

Your Roadmap to College

I am frequently asked what it takes for students to have a good chance of getting into the more competitive colleges. If done correctly, students have prepared well in advance and have already positioned themselves with each college of interest well before they apply. By the beginning of the senior year, the student has identified their targeted colleges, knows exactly what each college looks for and is already known by the college. The student also knows why they want to attend the specific college, is aware of the criteria the college utilizes in making their decision, can show each college that they exceed their criteria and that they will succeed in, benefit from and contribute to the college. They also have the added benefit of supporters within the college. All this is possible if the student has a plan and begins during their junior year.

To understand acceptance into the more competitive colleges, the web sites of these colleges tell the story. They tell you that selective colleges attract far more qualified candidates than they can accommodate, that their admission process is highly subjective and arbitrary and that a lot of very accomplished and talented applicants may not be admitted. They also tell you that personal qualities and not performance are often the determining factor in the admissions decision.

With this kind of competition, success depends upon students differentiating themselves in the eyes of the college. Here's the process that each student should follow:

- Assess your strengths and personal qualities that appeal to the more competitive colleges. If you do not understand your strengths in the eyes of the college, how then are you going to differentiate yourself?
- Understand what really makes a good college for you. This is a necessary but challenging task for a 17 year old, since you do not yet fully understand the different academic, social and career aspects you should consider.
- Select colleges that are right for you and that look for a student with your strengths. After all why would you want to go to a college that is looking for students with personal attributes different than your own? You may get in, but will you fit in?
- Have a strategy to show your strengths and personal qualities to each college of interest. This should begin with your very first college visit.
- Meet with and develop advocates and supporters within each college. Supporters can include: admissions counselors, professors, department heads, etc.

As a result of these actions you will know which colleges are right for you and why you are right for each college. You will know how you will benefit from attending and ways in which you can contribute. Now it is just a question of showing the college that you fit-in as opposed to trying to get-in.