

Newsletter



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January/February Calendar

- February 10– Seminar on Financial Aid & Test Preparation
- Feb. 11– last day to sign up for March 12 SAT
- Feb. 12– ACT test



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New UC Eligibility Criteria Goes Into Effect for Class of 2012



As Seniors wait to hear about their UC admissions this Spring, Juniors begin to think about and prepare for their college admissions journey. Back in 2009, the University of California (UC) developed changes in how they intend to admit freshman students. These changes begin to take effect for the class of 2012. While we are aware of most of the changes, how they will work is yet to be determined.

A huge change is the elimination of the required SAT subject tests. While students will no longer be required to take the subject tests, each UC is developing its own policy regarding the subject tests. Certain of the UC's are recommending particular subject tests for certain majors. Other UC campuses will view SAT subject scores as valued added to an application. Still others have not adopted a policy.

UC will now guarantee admission to the top

9% of students statewide and the top 9% of students at each high school. The previous numbers were 12% and 4%, respectively. In the past, certain campuses guaranteed the top 4% of students in each high school a spot at the campus. While the policies are still being made, it does not seem likely that such guarantees will continue for the ELC students. Thus, while students may receive a guarantee to the UC, they are not guaranteed a particular UC campus.

Finally, it is important that students take account of how many UC approved courses they are taking as 11 of the 15 courses must be completed by the end of junior year (not summer), and all 15 must be completed by the end of senior year.

While the new admissions criteria is intended to promote a more comprehensive review of applications, the reality of the process is yet to be revealed.

Seminar on Financial Aid & Testing

If you are interested in learning about need based financial aid and scholarships as well as test planning and preparation, you may wish to attend a free seminar on February 10,

2011, at Sylvan Learning Center at Lorton & Howard Avenues in Burlingame, CA at 6:30 pm. This will be a joint presentation by Maureen McQuaid, an independent counselor and ex-

pert on college admissions, and Melissa Campos of Sylvan Learning Center, an expert in academic tutoring and test preparation.

Planning Next Year's Schedule

Soon students will take on the assignment of planning next year's classes. While it may be tempting to take on too rigorous of a schedule as a junior to "get into college" or to slack off as a senior, proceed cautiously. Colleges do put great weight on the rigor of a student's curriculum in making admissions decisions. Thus, those students who are capable of taking many honors and AP classes should do so, but students should do so intelligently. A student does not want to end up with a C or lower grade in an AP

or honors course. At the same time, seniors must be cautious in lightening their schedules. They also should not be dropping core curriculum courses in math, English, science and foreign language. Colleges are looking for serious and motivated students, not students who do the bare minimum.



Admissions Update

While it is still much too early to gauge this year's admissions cycle, some early reports tell us that Harvard and Columbia had dramatic increases (over 30%) in early applications. We have even heard from less selective colleges such as Lawrence University, warning us that they will take less students this year because they have been overenrolled the last couple of years. They are trying to reduce enrollment to get back to traditional enrollment figures.

While this news may seem scary, I am finding that my students who were realistic with their college choices are faring quite well. Yes, there will be some disappointments, but these will soon be forgotten as students become excited about their choices.

Now that it seems that the never ending essays are complete and the last major deadline of January 15th is behind us, the waiting begins.

Financial Aid Deadlines Loom



Now that applications are in, it is imperative that parents and students submit their financial aid forms as soon as possible. For some colleges, only the FAFSA is required. Others mandate the Profile too. It is important that families review the financial aid section on each college website to determine what is required for a financial aid application. The earlier a financial aid application is complete, the sooner a student will receive his/her financial aid package. If a family waits too long, funds may no longer be available or a student will not have the information to make college choices. May 1, 2011 is the deadline to select a college, and financial aid packages can vary greatly. Thus, a student will want to have all information to make this important decision.

Will California Higher Education Be In a Panic Again?

As Governor Brown announced his proposed budget, the University of California, California State University, and community colleges face a budget cut of \$1.4 billion dollars. This announcement follows other serious cutbacks in higher education in recent years, resulting in more impacted campuses, less offers of admission, and losses in class offerings.

What does that mean for Californians who have previously

enjoyed an inexpensive top flight education? While it may be a bitter pill to swallow, I think it means:

- Higher tuition.
- Even more selectivity in admissions.
- Increased admissions to out of state and international students resulting in less offers to California residents.
- Longer times to graduate.

Tragically, Californians may also face less diversity, larger classes, less class choices, loss of academic major options, and a flight of top professors if the state cannot manage this crisis to continue California's high quality higher education.

While we have yet to hear from UC and CSU with respect to this new revelation, it will not be surprising if they decide to limit admissions from current applicants. Plus,

this is surely a warning sign to future applicants to think broadly in looking at their higher education options, including out of state colleges and private universities that may afford merit aid or lower cost housing options to balance higher out of state tuition.



Legacy Matters

As this year's college applications are in, a new study has just been published that legacy students do have a significant advantage over those who are not. While we have known for years that legacy students may have an admission edge, this study reveals that the legacy counts for more than originally thought.

The primary legacy, that is of the parents, carries the most weight. The legacies of siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles are less significant, but still can add weight to an application.

The rationale behind giving legacy students preferential treatment in the admissions

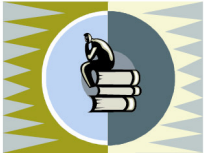
process is alumni giving, but interestingly, there is no real evidence of increased giving. Even if it was the case, there are those who claim that donations do not justify the unfair practice, particularly because it favors the wealthy over the poor and middle class.

Graduation Rates To Consider

One factor that students might not consider in selecting a college, but certainly matters to parents, is the graduation rate. Did you know that the average graduation rate for U.S. colleges and universities is about 53% in 6 years? This statistic is a heart stopping moment for most parents. What happened to finishing college in 4 years?

Graduation rates are not hidden secrets. They are published and easily attainable. It is important, however, not to look just at the current graduation rates, but also the rate of improvement. While this statistic may not be the only or the most significant factor in choosing a college, it is certainly one worth considering.





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Don't Make It Complicated

College admissions is not the same as when your parents applied to college. There are many more students applying to college (result of the baby boomers), students are applying to more schools, the online process and common application have made it easier to fill out more college applications, there are fewer new colleges, and marketing by colleges has become a huge business. So what is a student to do given all of this new phenomena which parents never faced? I suggest that you and your parents not make it too complicated.

You should get the best grades you can, take the toughest classes you are capable of taking without undue stress, strive for your best performance on standardized tests, and follow your passions in your extracurricular activities. Then, look to find the best college fit for you based on your academic and social interests.

Don't get caught up in the hype. There are so many superb colleges for you to explore. For the most part, it does not matter where you went to college, it matters

what you do while you are in college, what internships you take, and the networking and friendships you forge.

