



October 2009

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“A” IS FOR APPLICATIONS

October 2009

Seniors:

- Work on applications
- Complete Early Dec./Early Action Applications
- Complete financial aid “CSS Profile” if required by your colleges
- Submit “rolling” admissions applications ASAP

November

7th – **SAT & Subject Tests**

14th – **Deadline to submit College Application Lists** to Catherine

Seniors:

- File Early Dec./Early Action applications
- Work on remaining college applications
- Get a FAFSA form at www.fafsa.ed.gov

December

5th – **LAST good date for the SAT & Subject Tests this cycle**

12th – **LAST good date for the ACT this cycle**

Seniors:

- File additional college applications before deadlines

Juniors and Sophomores:

- Review PSAT score report and talk with Catherine about any questions you may have

My three-year-old son and I have been playing the alphabet game quite a bit recently. While “A” may stand for apple and airplane in his book, I have a feeling our seniors would come up with a few other words, especially in relation to the college application process – anxiety, apprehension, and angst are just a few that come quickly to mind.

Even diligent students who normally finish their assignments early can procrastinate when it comes to college applications. For some, the pressure seems too much, the stakes too high, and they just want to avoid the whole topic. Others decide they’ve got plenty of time during Thanksgiving and Christmas vacation. Without the ongoing distractions of school, they plan to immerse themselves in their college applications.

There’s often a more subtle reason for the avoidance. Working on applications sets into motion a series of events that can bring rejection, which is painful, or acceptance, which means leaving home -- also painful. Going off to college means growing up, leaving the comfort and safety of family and friends, and taking responsibility for your life.

Ambivalence isn’t limited to students. The prospect of sending a child off to college can bring mixed emotions. Kids who have spent years saying they can’t wait to get away from home may be frightened and unsure when it starts to look like reality. And parents who’ve been dreaming of a quiet house and no more fights over curfews and messy rooms may feel conflicted about letting go.

The stress of college applications can put everyone on edge. Students may see a

parent’s attempt to be helpful as pushing and pressuring. Parents can feel helpless and exasperated as they watch a child struggle.

It can be difficult not to step in and fix everything, but that might only make a child feel less competent. Once she gets to college, you won’t be there to remind her to do her homework and go to bed at a reasonable hour. Being responsible for her college applications helps a student feel more prepared to manage her life.

There’s another reason to let students take charge of the application process. If parents handle all the communication with prospective schools, admissions officers may start to wonder whether the student is ready for college. Encouraging him to make the phone calls, arrange visits and follow up with questions helps him feel invested in the process; it also conveys to colleges a sense of his maturity and purpose.

For students who feel overwhelmed with everything they have to get done, the best thing parents can do is help them get organized. Sit down together and make a chart listing the colleges your child is applying to, with requirements (test scores, transcripts, essays, recommendation letters) and application deadlines, so that he can check off each task as it’s completed.

The best that we can do is love and support our seniors through this stressful time. Your encouragement and guidance has helped them be successful thus far. Listen carefully for their guidance on how you can continue to be helpful in this next phase of life.

FREQUENT APPLICATION MISTAKES

Grammatical Errors and Misspellings - Don't rely solely on spell check. Proofread and ask others to proofread your work.

Using an unprofessional email address - Keep your fun address for friends, but use a professional address (like Tandem e-mail!) for admissions.

Not checking your email regularly - Colleges will use the one you submit! If you can't remember to check it regularly, have it forwarded to the one you use regularly.

Not reading carefully - If the form asks what County you live in, don't write United States.

Applying online, but failing to actually submit. Confirmation could be an email message, a Web page response or a credit card receipt. If you don't get this confirmation, e-mail or call to make sure that your application has been received.

Forgotten signatures - Make sure you sign and date all application forms, including teacher evaluation forms and Secondary School Reports.

Not telling Catherine where you've applied - Submit your College List to Catherine (due by 11/14) and let her know of any additions or changes along the way!

APPLYING EARLY: TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Does Applying Early Affect Financial Aid?

