



CSLF School Counselor eNews

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College Search Tips

The Early Awareness and College Planning staff at CSLF assists hundreds of families each year. One trend we have noticed is an increased number of students who are applying to six or more colleges, with some students applying to as many as twelve schools. Whenever I see an unusually long college list, I ask the student, "Why?". The usual response is that the student is afraid of being denied admission at some schools, so decides to add more schools. There is also a growing group of students who simply can not seem to cut down their lists.

When I ask a few more questions, I find that many of the students don't appear very knowledgeable about the colleges on their list and nearly all of them have applied to several schools that they have never visited.

While students are not always able to visit every college to which they are applying, they should know some basic information about each school on their list.

Urge your students to become internet sleuths. Every student should be willing to spend a few hours researching each of the schools they are considering spending the next four (five or six) years attending. Before students complete a college application, they should be able to provide a sound rationale for why that school is on their list. If they visit a school's website, they can find most of the following information:

***List of majors** - Students should know if the school offers a course of studies of interest to them.

***Academic requirements** - Students should know the median SAT/ACT scores (and if they are required) and grade point average of the previous year's freshmen class.

***Total cost of attendance** - Since cost is usually a concern, students should find out the basic costs of tuition, fees, and room and board.

***Types of financial aid available** - Some schools only provide need-based aid while others provide a combination of need and merit aid. Students should be able to find out the types of aid available through the institution, what financial aid forms are required, and the deadlines for submission.

***Student life** - This is where students can do their most creative exploring. They should read a few back issues of the student newspaper (usually available online but they may have to search for it). They should check out the clubs and athletic programs available. Also, student blogs are now posted on many college websites. Some colleges, such as MIT, pay students to post their blogs and agree not to make any editorial changes. The goal is to get your students to look beyond the glossy marketing pages of the website and find out as much as possible about the campus. With the right amount of research they can find out if most students leave campus every Friday and return on Monday. They can also learn the typical class size and if they will be spending a lot of time in large lecture halls. Your super sleuths should be able to find out the school's freshman retention rate and how many years it takes the typical student to graduate.

Number of High School Graduates at Their Peak

According to a Chronicle of Higher Education Report, 3.34 million students will graduate from high school this year, with the numbers expected to decline each year for the next seven years.

When students do this type of research before sending out applications, they will be better informed regarding the schools to which they are applying and their college lists may be cut in half.

Location, Location, Location -

It's not just the mantra of real estate agents. "The 2007 Survey of Parents of College Bound Students" found that location of the school was the top priority of parents when their child was applying to college.

About Connecticut Student Loan Foundation - The Connecticut Student Loan Foundation is a non-profit corporation that administers, guarantees, and finances loans within the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) and alternative student loan programs. CSLF promotes access to higher education by helping students and their families plan for and pursue a postsecondary education. CSLF has more than 40 years of experience providing assistance to students, parents, and industry partners.

About Invest in your Future – Invest in your Future (IF), CSLF's college planning services division, provides free outreach services regarding college planning and the financial aid process. The IF program is designed to promote college access and awareness, and includes a college planning resources center and library, a toll-free hotline, community presentations, materials distribution, online resources, and much more.