

Newsletter



Published by College Focus LLC
College Admissions Educational Consultant

February 2011

February/March Calendar

- February 25– late registration deadline for March SAT
- March 4, 2011– last day to register for April 9th ACT
- March 12– SAT test
- March 19– SF National College Fair at Concourse Exhibition Center 1:30-4:30 pm



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Inside Look at the Admission Selection Process

A recent clip on the Today Show might relieve some stress for those seniors and parents awaiting college decisions and provide a peek preview to juniors and underclassmen about the subjective nature of the college admissions process at many institutions. The statement that this process is not a referendum on students and parents is very important. Please take to heart that college admissions is not a statement about your value and accomplishments or the prospects for your future. (Clip at: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/41619750#41619750>.)

While Mr. Jacques Steinberg noted that about 50 highly selective colleges employ the type of process used by Grinnell College in this clip, most colleges employ a variation of this process unless they are using strictly numbers (grades and test scores) to drive the admissions decisions. While there are some interesting observations to take away from this story as highlighted below, the most important message is that you should not overly strategize this process and stay true to yourself.

- The rigor of the curriculum is the first and most important thing colleges will look at.
- The depth of commitment to a few extracurricular activities rather than many activities is important.
- Lightweight extracurricular activities may be a problem.
- High test scores with low grades are suspect and may cause alarm because they may show a lack of motivation. An essay explaining this, while important, without some other evidence in the application may be problematic.



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Spring College Visits

Spring break is the best time to visit colleges. This is because college spring breaks usually do not coincide with the high school breaks and high school students can see the colleges in session. High

school students can gain so much from college visits, even those students who initially begrudge going in the first place. Visits afford students the opportunity to see whether they feel they

will fit in and what type of environment is comfortable to them. If affordability or time away is an issue, there are many options in the San

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Merit Scholarships

With the ever increasing cost of college and dwindling family assets and income, many families are looking for scholarships to help alleviate the burden of paying for college, even those families who may not qualify for financial aid. For those who do not qualify for financial aid, but are looking for financial assistance, merit aid is often the answer. Selection of the colleges to which a student will apply is the first step. Some colleges do not offer merit aid to incoming freshmen. Others are quite generous. One resource for beginning the search for merit aid is at

www.meritaid.org. For example, there you will discover that Pomona College, a highly selective liberal arts college in Southern California, does not offer merit scholarships to freshmen, but University of San Diego and Santa Clara University do. While the website does not often provide the criteria to achieve the merit award, sometimes the college website does.

Most merit aid does not require a separate application. Rather, the student's college application is the application. The most important criterion for merit aid is often a combination of grades and

test scores. At some of the larger public universities, test scores seem to weigh heavier in granting such aid. Thus, a student who requires financial assistance in paying for college should add some colleges to her list where her grades and test scores exceed the colleges' average GPA and test scores.

Families should also not shy away from out of state public colleges as sometimes they will offer very attractive packages to attract out of state students. The key is to search early, knowing the search takes some work.

Local CSU Priority Admissions in the News

Other than Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, all CSU campuses have traditionally given priority to local eligible students. This practice worked well for the campuses when only a handful of campuses were impacted. Currently, however, 17 of the 23 CSU campuses have more freshman applicants than spots for them, and a growing number of campuses have more applications for certain programs within the colleges than spots available. All of this is reducing access for local students. San Diego State became the first campus to turn away qualified local students, eliminating the priority for local students. Instead, it took the most qualified applicants from across the state last year. The rub comes from the college's desire to take the students the college believes have the greatest chance to succeed and graduate and to provide diversity to the campus with the original mission of the CSU to serve local students so that students do not have to leave home. More legislation on this issue may be in our future, but in the meantime, it appears that other impacted campuses are giving local students priority, at least for now.

Spring College Visits *(Continued from Page 1)*

Francisco Bay Area, with choices between large, medium and small colleges, as well as private and public universities and schools with a liberal arts focus and others with more pre-professional studies. Road trips to Southern California or the Northwest often also make fun family outings and great bonding experiences.

