

the first time, and then suddenly finding, without any counter-balancing good news, that your hopes have been dashed and you must apply in earnest to several other colleges?

YOU AND YOUR GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Your job is to learn enough about yourself and about colleges to think clearly about where you would want to attend, and then for you (not your parents) to take the lead applying for admission.

Many high school college advisers act as if their job is to make sure that you and all your classmates have been admitted somewhere, anywhere. Also, understandably, they are concerned about managing the bureaucratic demands of processing a large volume of college applications.

It's not necessarily a bad thing if your list of favorite colleges makes counselors nervous. Maybe they'll pay a little more attention to your file. The best high school counselors help you match your preferences with colleges. They also can assist your campaign to be admitted where you want to go. That takes a lot of time and dedication.

MAKE THE PROCESS FUN

Think about what it's going to be like to be on your own and to live, study and goof off in a new place, meeting new people. Take advantage of the need to pause, to make a detailed report about what you've accomplished in this first part of your life. In this way the college application can be more than a chore. It can be a satisfying inventory of positives and promote honest self-evaluation of how you want to grow or change or improve.

The application process doesn't have to be nerve-racking. If you only apply to schools that really turn you on, then you really don't have to worry about being accepted to the wrong place.

In the unlikely event that you do not gain acceptance to any of your favorite schools, maybe you should take another year and do something that interests you or prepare yourself to reapply to colleges after spending some time better equipping yourself for college.

The dirty little secret is that there simply is no single school that will make or break your future.

BE A 'SMART SHOPPER'

You are in the market for one of the most expensive, most valuable things you will ever acquire; a college education.

Have you talked to people who have recently attended the colleges that you are considering? What have you read about the colleges? Have you visited colleges that you are seriously considering, alone, without your family?

The traditional family summer tour of colleges is a nice starting point and often can be very helpful in eliminating college choices. But in terms of getting a good feel for what it's like to be a student on campus during a term, there is only so much you can learn by staring at bricks and mortar from the outside of empty buildings, while trying to act as if you are not actually part of your family encourage—how embarrassing.

Thump the melon, test-drive the car, try to get, on your own, to the few colleges that most interest you. Bring a sleeping bag, arrange to stay, if you can, in the dorm room of a friend or somebody who graduated from your home area high schools. Attend class, find out how bad the food is in the dining hall, attend an athletic event or concert, go read, in the library and work on some homework in the midst of other students doing the same thing.

If you're already in your senior year and haven't done this, it's not too late. And, of course, after you are accepted at a college you certainly have the opportunity to visit before you make your decision.

BE YOURSELF

When you're applying to college you certainly want to put your best foot forward and present an accurate and compelling case for admission. But above all things, remember to be yourself.

Suppose, if by some miracle, you actually were able to gussy up your application and essays to come across as a different person or convincingly act out a role in an interview. Would the college be accepting the wrong person? More practically, it just often doesn't work to try to be someone else. Phyness is difficult to maintain, and in most cases it's transparent.

This also means that the application form that you complete should be your own work. Relax; take the task seriously; do the best job you can and don't forget: Parents, teachers and consultants who have too large a hand in preparing applications leave very visible fingerprints.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Colleges generally do not require interviews, but, if available, they provide an opportunity to learn more about a school and to supplement your written application.

If you have an interview with an alumni volunteer, remember they are not decision makers. Their task is to collect information and pass it on. They can be very good or very bad. Count on this: Whatever they report to their alma maters will be taken with a full shaker of salt. Their views will not outweigh the record you have built over time, the evaluations of professional teachers who have seen you in a class context or your own words on your application.

Still, alumni interviews can help uncover or reinforce strengths and corroborate the profile that appears on the written application file. Again, be yourself, and be prepared for a variation of the inevitable final interview question: "Is there anything else you would like to ask me?"

Also, if you're wondering about what to wear to an interview, the acceptable range of attire is very broad. On matters of dress, and all such questions about your application, let your own good judgment be your guide.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT OTHER APPLICANTS

It is simply not true that somebody else in your school or your neighborhood is competing with you for a spot that they might take away your space at a college that you want to attend.

At the very most selective colleges you are not competing against the person sitting next to you in a classroom, you're competing against the national pool of applicants.

In colleges that are less selective, if you make a compelling case that satisfies its requirements, you have a very good chance of being accepted. Your case for acceptance is not diminished, it is not less compelling if other qualified candidates in your community are accepted.

In any event, know that any information you have about other candidates for acceptance is suspect: What somebody's board scores supposedly are or are not; whether or not a particular college has a quota for your high school; what a college has supposedly communicated to a candidate; what athletes have been told; whether students with learning disabilities get a fair shake—it's all unreliable.

None of it helps you make your case and it will get your stomach juices roiling if you pay attention to such gossip.

Have confidence in yourself. Focus on what you can do something about, which is your own application and at the end of the day things will work out just fine. Be happy if people you know also are accepted to a college of your choice. You'll already know people to embrace or avoid when you get to campus in the fall.

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Don't torture yourself about the choice you make. Remember, you've carefully compiled a list of schools that make sense for you. Be liberated in the idea that you can't make a wrong decision.

Attending college is expensive. Whether or not you receive scholarships, take out loans, or get a part-time job, it's likely your college education is going to cost a lot. Talk this over with your family and determine your realistic options.

In the end, after you carefully weigh the different factors that are important to you, it's probably going to come down to a gut reaction. Trust your own instincts. Make up your mind and then get excited about it. Also make sure to thank your parents, other family members, teachers and advisers.

AND, FINALLY

I'm not a professional admissions officer or an educator. I don't know any particulars about you or your situation. I just suggest you think about the questions raised.

Don't let hopes about college become a black cloud over the best year of high school.

Oh, either white or manila envelopes are fine, but don't forget the postage.●

COMMENDING PAULA DUGGAN

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I would like to commend Paula Duggan who is retiring after 13 years as a senior policy analyst at the Northeast-Midwest Institute. She has been instrumental on a variety of labor market, education, and fiscal federalism issues.

Paula, for instance, was the key force behind labor market information provisions within the Workforce Preparedness Act, and she has worked diligently to ensure that the law is well implemented. She was one of the first analysts to make the connection between worker education and business productivity. And she has written numerous reports explaining how federal allocation formulas are structured and how federal funds are distributed among the states.

I have benefitted from Paula's expertise and experience in my capacities as chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and as co-chair of the Northeast-Midwest Senate Coalition. Paula consistently has provided unbiased and insightful research that has advanced bipartisan efforts on behalf of this region and the nation. As she begins her well-earned retirement, Mr. President, I again want to thank Paula Duggan for her fine work.●

TRIBUTE TO MR. BOBBY BOSS

● Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a great American institution and its leader. The American Legion Barrett-Davis-Watson Post