

# Going Off to College: A Journey for Students and Parents

Nicholas Amato, Jr.

Consultant

Bayport-Blue Point UFSD

***Staff at the New York University Child Study Center said “Parenting is a tough business and a double-edged sword; successful parenting requires devoting one’s life to a totally dependent being to ensure a safe, independent departure into the world – leaving parents behind. Joy may be mixed with longing as the young adult takes flight from home base.”***

What can we do as a team, parent and child, to ensure that going away to college will not place stress on the family?

# Preparation and Research... it can be fun

## **Ask questions and find experts in your community.**

Schools, religious groups, and civic groups can support you. Find the groups that know about education. Be sure to ask questions of the staff at the college your student is interested in attending.

## **Learn about financial aid.**

Check out reputable sources for information. The U.S. Department of Education provides many resources online and in print, in English and Spanish. Start at [www.ed.gov/finaid.html](http://www.ed.gov/finaid.html).

## **Match the student with the college.**

Instead of looking for the “perfect” college, encourage finding a good match. Look at class size, housing, counseling and health services, athletic and arts programs, opportunities for extracurricular activities and degrees/programs offered. Visit during the school year to get a feel for the place and how the students, faculty and staff interact.

# Preparation and Research...continued

## **Check out the college's career advising center.**

Ask about opportunities for students to discover their career interests, take part in internships, associate with professional mentors and learn more about careers.

## **Don't worry if your child goes to college without a major.**

It can actually be a benefit for students. "Undeclared" students can learn more about their personal preferences and abilities, and explore what majors of study are available before deciding.

## **Be supportive and encouraging.**

You don't have to know the answer to every question. Just reassuring your children and telling them that you're behind them can make the difference between giving up or going on.

# 6 Steps to College Application...

## Mechanics

- **Your SAT or ACT scores (official score reports sent by you)**
- **Your high school transcript**
- **The formal application specific to that college.**
- **Letters of recommendation**
- **The Essay**
- **Construct Activity Resume**

# College Application Process.....

## Mechanics

- Your entrance exam scores (SAT or ACT) need to be mailed directly from the collegeboard.com to the colleges you choose to apply to. You can request for your scores to be mailed to certain college right on the test, or after you take the test on the web.
- Your high school transcript needs to be mailed directly from your high school. The Counseling Center will process that for you as soon as you complete the required form. Please to make sure that all information on your transcript is correct. They will be mail home for your review.
- You also need to fill out the application for the specific college.
  - Most colleges will let you complete their application online, but if not, you mail the hard copy into the given school. Your Counseling Center will do that for you.
  - Many colleges accept the Common Application, which saves a lot of time because the same application can be used for multiple schools.

# Steps in Completing the Common Application

- Counseling Center strongly encourages you to consider applying online. It's quick, easy, and secure. However, if you prefer to print a hardcopy, complete it by hand, submit you hardcopy to the Counseling Center.
- Note: Do not mix-and-match your application, supplement, and payment between online and paper submission. Either submit the application, supplement and payment (or fee waiver) online, or submit them all by mail.
- You can send the Common Application to your colleges electronically from the Common Application web site, <http://www.commonapp.org>
- It would be most convenient for you if you set up an account at the web site. This will enable you to save your application and go back in to make changes or complete it, plus you will have access to the colleges' supplements.

# Steps in Completing the Common Application

- Read the directions carefully before you start, as the process varies from school to school. Some want all documents and payment sent at once, some will allow you to send them separately.
- Completing your application online also allows your counselor to proofread it/go over it with you before you send it. It is a very good idea to have a counselor proofread your application before you hit the send button!
- Please remember that there are additional forms that you must acquire to complete the Common Application. You need to go to School Forms, and invite both your counselor and teachers to write recommendations.

# Steps in Completing the Common Application

- You will need their email addresses to do so. It is important that you ask a teacher first if they are willing to write you a recommendation before you e-vite. Once you have submitted an e-vite, please be sure to double check with counselor and teacher that they have received your e-vite.
- If you are submitting your application by mail, then you will need to download these forms from the CA Main Page. You will need to print out two Teacher Evaluation forms and give one to each teacher who is writing a recommendation for you. They will fill out only one copy and then you make photocopies to send to the number of schools you applying to.
- You will need to do the same process for your guidance counselor to complete the “Secondary School Report” form.

# Common Application

- Again, your counselor will only need one copy and will make photocopies if additional copies are needed. Make sure the small section at the top of the page is complete where you must fill in your name, address, etc. Do not forget your signature! You will turn in the “Secondary School Report” form at least two weeks before the college deadline.
- You will also see a “Midyear Report” form in the “additional forms” area of the Common App. web site. You do not need to print that out. Midyear grades are automatically sent in February to all the schools you have applied to.
- Be aware that most colleges have an additional form that they want you to fill out called the “Supplement to the Common Application.”

# Common Application

- The supplements for each school are available at the Common App. web site. or from the colleges' web sites. If you are applying online you will find the necessary links to complete the "Supplements" online.
- The Counseling Center HIGHLY recommends completing applications online. Note that deadlines for applications are strictly for the student's application and their application fee. Teacher recommendations, School Reports, maybe submitted prior to the student deadline.

# Letter of Recommendations

- Your letter or letters of recommendation should be from your teachers and counselor.
  - You want to request a letter of recommendation from someone who knows your academic abilities and a bit of your personal character, and who will be sure to write nice things about you.
  - Please choose those teachers who know you best and will be able to write about relevant information about your thrust for learning, character and your role in his/her classroom.
  - Be confident that the teacher will write positive recommendation.
  - If you are asking a teacher to write a personal recommendation, one that does not require a form, have the teacher hand the application into the Counseling Center

# The College Essay

The essay is an extremely important part of the application process because it is the only part of the application where a shade of your character emerges on the page.

- Don't leave your essay to the last minute.
- Look at the topic that the college wants you to write about and give it a lot of thought.
- Write the essay well in advance and have it proofread by your peers and certainly an English teacher.
- Don't slack on this part, it really could set you apart from other candidates.
- You must remember that people can look mundanely similar on a white 8 1/2" by 11" sheet. The essay can show your creative flair.

# Essay Topics on the Common Application

## Writing

**Short Answer** Please briefly elaborate on one of your extracurricular activities or work experiences in the space below or on an attached sheet (150 words or fewer).

---

---

## Personal Essay

Please write an essay (250 words minimum) on a topic of your choice or on one of the options listed below, and attach it to your application before submission. **Please indicate your topic by checking the appropriate box.** This personal essay helps us become acquainted with you as a person and student, apart from courses, grades, test scores, and other objective data. It will also demonstrate your ability to organize your thoughts and express yourself.

# Essay Topics on the Common Application

Evaluate a significant experience, achievement, risk you have taken, or ethical dilemma you have faced and its impact on you.

Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.

Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.

Describe a character in fiction, a historical figure, or a creative work (as in art, music, science, etc.) that has had an influence on you, and explain that influence.

A range of academic interests, personal perspectives, and life experiences adds much to the educational mix. Given your personal background, describe an experience that illustrates what you would bring to the diversity in a college community, or an encounter that demonstrated the importance of diversity to you.

Topic of your choice.

*STUDENT NAME*

*Activity Sheet*

*Name:*

*Social Security Number:*

*In-School Extra-Curricular Activities*

*Activities*

*9<sup>th</sup>*

*10<sup>th</sup>*

*11<sup>th</sup>*

*12<sup>th</sup>*

*Description*