



Your College Navigator, LLC

Admissions by design, not chance!

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Seniors:

Continue work on college apps

Complete all financial forms required by your colleges (FAFSA/CSS Profiles)

Keep your grades up

Juniors:

Focus on grades and activity accomplishments

Continue your college planning/research and selection

Study for upcoming SAT/ACT Tests

Attend College Planning Seminar

9th and 10 Graders:

Focus on grades and activity accomplishments

Attend College Planning Seminar

Upcoming College Planning Seminars for 9th, 10th and 11th grade Students and Parents

Jump-Start College Admissions

Dec 5 - Cold Spring Harbor Library

Dec 11 - Sid Jacobson JCC

Dec 12 - Manhasset Library

To register go to
www.ycnavigator.com

A New Way of Looking at College Admissions

Higher education is now a massive industry with over 20 million students enrolled throughout the country. Historically, colleges have purchased names of prospective students from the ACT and the College Board in order to build their applicant pools, in addition to having used fairly traditional marketing and branding strategies.

But about 10-12 years ago, the numbers of prospects started to change. Fewer students were graduating from high school and heading to college, so institutions quickly realized that their old way of attracting students had to change. The purchase of even more names became too expensive and, without targeted and specific parameters, it became too 'hit and miss' to build a good pool of likely and qualified applicants.

To make predictions about yield even more confusing, colleges learned that students were sending out far more applications than ever before – one high school in NJ found students sending out an average of 45 applications! The goal of an enrollment manager is to encourage as many applications as possible while keeping class sizes pretty much the same. This lowers the admit rate and raises the college's ranking and reputation. Therefore, colleges found it necessary to invest in research that targets the right person, and uses the best possible incentives to encourage that application. Without such thoughtful management of their enrollment goals, yield becomes so much harder to predict - yield is the percentage of admitted students who enroll at a college for their first year. With all the data available from the ACT and the College Board, it

became possible for colleges to counter a drop in applicants' test scores by offering fee waivers to high-scoring applicants; a drop in the geographic diversity of their applicant pool could be managed by sending out targeted emails to seniors in distant states; and a lower percentage of applications from students of color could mean that a college has the opportunity to offer fee waivers to a more diverse group of students.

Never forget that you are highly desirable to most colleges and universities! They are a business, albeit many non-profit, and they need you to sit in their classrooms, sleep in their dorms, and eat in their dining halls. In the digital age, you have the ability to reach out and let colleges know more about you. If you are comfortable, answer the demographic questions that are posed when you first take the standardized tests. You can even start building your Coalition Application soon after entering high school.

Many of the colleges that are seeking alternatives to the traditional ways of building an applicant pool are turning to enrollment management programs such as *Capture Higher Ed*, which track the digital footprint of interested students. They can analyze the number of times a student enters a college's website, which pages they read, how often the student scrolled through and even where they went afterwards. This form of data mining allows colleges the option of adding more personalized content to their website, and sending targeted emails to specific prospects. Clearly, there is another conversation to be had about student privacy, but *Capture Higher Ed* reports that students are only tracked when they choose to provide personal identification (continued on p. 3)

Financial Matters: Maximizing Merit Aid



Although many middle-class and upper income families will not qualify for need based aid, they still may find the cost of attendance at most private colleges intimidating. Have you ever wondered what you can do to improve your chances of getting merit aid from a college?

An intriguing study from the University of Rochester in New York may hold some clues. Jonathan Burdick, their Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, analyzed the characteristics of students who received merit awards from Rochester. He looked at specific applicant characteristics to see which ones make a difference in the size of a student's merit scholarship offer:

Rigorous high school courses. For every AP, IB, or Honors course a student took in high school, his or her merit award at Rochester increased an

average of \$400.

Grades in core academic courses. Every "A" grade in a core academic course in high school translated into an extra \$62 of merit money.

Test scores. For every 10 additional points students scored on the SAT, they received an average of an extra \$115. For every 1 point on the ACT composite, they earned an average of \$425 extra in merit money.