To provide better counsel to my students on a college fit, this is also the time of year when I am off visiting colleges. Next month, you will find me in Georgia and South Carolina visiting colleges in the Southeast, and in Pennsylvania in April visiting colleges that I did not see during my prior trips to Pennsylvania. If any of you are interested in colleges in these areas, please let me know if you have any particular questions or requests and I will try to accommodate you. I will provide a report on my visits in the upcoming newsletters.



Selection Process *(Continued from Page 1)*

- Colleges are looking at diversifying the incoming class— geographically, racially, socio-economically.
 - Colleges are looking for different talents. Thus, if you have the talent they are looking for at that moment, you may be admitted. If not, you may be denied or waitlisted.
 - Varied individuals are reading the applications with different opinions and they may be reading your application at 3am in the morning!
 - Attention to detail is important. They are paying attention to the nuances in each application.
 - Essays are critical— not to list accomplishments, but to get to know you as a person outside of grades and activities.
 - One factor on the committee screen was the likelihood of the student to enroll. This is not a question on the application, but information perhaps deduced from a legacy, your contacts with the college, and information provided in the application. The colleges are looking for students who will attend if offered.
 - The clip did not portray that there are often clear accepts and clear rejects.
- Instead, it focused on those in the middle, where the admission answer is often vague, obscure and difficult to explain.
- For those interested in reading more on the process, I recommend Mr. Steinberg’s book, *The Gatekeepers*. It offers the highs and lows in the admissions process. Like most things in life, the admission process is not always fair.

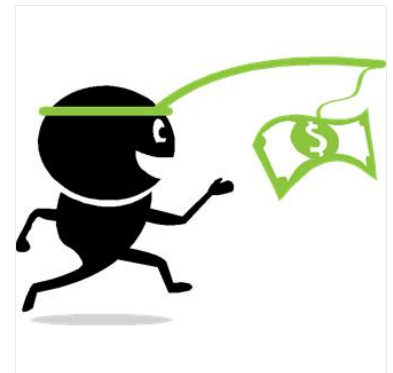
California Budget Alternative Impact on Higher Education

The nonpartisan Legislative Analyst’s Office just released a list of suggested action items if voters reject Governor Brown’s proposed tax extensions. The items will have a significant impact on higher education in California and Californians with college bound students which have already been hard hit in recent

years. The action items include almost tripling community college fees per unit, and increasing tuition an additional 7% at the UC and 10% at the CSU. On the other side, they propose to further cut enrollment at the CSU by an additional 5%, and reduce operating and personnel costs at both university systems.

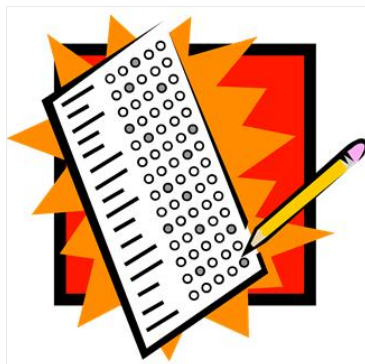
Finally, student financial aid will be affected by cuts to Cal Grants and institutional awarded aid.

Neither Governor Brown’s proposed budget nor the Legislative Analyst’s office poses a rosy future for California higher education.



Test Optional College Update

DePaul University in Chicago just announced that it will go test optional for freshman admissions next Fall. It may be the largest not for profit private university to do so to date and follows a continuing trend of colleges that forego requiring standardized test scores. In announcing its decision, DePaul con-



cluded that four years of

rigorous college preparatory work in high school was more predictive of freshman success in college than a four hour test. In recent years, we have seen Wake Forest, American University, and Loyola University in Maryland, among others, successfully wade through applications without requiring test scores. These colleges can be

great options for the student whose test scores do not match his accomplishments in the classroom, for whatever reason.



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Service Academy Cutting Enrollment

A Colorado newspaper has reported that the Air Force has ordered its academy to reduce enrollment to save money. Thus, the United States Air Force Academy will be reducing the numbers of cadets accepted at least this year and next year to meet a 9% enrollment cut mandate. (<http://www.gazette.com/articles/money-112453-save-acad-emy.html#ixzz1EEIXhpbjm>)

The question becomes whether the other service academies will follow suit. Because of the free education offered by the academies and the attractiveness of the

ROTC scholarship money, these programs have become more attractive in the last few years. While the service academies have always been highly competitive in terms of admissions, it appears that they may become even more so at least in the near future.

