

April 2015

18th - ACT and ACT plus Writing

Seniors should have their final letters of acceptance by April 1st

Juniors – Visit colleges

Prepare for AP Exams

Seniors – Compare offers of admission; revisit top choices

Evaluate financial aid packages and explore college funding options

May 2015

1st – Common reply date for college enrollment

2nd – SAT Reasoning and Subject Tests

(register by 4/6 - late registration 4/21)

4th-15th - AP exams

Juniors – work on resume

Juniors – speak to advisor about military colleges or ROTC programs

Seniors – notify the colleges that you will not attend and take some time to thank those who wrote your letters of recommendation for college

The Power of a Well-Chosen Essay

A favorite college admissions adage is: “A good essay can heal the sick, but can’t raise the dead.” A strong essay has the power to move a teetering applicant into the “yes” pile, but it’s not a miracle drug that will assure an acceptance letter for a less-than-qualified student.

The essay has taken center stage in the application process for a variety of reasons. With so many students applying to many more colleges than in the past, the essays are really the best way for students to set themselves apart.

Since interviews are no longer standard, the essay introduces the student and helps the admissions committee get to know them. The growing importance of the essay has increased the stress students feel as they begin the application process. What’s worse is that the advice from colleges is so general that it’s hard for students to know how to respond.

Here are some of the do’s and don’ts that colleges often suggest:

Do:

- “Be authentic; show us who you really are.”
- “Share your passion; write about what’s important to you.”
- “Make it memorable.”

Don’t

- “Write what you think we want to hear.”
- “Tell us what we already know about you.”
- “Forget to proofread.”

Was that helpful? Maybe, but what most students really want to know is, how do I pick my topic? How do I figure out what to write about that shares something about

me and is still interesting and insightful?

Spring of junior year is a great time to begin thinking about the essays you will want to submit with your college applications. When brainstorming essays, ask yourself a variety of questions to tease out the best potential topics. Here are a few:

- What are your favorite subjects? Why?
- What are your greatest strengths/talents?
- What are your weaknesses?
- How are you different than most of your friends?
- What are your relationships like with your family (siblings, parents and grandparents)?
- What is important to you/what do you most care about?
- How do you spend your time outside of school?
- What is your greatest achievement/most unusual thing you’ve ever done?
- Have you learned any “life lessons”? What? From whom?
- How would someone that knows you well describe you?

After answering these and some other questions, the topic typically, and almost magically, begins to reveal itself. And best of all, your chosen topic is likely to fit the prompts supplied by most colleges, including those on the common application.



Majoring in Landscape Architecture

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 arboretums
- Waterfronts and greenways
- Community development plans
- Urban centers
- Streetscapes and neighborhoods
- Resorts
- Corporate facilities
- University/college campuses
- Nature preserves
- Zoos

Landscape architects are involved 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.

Bureau of Labor Statistics at www.bls.gov (click on the Occupational Outlook Handbook)

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 nearly \$90,000 per 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. In more advanced classes, 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, have their own businesses or work on a consultant basis. 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: The Hidden Costs of College



College financial aid packages will start arriving this month, but when you begin comparing your out-of-pocket costs, be sure to include expenses that go beyond room, board and tuition. These costs may vary from one institution to another, but they really add up quickly.

- Books—College texts are very costly. You might be able to save

on books by downloading e-books, renting textbooks from Amazon or Chegg, or buying used editions at the bookstore or online.

- Food—Meal plans differ from college to college—buy the plan that best reflects the way you are likely to use it. You'll also need to budget extra money for pizza, snacks, etc.
- Transportation—Distance from home and availability of lower cost travel should be considered. If you will be traveling by air, buy tickets well in advance for peak travel periods such as Thanksgiving. Bring-

ing a car to campus? Better add in the cost of parking.

- Greek life—There are lots of extra costs associated with going Greek. Initiation fees, membership dues, sometimes higher costs when you live in the sorority or fraternity house rather than in campus housing. Special activities also can be costly.
- Studying abroad—Extra expenses are often incurred including air travel, living expenses and visas. Some colleges will provide stipends to cover additional expenses so that more students can experience a semester abroad.

