

You're Amazing Just the Way You Are

I was driving in my car recently when the song “Just The Way You Are” by Bruno Mars came on the radio. The lyrics prompted me to reflect on the college admissions process. Most students go through an elusive search for that one special message that will convince a very tough admissions committee to accept them. What you may not realize is that the search may be that difficult, since “you are amazing just the way you are.” Everyone is unique and it is those unique qualities, properly developed and presented, that will differentiate you to the admissions committee.

Whether you are about to become a rising senior or a rising junior, if you really want to impress a college, start thinking about what unique qualities, interests and accomplishments you can bring to the college community. Most students have not thought about college admissions from this perspective. As a result, very few students have truly identified those areas that separate them from others with similar grades, interests and accomplishments. All students are unique and have something distinctive that they can contribute to a college. The challenge is to identify these areas as early in high-school as possible, and to build and develop these unique areas into your personal brand. Coming up with these compelling areas is never easy; but if you look to obtain admission into a competitive college, it is both doable and necessary.

To assist you in accomplishing this task, here is one approach I frequently have students utilize:

- Write down information on yourself – accomplishments, talents, challenges overcome, areas and activities of importance, etc., and why each is significant to you.
- Identify the common themes that you find from what you have written. It is important that you be honest with yourself. Examples of themes include leadership, initiative, intellectual curiosity competitive spirit, strong character, creative talent, love of research, etc. These are just some of the more than 15 areas identified by many colleges as important to their decision process.
- Determine how you can further build on these unique and distinctive qualities to separate yourself from others. Identify those actions you can take to further demonstrate these qualities to a college. Determine what else can you do in school, in your extracurricular activities or in summer activities that will contribute to these qualities.

If you are about to become a rising junior you have a tremendous opportunity ahead of you to build upon your uniqueness. If you will soon be a rising senior, now is the time to determine the brand you will demonstrate to each college through your essays and the rest of your application. There is still time to further develop your brand so you can show your potential value to each college.

Students who have a strong sense-of-self and who can demonstrate this through concrete stories and accomplishments can present their value in a unique way to each college of interest. As a result, you will have a significant leg up on those that just apply. Remember, you are amazing, just the way you are.

For assistance in determining your unique value, in selecting the best-fit college for you, and assistance in the entire admissions and essay process, contact Michael Binder, President and Founder, Your College Navigator, LLC.