

Notes From The Coach's Playbook

November 2008

www.CollegeCoachDeb.com

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1st – SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

Seniors – File Early Decision/Early Action applications

Work on remaining college applications

Download a FAFSA or complete online at www.fafsa.ed.gov

Register for a PIN

30th – Applications due for University of California colleges

December 2008

Underclassmen—Review PSAT score report with advisor and map out a plan for test preparation. Schedule testing dates.

Seniors—File any additional applications before deadline dates

6th—SAT Reasoning and Subject Exams

What the College Bound Athlete Needs to Know

When a college football or basketball team wins a championship, the school typically receives a boost in applications for admission. No wonder colleges recruit student athletes. But what are the benefits for these students?

Preferential treatment in the admissions process is a huge advantage. At many, though not all, Division I schools, if a coach wants an athlete and that student meets NCAA eligibility requirements, the student is more likely to be admitted. But while athletic prowess may be the ticket for superstar athletes, good grades are still important for the majority of prospective players.

Money is another incentive. Division I schools are usually large flagship universities with the most money to put into athletic scholarships. Division II schools also offer athletic scholarships. Many people think all recruited athletes are getting a free education, but the number of scholarships is limited by NCAA rules. The average athletic scholarship is \$10,409. While football and basketball players may get full rides, athletes in less glamorous sports often receive just a few thousand dollars.

Even athletes who get a full ride aren't really getting anything for free. An intense schedule of training, practice, team meetings, and travel to games makes it challenging to keep up with coursework. Athletes may not be able to take certain classes because of scheduling conflicts or workload. While players form tight bonds with their teammates, they have limited time for social life. Forget about spring break at the beach. Being a Division I athlete is a demanding job.

Of course, if you love playing a sport, the sacrifices may be worth it. You have the joy of the game, the camaraderie of your teammates, and an identity on campus. And you certainly graduate having learned good time

management skills.

While playing sports at a Division I school may be more prestigious, there are advantages to a Division III school. Athletes can still get special consideration in the admissions process at Division III schools, and even though these colleges don't offer athletic scholarships, they can offer academic scholarships. Playing for a Division III team might mean more playing time, which is important when you love a sport, and the satisfaction of being a big fish in a small pond. Since Division III schools tend to be smaller, athletes may find more personal attention and smaller classes, and it may be easier to socialize with the rest of the college community.

Students who want to play on a college varsity team should ask their high school or club coach for a realistic assessment of their prospects. Out of over 300,000 high school senior football players, fewer than 18,000 or roughly 6 percent will be NCAA freshmen. In basketball, the high school to NCAA rate is closer to 3 percent for both men and women.

Coaches at Division I schools are usually aware of blue chip athletes and will recruit them. Other students who are interested in playing for a school will need to be more proactive. Ideally, your coach knows college coaches and is willing to contact them on your behalf. There are rules about when college coaches can contact students, but students can call or email coaches, and may want to prepare an athletic resume that includes academic as well as athletic history.

It's exciting and flattering to be recruited for a team but remember that college is four years of your life. You want to be sure that the school you choose is also a good match for your academic, career and personal goals. Very few college athletes will continue on to a career in professional sports, so make sure that your college will provide you with the skills you'll need for life.



Focus on Careers: Physical Therapy

The field of physical therapy tends to attract compassionate individuals who have a strong desire to help other people. To be successful, practitioners need to have good interpersonal skills, must be able to communicate effectively, and also have an affinity for science. Physical therapists (also known as PTs) work with accident victims and with people who are disabled by illness or a physical condition (such as arthritis or cerebral palsy). Their job is to test and measure function and mobility, and develop a treatment plan to restore patients to health or to improve their ability to function independently. Some PTs provide services for athletes to screen for potential problems and devise preventative exercise regimens. Still other physical therapists are employed as consultants by companies to help reduce injuries to employees, or work with fitness centers in developing effective and

safe exercise routines. A major part of the job of the physical therapist focuses on preventing injuries and loss of mobility. The goal of all physical therapy is to restore function, and to maintain and increase overall fitness and health.

Physical therapists work with people across the lifespan; some may specialize in infants and children while others work mainly with the elderly. While most are employed by hospitals and clinics, others work at rehabilitation centers, nursing homes, and at physicians' offices. Some physical therapists establish their own private practices, or may teach and/or conduct research. Physical therapy is a rapidly growing field and the demand for these services is expected to continue to grow over the next decade as the average age of the U.S. population continues to increase.

Education and Training

A career as a physical therapist requires a minimum of a post-baccalaureate degree from an accredited educational program. Although some of these programs still offer the master's degree, most PT students now graduate with a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. Admission to physical therapy programs is quite competitive, and a strong undergraduate science background (including classes in anatomy, biology, chemistry, math, and physics) is required. For this reason, undergraduate students interested in careers in physical therapy often major in one of the biological sciences, or take a curriculum very similar to that of the pre-med student. In addition, many PT programs also require that applicants have had volunteer experience in a hospital or clinic physical therapy department, so undergrads should look into volunteer or internship experiences in these areas.

