution”:** Your application must “bring to life” who you are in the mind of the admissions counselors. Through your essay, supplemental essays, and activities, as well as your teacher recommendations, your application communicates who you are, how well you fit, what you offer, and what is important to you in ways that your grades and test scores cannot. Your application must weave all of this together into a cohesive whole, in effect telling the college, this is who I am, and this is what you get when you accept me.

**Importance of the “interest factor”:** We are not talking about telling the college that you wanted to attend since you were in 2nd grade. This is about showing genuine interest in learning more about the college. For instance, if the college is within a 4-hour drive, did you visit the campus? Did you meet with an admissions counselor when they visited your high school, at a college fair or a regional roadshow? Did you meet with a professor or a coach? How about an alumnus? Many colleges are paying increased attention to your interest in attending their college. They want to feel reasonably comfortable that if they extend an offer to their institution that you will attend.

With a deeper understanding of these factors, you will be better positioned to develop your college admissions game plan.

## Career Options for Landscape Architecture Majors

According to the Washington State University website, landscape architects design:

- City, state, or federal parks
- Public and private gardens and arboreta
- Waterfronts and greenways
- Community development plans
- Urban centers
- Streetscapes and neighborhoods
- Resorts
- Corporate facilities
- University/college campuses
- Nature preserves
- Zoos

Landscape architects are engaged in:

- Sustainable urban development
- Ecological planning and restoration
- Community partnerships
- Environmental advocacy
- Landscape preservation
- Resource management
- Farmland protection
- Food production and community gardening
- Water conservation
- Green infrastructure and storm-water management
- Aging-in-place and senior-friendly community planning

Learn More:

American Society of Landscape Architects at [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org).

Bureau of Labor Statistics at [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov) (click on the Occupational Outlook Handbook)

## Majoring in Landscape Architecture

*“Landscape architecture combines art, ecology, engineering, and community engagement to create meaningful outdoor places.” (WA State University)* If you're creative, interested in the environment and science, and enjoy working with people, landscape architecture may be just the career for you. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, landscape architecture is the fastest growing of all the design professions, although the profession has experienced a contraction in job opportunities over the last few years as the housing market declined. Nearly a quarter of the 30,000 landscape architects working in the United States are self-employed; the average salary earned by those in this profession is over \$65,000/year, with those working for the Government averaging over \$85,000/year.

Landscape architecture involves the planning, design and management of both the natural and man-made environment. In addition to beautifying our environment, landscape architects must determine the best use for a site. They need to consider the environmental impact of proposed development, and make plans for both auto and pedestrian traffic. Landscape architects design such varied facilities as parks and playgrounds, college and industrial campuses, gardens and recreational areas, shopping centers, residential developments and national forests. Their work impacts all of us.

To become a landscape architect, students must learn about the ways the natural environment can be changed to better the quality of life for its users. They must first understand the land as well as its ecology. To this end, students study design, construction techniques, art, history, and natural and social sciences. Majors start with traditional techniques such as site planning and design, employing both drawing and computer graphics in studio-based courses. The students study ecological systems, learn about plants that grow in a variety of conditions, and discover the relationships between social and

political institutions and the natural environment. At more advanced levels, the major includes courses in urban design, landscape technology and regional planning. As a culminating project, students may design a park or a garden, or create a site plan for a residential dwelling or sports arena.

College departments may differ greatly in their approach, so students contemplating this major should look closely at the emphasis that is placed at the colleges they are considering. Some programs focus on physical design, others on environmental issues such as sustainability and regeneration. Some do a good job of combining both design and ecology. City-based colleges are more likely to focus on urban design than are suburban campuses. Finally, some colleges offer a four-year curriculum that culminates in a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture (BSLA); others offer the five-year Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA), which includes more studio and lecture courses. Most states require that landscape architects be licensed, a process that includes the completion of the professional degree and the passing of a national licensing exam. Some states also require completion of a period of supervised practice before the landscape architect becomes licensed.

Landscape architects may be employed in a variety of settings including public, private, and academic institutions. Many are self-employed and have their own businesses, or work as consultants. Those interested in private employment may find jobs in engineering, architectural and planning organizations. Governmental agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state and local governments provide many graduates with opportunities for employment. Those landscape architects who hold Masters degrees may go on to teach and conduct research at colleges and universities.

## Financial Matters: Talking To Your Kids About Money



Before students leave for college, families need to have a conversation about reasonable spending expectations. Parents need to be aware of the costs of books, clubs, activities and midnight pizza runs. But students shouldn't assume there is a limitless debit card at their disposal.

Most would agree that parents owe it to their children to discuss their financial commitment. Parents need to make their academic and financial expectations clear. Do you expect that your children will have some "skin in the game" and be responsible for some of the expenses? Are they taking out loans? Are they responsible for their personal expenses? Do you plan to

provide them with a monthly allowance? Writing the checks without having these conversations is not conducive to financial success.

Part of what makes this conversation even more challenging is that money is almost a virtual concept for many students. They use gift cards, credit cards, debit cards and apps such as Venmo and PayPal. Money, the green stuff, is not a meaningful part of many teenagers' lives.

