



What the Class of 2009 Should Be Doing Now!

If you are headed into your senior year of high school and have competitive college aspirations, the summer offers an excellent time for preparation. There are several things you should be doing now to make the fall easier and also increase your chances of admission to your top choice colleges.

1. Scrutinize each college website. Really dig down into the information about each school. What do they look for in candidates (do a search for "common data set" or "freshman profile") How do you compare? What do each of the departments you're interested in offer? List by name those department heads. Think about specific questions you would ask that professor if you were sitting in his or her office.
2. Print out all applications for each of your prospective schools. Make a note of the application deadlines for each school (remember, the best laid plans can and do go wrong so it's best to have a firm calendar set up). What tests do they require? What are the deadlines for taking those tests? Check for supplemental applications to see what essays are required as well as what specific questions may be asked. They will probably want to know your specific reasons for applying. Create a file for each school with all of this information. Create a "College Requirement" calendar. This will help make sure you get everything done ahead of schedule.
3. Write your college essays and your all important short answer responses to college specific questions. Do **NOT** wait until your senior English class! This task is one of the most important and difficult to do right and if you have a tendency to procrastinate, save time and heartache and start as soon as you can.

Spend some time thinking about what makes you unique, your hook, what you will use to "sell" yourself to these schools. Try this question: if each of those schools receives 11,231 applications next fall from people with the exact same stats as you, what would you tell them about why they should accept YOU and not the others? Make a list of your interests, your accomplishments, your activities. Then give that same question to your best friend, a trusted teacher and your parents.

4. Work on developing a "resume" of your activities - be as detailed as possible at this point. Why have you chosen these activities, what have you accomplished, how would you describe them to someone who doesn't know your school or these activities? Put this all down on paper with details about how many hours you've spent on each. Remember, the number of activities is not as important as is the depth of your personal participation.

5. In most cases, two teacher recommendations from junior year will be required. Prepare a "thank you letter" for each teacher suggesting to cite specific examples of your contribution in his or her class or an activity or project that he or she was part of that showed your leadership and/or organizational skills. You may think they know you well enough, but they probably don't know some things about you that could help distinguish you from the 'rest of the pack'. Make it easy for them.

Doing your best in following through on these steps will make it infinitely easier for you, too!