

Ten Ways to Succeed in the College Application Process

(1.) DREAM! Yes, we mean dream big for your life, don't hold back your full vision for just how great you see your life becoming. Dream in terms of your personal and professional life, for not merely the next few years, but for as far as you can see into the future.

(2.) LIST DREAM SCHOOLS. College is a strategy or a way to manifest your dreams. You should choose a college that will help you manifest your full potential in life. Select a school that will empower you to develop your personal qualities and prepare you professionally. We cannot count the number of times that we have asked students what school they are going to apply to and they tell us only third tier schools. But when we begin asking the type of questions that reveal their personal and professional dreams, they tell us that their dream school would be Brown or Tufts or another world-renowned institution. We had one student tell us that he didn't even think that attending Brown was a possibility for him in his life, until he met a coach who wanted to recruit him for his athletic abilities. Just one example of the power of your dreams.

(3.) VISIT SCHOOLS. Actually go to visit at least three schools so that you can experience for yourself if this is the type of environment that will empower you to realize your full potential in life. You should know which learning styles you have and which teaching styles are used at each school. Remember, there are eight intelligences according to the renowned Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor Howard Gardner, and some schools match different intelligences better than others.

(4.) LEARN ABOUT YOUR SELF. This is a time of dramatic change for you and you should take the time and energy to learn about who you really are, the new you that you are changing toward. Remember, it is the new you, the person you are changing into that will begin a new life at college. There are many assessment tools available to help you—including the popular Myers-Briggs Personality Type Indicators (MBTI) and our own proprietary Success Predictor—to help you know about your personal and professional futures. The summer is a great time to take the time to do this important work.

(5.) DREAM AGAIN! Once you think you have dreamed all of the dreams you can dream in the first item on this recommended list, dream some more. We promise you that you have more in you, and that you can know your dreams and your self at even deeper levels. Remember to think without limitations, don't worry about being realistic, or about what other people's expectations are for you. Focus upon your own dreams and watch them begin to become real.

(6.) APPLY EARLY. Show up on the first day of classes senior year ready to apply early action or early decision to at least one school. This means that you will have already visited campuses, made a list of dream schools, learned about yourself, dreamed about your life, and written at least one draft of your all important college application essay.

(7.) DON'T WORRY ABOUT MONEY. If you have a dream, and you know yourself well enough, and you can convince an admissions committee of your value, money is always available. Unfortunately, we use money too often to limit our dreams, what we see is possible. As you go for your dreams, you should not worry about money or any other self-imposed limitations.

(8.) GET GREAT RECOMMENDATIONS. Prepare to ask your recommenders for their recommendations within the first few weeks of school senior year. This means that you need to ask them early so that you can determine who you think will be eager to recommend you strongly or just mildly. This makes a big difference. You can also actually learn how to coach your recommenders to write their recommendation with intention and distinctiveness.

(9.) PREPARE A PORTFOLIO. It is becoming more and more popular and effective to consider using a portfolio approach when developing your application strategy. This means if you are involved in a number of school activities, whether they are Dance Troupe, Varsity Soccer, Science Fairs, Constitution Law Cases, or Choir, you should consider submitting a series of video tapes and programs, in the form of a personal highlight film. This film will showcase your considerable talents and will communicate visually as well as in writing. You can present your portfolio in CD or DVD formats. Prepare a list of possible activities you want to highlight in your portfolio so that you can request copies of tapes from the athletic department, academic department, or others. This approach has been particularly effective for obtaining merit scholarships.

(10.) CONSIDER A COLLEGE COUNSELING PROGRAM. We would be very happy to meet with you to discuss if a college counseling program is right for you, if you could effectively utilize this type of expertise. Just like you benefited from private music lessons, or tennis lessons, or academic tutoring, you may benefit from private college counseling. Counseling can focus upon any one or combination of items listed above, depending upon your needs. We are committed to helping you see and achieve your full potential in life, and to realizing your dreams.

Maybe Michelangelo said it best: "Our problem is not that our hopes are too high and we never reach them. It is that they are too low and we do." Let us go forward, together, dreaming our highest dreams and achieving them.