Choosing Among Your College Options

The waiting is over. Admissions decisions have been made. And some very happy students now have the enviable problem of deciding which college they want to attend.

From now until the May 1 notification deadline, the tables are turned as admissions officers try to win over newly admitted students. There will be flattering letters, phone calls and invitations to fun-filled programs designed to get prospective freshmen excited about attending their school.

Remember that these programs will paint the school in the best light. Since you want to learn everything you can before making a final decision, it's a good idea to look beyond the nice receptions and speeches. Some students skip these events, preferring to see the college on a more typical day. Others have been clear about their first choice school from the start and know where they want to be.

But even if you visited the college before you applied, it's worth making another trip. Now that you've been admitted, you'll probably see things differ-

ently. It's no longer a fantasy. You need to walk across the campus and eat lunch in the dining hall and see if you can picture yourself at this school next year.

Whether you go to a special event or visit the school on your own, be sure to spend some time in the student union or library talking with students about the college. It's better to find out now exactly how hard it is to get into popular classes, or that everyone goes home on weekends, or that you'll have no social life if you don't join a fraternity. This is also the time to sit in on a couple of classes and talk to students in your major.

If you've grown up in Los Angeles and are considering a college in Chicago, you might have the admissions office arrange for you to meet with a student from California, so you can find out what it's like to adjust to long cold winters. (This past winter was really severe so they'll have lots to say!) Talk to friends who have gone off to college on the East Coast and ask how they manage being far from home. Preferences can change during senior year,

and students who start their college applications thinking they want to go across the country sometimes realize they want to be able to come home for a weekend. If any students from your high school are currently attending the colleges you're considering, get in touch and ask if they'd make the same choice today. Getting as much information as possible will help you make an informed decision.

Comparing financial aid offers is another major factor in making your final decision. If attending your third choice college means you'll graduate with little or no debt, that college might move up to first choice. Financial considerations could be especially important if you're planning to go on to law, medical or graduate school or will be embarking on a lower-paying career right after graduation.

It may seem like a huge decision, but if you applied to colleges that are good matches, there are no wrong decisions. You should have a great experience at any of the schools that have admitted you.



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Wallowing on the Waitlist

Uh-oh. Your eagerly-awaited decision letter from Dream University finally arrives and you learn that you've been offered not the hoped-for place in the class, but a spot on their waitlist. What should you do now?

Your first step is to carefully consider the rest of your college acceptances and determine which of these provides the best fit for you. If necessary, revisit several of your top choices, spending as much time on campus as possible, sitting in on classes and talking to current students. Accept your favorite offer by returning your intent to enroll form along with any needed deposit before the May 1st reply date. Be sure to submit the form and deposit for housing as well. For many schools, the date your deposit is received determines your housing choice. You'll also want to send a nice note to each of the other colleges that offered you a place, thanking them for their interest and explaining that you've made other plans. Letting your other colleges know as soon as possible that you won't enroll allows them to offer your spot to another student.

Now for your waitlist offer. If you are still

truly interested in attending this college, respond promptly to their offer accepting a place on the waitlist. Follow this up with a personal call to your admissions contact, expressing your disappointment as well as your hope of admittance. Ask if the waitlist is ranked in any way and how many students are on it. Inquire about the number of students they expect to take from the waitlist or have taken in prior years. Be sure to find out if there is a cut-off date for the waitlist. This is also a good time to update the admissions officer about new achievements, rising grades, honors or awards. Remind your admissions officer of why the school is a good fit for you and of the many assets you'll bring to campus. You might even wish to send an additional letter of recommendation from one of your senior year teachers. If Waitlist U is your first choice and you will enroll if admitted, tell them so.

Nationally, only about 20% of waitlisted students are admitted each year. If you really want to be among those who are, you need to be proactive in contacting the admissions office and letting them know of your continuing interest in attending.