If you need financial aid, you'll probably need to complete a CSS Profile or the college's institutional form at about the same time as the early decision application. The college financial aid office can then send you a tentative financial aid package (tentative until you can send the college your tax return and other supporting documentation). Each college does this a little differently, so check with the financial aid office or admissions office of the college to be certain of their procedures.

What if your early decision college does not offer you enough aid? "If the financial aid package is insufficient, we will release the early-decision-admitted student from the Early Decision obligation," says Richard C. Vos, dean of financial aid at Claremont McKenna College. "If the initial aid offer in mid-December is inadequate, we encourage the family to have a conversation with our financial aid director. That process almost always resolves the problem."

However, Early Decision may not be the best choice if you want to compare financial aid packages between colleges. "My advice to students is this: If you want the chance to compare aid packages, don't apply early decision," says Christopher Hooker-Haring, dean of admission and financial aid at Muhlenberg College (PA). "Go regular decision and then line your aid packages up in the spring and see what the results are."

Does Applying Early Give an Advantage?

Many students apply early because they hope to beat the competition of regular decision. Although most colleges have a smaller number of applications in their early programs, whether it's easier to get accepted early than later depends on each college's policies.

"To find out if early options would benefit you, ask the admission staff two important questions: first, what proportion of the class is admitted early; second, what percentage of the early applicants are admitted versus [the percentage of] regular applicants," says Robert Massa, vice president for enrollment and student life at Dickinson College (PA). "The higher the first numbers are versus the second, the better your chances are of being admitted if you apply early."

Another factor is whether your academic record will be stronger later in your senior year. If you had stellar junior-year grades, this may not be a concern. But if you think that your application would be stronger with the addition of your grades for the fall of your senior year, waiting for regular decision may be the way to go.

A possible advantage to applying early is that you will receive admission decisions early. If you're accepted to one or several colleges, you may feel less stress about the rest of the college admission process. (And if you're accepted Early Decision, your college search is over.) If your application is declined at one or more colleges, you have some time to re-assess your college choices, if necessary. Colleges can also hold over your application to regular decision. If this happens, make sure to send updated information in time for the regular decision deadline (such as senior-year grades and activities) to bolster your application.

In the end, the decision of whether or not to apply early decision or early action is yours alone. Do your research, think about your options, look at your fall schedule, talk to your guidance counselor and family. And then decide for yourself.

Upcoming College Representative Visits

10/27	Tues	8:45AM	Wesleyan University
10/27	Tues	2:20PM	Randolph-Macon
10/29	Thurs	8:45AM	Lehigh University
10/30	Fri	2:00PM	Washington & Lee
11/2	Mon	11:30AM	Sweet Briar College
11/02	Mon	10AM	Hobart and William Smith Colleges
11/3	Tues	8:45AM	Bennington College
11/3	Tues	1PM	Washington College
11/5	Thurs	8:45AM	MD Institute College of Art
11/5	Thurs	2PM	Emory University
11/6	Fri	11:30AM	University of the Arts
11/11	Wed	11AM	Bridgewater College
11/16	Mon	3PM	St. John's College

TEST DATES & REGISTRATION DEADLINES

(Register online at collegeboard.com and actstudent.org)

Test Date	Test	Registration Deadline	Late Registration (includes fee)
December 5, 2009	SAT & Subject Tests	October 30, 2009	November 12, 2009
December 12, 2009	ACT	November 6, 2009	November 20, 2009
January 23, 2009	SAT & Subject Tests	December 15, 2009	December 30, 2009

Counselor's "2 Cents" Tip:

Now's the time to be researching scholarships! Many independent and college-based scholarships have early deadlines independent of the college application deadlines (yes – this unfortunately means that you may be applying for scholarships at schools that don't accept you). Check out the financial aid websites for all of the schools on your college list. Make sure you're not missing out on great opportunities to help reduce those large tuition bills! For independent scholarships, check out the following resource on UVA's Financial Aid website at: www.virginia.edu/financialaid/applscholarship.php. They have assembled a wonderful list of reputable organizational websites that provide scholarship searches (thanks, UVA!).