

How I Picked My College This Year

FOR A HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR, selecting a college to devote the first four years of life in the “real world” is an intimidating, perhaps seemingly impossible responsibility. I am a matriculating college freshman who has recently been through the rigorous, fun, frustrating, growth-evoking college selection process and come out on the other side.

I'm not here to paint a pretty picture because trust me, I will be the first to admit that narrowing my list of 27 schools to eight on the “apply” list, then actually committing to one school was one of the more unpleasant tasks of my high school career. But, I do want to offer up some comforting words to the stressed and anxious seniors (and hopefully even their parents) who are about to begin their own college-picking expedition.

If you will, allow me to divulge a little about my own adventure which ended in my picking a public state university. Prior to beginning my senior year, I'd always dreamed of going to a “big-name” school – one of those really prestigious ones that would make all my cousins jealous when they announced it in the family newsletter. However, as I began to research the Ivies, I realized their cultures might not fit me. Keep in mind, I'm pursuing medical school for the long run, so it was in my best interest to hunt for a school that will give me scholarships.

As I sat down to compile my list of “apply” schools in the summer, I remembered a friend in the Class of 2015 had applied for something called the Park Scholarship at North Carolina State University. I decided to give it a try. The process was rigorous, but in hindsight, 100 percent worth it. So, if you have an inkling that maybe you should apply for a big-time scholarship, I encourage you to go for it. You might just surprise yourself.

My college application process to eight schools and five scholarships led to 12 essays, 17 short answers. Here's some of what I learned. When you begin your college application process, consider...



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- Making a list of pro and con factors that would sway you toward or away from the school. This may include academic culture, student life, athletic opportunities, size of school, location, weather, costs and so forth.
- Selecting a school that fits, one that will give you money versus a big name one that won't. This is especially true if you plan to pursue graduate studies, medical/dental/law school.
- Visiting the campus, speaking to professors and current students, perhaps even attending some classes. This will give you a feel of attending the college.
- Making sure that you are the sole influence dictating your decision. This is your call. Don't ignore your parents. Take their concerns into account and value them. But, ultimately, don't be dictated to by anyone besides yourself.

Beginning early!!! Preview the short answer and essay prompts as soon as they become available. Even if you do not start writing right away, this will help you to brainstorm ideas.

What's great about selecting a college is there will always be more than one perfect choice. You can choose to be happy anywhere! You have so many options that it's impossible to look at every school that fits you. But, have no regrets when you've made your admissions decision. Listen to your heart and gut, and keep in mind that YOU are the one who will be attending whichever college you choose, not your mom or dad, best friend or anyone else.

And, if you have doubts, don't be afraid to get some help. Seek out students from the previous graduating class, especially if they applied to or are attending a college in which you are interested. Talk to your counselor. You have many resources, but it's up to you to use them. ■

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restricted to students at community colleges, universities and trade schools that have been approved by a regional accreditor.

“The program will let as many as 1,500 students in the coming academic year enroll in a select group of traditional colleges while undergoing much of their training with one of the alternative providers, ultimately leading to degrees,” wrote *The Wall Street Journal*.

Boston College Meets Full Need. Boston C.'s “Light the World” campaign, which raised a total of \$1.6 billion, will allow the school to remain one of only 19 private universities that are need-blind in admissions and that meet the full demonstrated need of all accepted students. The campaign enhanced student

financial aid through the establishment of 380 financial aid funds and 1,000 scholarships.

Failing To Apply For Student Aid. What percentage of undergraduate students did not apply for financial aid in 2011-12? According to a new U.S. Dept. of Ed report, 20 percent of undergraduate students did not apply for any financial aid in 2011-12. A whopping 30 percent of students in public two-year institutions did not apply for aid, while only 5 percent of those attending for-profit institutions did not apply.

The two most cited reasons for not applying for aid were that students thought they could afford college without aid and students thought they were ineligible. Concerns about taking on debt was reported more frequently as a reason for not applying for aid by students in public four-year institutions (37 percent) than

by students in the other types of institutions (21-33 percent).

Do State Subsidies Favor The Affluent? Conventional wisdom is that state subsidies for public universities favor the affluent. This conclusion is based primarily on study of grants and scholarships. But a new study from Brookings, a Washington D.C. think tank, concluded that the conventional wisdom does not take into account indirect support of state and local funds that subsidize universities as a whole and allow student tuition rates below the actual cost of educating students. Additionally, “Selective state universities are not enrolling primarily high-income students.... In fact, low-income students are well represented at public four-year universities.

See, www.brookings.edu. ■