Here are some tips for getting that financial conversation going:

Be straight about the costs of tuition and room and board. Most students can't comprehend the idea of laying out \$50,000 or more per year. Help them understand the investment by comparing it to something more tangible – equal to the cost of two cars, perhaps.

Be specific about what you're willing to pay for and even more specific about what you're unwilling to subsidize.

Discuss the hidden costs at college. Some fees are not included in the list of required fees. For example, class-specific fees may include charges for materials, studio or practice room time and laboratory fees. The same is true for per-use fees (such as the athletic facility, pool or weight room). According to Edvisors, most students will spend \$250 to \$500 per month on these hidden costs.

Consider putting your expectations in writing. For example, if your student will be responsible for paying back any loans, ask them to sign a contract. Some parents tie in academic expectations as well: "you must have a 3.0 GPA to continue."

Make sure your student is cautious before setting up multiple credit and debit card accounts. Be clear with them about what you'll pay for and what is their responsibility.

Schedule a financial check-up with them about a month in. If they've done a good job, loosen the leash a little.

## How Movies Can Help You Write Better Application Essays

Like most people, you probably have many stories that you can tell about your life. You've done things, gone places, had triumphs and taken nosedives. As the saying goes, "life happens."

The best college application essays, however, don't merely tell what happened *to* you; they also let admission officers understand why what happened *matters*.

How do you do that in 650 words or less? Think like a screenwriter.

Regardless of whether they're writing comedies or dramas, screenwriters all use the same underlying story-telling elements. A hero (or heroine) sets out to achieve a goal. Along the path, he discovers there are obstacles in his way. He takes action and gets around the obstacles, and in the process, he has an epiphany about himself. Perhaps he learns he's stronger than he

thought, or realizes that something he thought matters, doesn't. In the end, the hero usually triumphs, but the viewer has also been let in on a secret: the hero is not the same person at the end of the film that he was at the beginning.

Let's look at how these story-telling elements might apply to writing your personal essay.

**Hero** – The central character in your college essay is always *you*. After all, when an admission officer sits down to read your essay, you're the person they want to get to know, and, hopefully, root for. Every good hero needs a goal: something that he or she wants or needs. Let's say, for instance, that your essay topic is about a math class in which you had a tough time. The hero's goal in the essay is to get a passing grade in the class.

**Obstacle** – If the central character of a story just breezes through to his goal, he isn't going to be much of a hero.

So, in writing your essay, make sure your reader will understand the obstacles you faced or the problems you had to solve before reaching your goal.

Heroes can face two types of obstacles: *external* obstacles and *internal* obstacles. External obstacles are things that happen *to* you. Internal obstacles are roadblocks that *you've* created for yourself.

External obstacles and struggles both can have their role in essays. Most of us have faced problems that were not of our making. We've been lost in a strange place, had to deal with rude people, or faced the illness and death of loved ones. Often, external obstacles like these form the backstory in an essay.

However, to an admission reader, the most interesting and revealing obstacles in an essay are usually *internal* obstacles. We lack confidence to ask

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Check out our website for  
upcoming seminars

## How Movies Can Help ... (continued from p 3)

directions, have trouble being assertive with a difficult person, or we are scared of seeing our loved one sick so we avoid them. *Internal* obstacles – and our struggles to resolve them – let admission readers peek inside your mind and learn something more important about you than just “what happened.”

Getting back to our essay about math class, an external obstacle could be having a bad math teacher. On the other hand, if you were afraid to ask your math teacher for help, or have always had doubts about your math abilities, that’s an *internal* obstacle (fear) that must be resolved before you can reach your goal of passing math.

**Action** – Faced with an obstacle or problem in his way, a good film hero always takes *action*. The “action” part is just as important in your college essay. Admission committees are interested in getting to know who you are as a person. While the obstacles or problems you’ve faced in life are certainly part of your story, *how* you dealt with those obstacles or problems is really where the story becomes about *you*.

In our math essay, perhaps you got up the courage to ask your math teacher for extra help after school. Or you put your fears about math aside and began to spend more time on your math homework

each night.

**Epiphany and Resolution** – The epiphany in your essay is your “Aha!” moment. You face a problem successfully (or unsuccessfully) and you change in some way. Your perspective shifts or you decide to take a new direction. The resolution tells the admission reader what happens *after* the story ends: what your new direction was, or how your new perspective changed your actions going forward.

The most successful personal essays usually include both an epiphany and a resolution. Although the problem/obstacle/goal and your struggles/actions may be *outwardly* directed in your essay, a strong epiphany and resolution always have an *internal* element.

For instance, in our math class essay, an epiphany might be that as you started to do better in math, you realized that math can actually be fun and interesting. And a resolution for the story might be that you not only ended up earning an A in the class, but also decided to become an engineer.

While these story-telling elements won’t work for every type of application essay, keeping them in mind as you brainstorm essay ideas can help you identify the most interesting and important stories you have to tell about yourself and provide a framework for telling your story.