Interviewing. Students who scheduled an admissions interview with the University of Rochester received, on average, \$250 more in merit money. Students who pro-actively kept in touch with admissions and financial aid—even *after* they were admitted—were likely to receive an average of \$3,000 *more* in merit money.

Teacher recommendations. Every teacher letter of recommendation that the admissions committee rated as "excellent" correlated with an average of \$1,800 more in merit awards.

Being on time. Students who had all parts of their application into admissions on time (including mid-year

grade requests) earned an average of \$400 more in merit money.

Applying for financial aid. Regardless of their *actual* financial need, students who filled out the FAFSA and CSS Profile financial aid applications received, on average, \$2,500 more in merit money.

Geographic diversity. Out of state students received an average of \$2,000 more in merit money at Rochester than in-state students.

Burdick's data were specific to the University of Rochester, and in sharing his findings, he was careful to point out that some of the differences were not by conscious design. Still, students hoping for merit scholarships at other colleges would be wise to take these findings to heart. Grades, high school courses, test scores, teacher recommendations, and personal contact with colleges don't just matter to your admissions chances; they may very well make a difference in how large a merit scholarship you are offered when admitted.

A New Way of Looking at College Admissions (continued from p. 1)

to that school. Over 50 colleges are now using Capture Higher Ed, which recently indicated that it tracked over 20 million unique web visitors to their clients' websites. Other colleges have chosen different enrollment management programs, but the majority of colleges now use a similar approach to enrollment management.

Why does all this matter? It matters

because as a high school student, you have a great deal of control in how you engage with your colleges of interest. From the first contact when you fill out forms when taking your standardized tests, to every digital 'touch' online, you are building on a college's interest in you as an applicant. Sending emails to admission offices with questions or expressions of interest, and taking a tour of campus, all add to the picture

colleges build of you. If their research analytics determine that you are a likely prospect, it may well result in highly personalized attention such as a fee waiver or a partially pre-populated application. Take every opportunity to learn as much as you can about your colleges, understanding that they are spending a great deal of money to learn as much as they can about you!



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Check out our website for
upcoming seminars

Current Trends in College Admission

The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) surveys thousands of admission officials at colleges across the U.S. yearly about their admission practices. The resulting report, *The State of College Admissions*, provides insights into trends in college admission. Some highlights follow:

Nationally, the average college acceptance rate edged up to 66%. NACAC examined admission data to determine the national average acceptance rate for first-time freshmen across all four-year colleges in the U.S. This number has increased slightly for each of the last five years. As a group, private colleges have a slightly lower national acceptance rate than public institutions.

Sixty-five percent of students apply to six or fewer colleges. 35% applied to seven or more colleges last year, compared to 36% the previous year.

Your grades matter more than anything else to admission. When asked to weight the importance of different factors they use in making admission decisions, admission officers were very clear: your grades in high school are most important. Colleges want to see that you are ready for college success, and the best indicator of that is how you've done in your high school classes. But don't think you can slack off and take easier classes in order to boost your chances; 87% of the admission officers surveyed also said that the strength of your high school curriculum is important.

Test scores matter, but not as much as they used to. 54% of those surveyed reported that an applicant's SAT or ACT scores are of considerable importance in making an admission decision. Test scores were of moderate importance to another 28%. However, overall, colleges today are putting slightly less emphasis on test scores in admissions than they did a decade ago.

Your recommendations matter just as much as your application essay. Your personal statement is important to college admission officers. 54% said that applicant essays were either of considerable or of moderate importance when reviewing applications. But don't sell the importance of your recommendations short. 56% of admission officers said counselor and teacher recommendations were of similar importance.

If you have to choose between studying and an extracurricular, hit the books. Colleges do care about extracurriculars, but probably not as much as many students and parents believe. Only 6% of admission officers ranked extracurriculars as being of considerable importance to their admission decisions, while another 30% said an applicant's extracurriculars were of moderate importance. That means to 64% of admissions officers, extracurriculars aren't a major factor in the decision to admit. Extracurriculars have many benefits, so it is still important to get involved with activities you enjoy. But, your grades will almost always be more important than your extracurriculars.