Physical therapists need to understand all of

the factors that can affect movement and function, so physical therapy training programs include both basic science courses as well as specialized courses in areas like biomechanics, neuroanatomy, and human growth and development. A significant part of the training involves supervised clinical experience. Upon graduation from one of the 199 accredited U.S. programs, therapists must pass a state licensure exam before they can practice. Some states also impose additional requirements for licensure. Ongoing continuing education is generally required in order to keep your license active. To get a list of accredited physical therapy programs as well as more information about this rewarding career, log on to the American Physical Therapy Association's website at www.apta.org. Additional information on physical therapy careers is also available at www.explorehealthcareers.org, a free resource site for information about a wide variety of careers in the health sciences.

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Focus on Finances: Selecting Financial Safety Schools



This has been an unusually turbulent year for the U.S. economy, and both families and colleges have seen their financial holdings adversely affected. What impact might

this have on college choice?

Advisors have long advocated that students select colleges for fit. “Fit” is determined by appropriateness of that institution as seen by size, location, majors offered, academic level, campus culture, etc. But fit also implies an economic fit—will this be an affordable choice both for the student and his/her family? Although finances have always played a role in final college selection, this year their role may be more critical. While colleges with very large endowments (such as the Ivies and other highly selective colleges) are expected to continue to offer generous packages of need-based aid, many other colleges will see their ability to offer aid

compromised this year as their portfolios and donor lists shrink. Families confronting this reality are likely to increase the number of applications made to public universities, making these schools even more selective. Taken together, colleges that once were on a student’s “likely” list may no longer be a “safe” choice.

In crafting your final list of colleges, be sure to include some true safety schools. These are colleges at which the applicant’s academic credentials places him in the top quarter of accepted students. These are also colleges that are a good fit in other ways and where the student would be happy to be a member of the freshman class. And finally, the true safety school is also a safe financial choice. That is, a place that is affordable both now and in the future. Although it’s fine for students to take out some loans to pay for their college expenses, it’s never a good idea to mortgage your future by assuming too much college debt. Keep in mind that you may need additional resources to pay for graduate school.

The Role of Recommendations

Most private colleges and some public ones require recommendation letters as part of the admissions process. By understanding the role of recommendations, you will be able to choose your recommenders wisely and optimize your chances of acceptance.

When colleges ask for one or two letters from teachers, they are trying to learn more about you as a student. They want to admit applicants who are intellectually curious and who go above and beyond what is expected of them. Other desirable traits include leadership in group activities, the ability to engage in and stimulate discussion, and diligence in completing assignments. The best teacher recommendations don’t necessarily come from instructors from whom you’ve received an easy A. Often subjects in which you had to work hard to achieve, and those for which you sought help outside of class provide the best opportunities for insightful recommendations. When requesting teacher recommendations, follow the college’s guidelines. If they ask for two from core teachers, don’t choose an elective instructor. It’s generally best to choose junior year teachers but others may be asked if necessary. When requesting a recommendation, ask: “Would you be able to write me a

good (or outstanding) recommendation?” If not, find someone else.

Counselor recommendations (also known as school reports) focus on you, the person, and place you in the context of your senior class. Your counselor will write about the strength of your curriculum, and your level of achievement compared to others in your class. In this letter, your counselor will explain any inconsistencies in your academic record, talk about special challenges you’ve faced, and summarize your strengths and weaknesses. It’s obviously easier to be enthusiastic about students one knows well; wise students make the time to get to know their school counselors.

Students often want to submit additional letters of recommendation. Avoid this unless the writer really has something different to add. For example, an employer, a researcher with whom you’ve worked, a clergyman, or a volunteer coordinator might be able to speak to special qualities with which your other recommenders were not familiar. Choose this outside recommender wisely and send no more than one extra recommendation. Recommendation letters help to flesh out the applicant—they act as a “tip factor” for students on the cusp of admission.

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Taking a Proactive Approach to Learning

You've probably received your first "progress report" this semester with an early indication of how you've been doing in each of your classes. Use this progress report as a "reality check" - are you achieving at a level that will enable you to reach your academic and college goals? If not, it's time to take a proactive approach to learning.

Think about your performance in each class. What has gotten in the way of your earning the grade you hoped for? If homework assignments (or the lack of them) have impacted your grade, promise yourself that you will complete all future assignments both timely and completely. Speak to your teacher about her policy about accepting late or incomplete assign-

ments. Is class participation the issue? Make sure that you become an active participant in class, offering answers when questions are asked and taking a contributory role in class discussions.

Test results getting you down? Start a study group and include some of the strongest students in your class. Arrange to meet with your instructor after class for extra help and study tips. Teachers love kids who care—make sure your teacher knows that his subject is important to you and that you want to do well. If you continue to have difficulty in a class, consider getting outside help. Check with your school or an advisor about tutors available to help with a particular subject. Sometimes, all you need is a different point of view to make the learning come alive.

Website of the Month: www.collegegrazing.com

College Grazing is a tool to help students focus their thinking about college selection. Through a series of surveys (called "munchings"), users develop their own personal list of criteria for choosing a college and deciding whether a particular school is right for them. We particularly liked the section on essay writing which

breaks down the process into manageable chunks.

Another tool, a "website analyzer", helps students make sense of the huge amount of information found on college websites. The site also makes use of links to external websites like College Navigator to help users learn about colleges.

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