

College Bound

ISSUES & TRENDS FOR THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS ADVISOR

Vol. 26, No. 2

October 2011

Higher Education Nation

COLLEGE COMPLETION, retention rates, college affordability, the “preparation gap,” student debt.... These were but a few of the topics discussed the end of September at NBC’s “Education Nation” Summit. It was the second such gathering of policymakers, educators, members of the business community and journalists at Rockefeller Plaza in New York City and aimed at focusing the nation on the challenges facing education in America. *CB* was there and here are some of the highlights from the discussion about higher education.

Time to Degree. Complete College America released a report at the Summit that profiles the challenges college students face and the reasons why they are not completing their degrees and certificates. Compiling data from

33 states, the report, called “Time is the Enemy,” documents the number of part-time students, those in remedial courses, transfer students, certificate students and so on with the aim of focusing on what needs to change to be sure students complete their degrees. The report is online and interactive. To see the state-by-state results of the report, see www.completecollege.org.

Global Report Card. Former First Lady Laura Bush was on hand to release a new study from the George W. Bush Institute called “Global Report Card” for America’s schools. It compares student achievement in 14,000 U.S. school districts with the academic achievement in 25 developed countries. The upshot: “When

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“Tweaking” the Admissions Process

More Admissions Officers Check Facebook. Almost 25 percent of college admissions officers surveyed by Kaplan Test Prep this year said they go to Facebook to learn more about applicants. This is up from 10 percent in 2008. And 20 percent check applicants out on Google. What did they find? Some 12 percent say they found details disturbing enough to negatively impact the application such as vulgarities in blogs, alcohol use in pictures, illegal activities and plagiarism.

At the same time, 85 percent of admissions offices use Facebook for recruitment and 66 percent use YouTube to attract potential applicants. Kaplan also flagged big “application killers for the people who read applications,” including low high school grade-point averages. For info, see <http://press.kaptest.com>.

DePaul Test Optional. DePaul U. in Chicago is among the latest to drop mandatory standardized tests. Beginning with the freshman

class of 2012, students can opt out of the ACT or SAT and rely upon their high school academic records. Those who opt out will be asked to write answers to supplemental questions about issues such as goal setting, community involvement and personal challenges.

The DePaulia noted that “according to Jon Boeckenstedt, associate vice president of DePaul’s Enrollment Policy and Planning, the school’s ultimate goal is to let people and students know that their four years in high school mean more than four hours on a Saturday morning.”

Tougher Standards Work. Two years ago, the Iowa state Board of Regents implemented tougher admissions standards at state schools, known as the Regent Admission Index. The first study of the results of this change indicates that more college freshmen graduated from high school with better grades and higher

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THE GREENE REPORT

IMAGINE YOU ARE A HIGH SCHOOL student or parent. You’ve read the college guidebooks, looked at school websites and followed the instructions for getting application material from a college. You next prepare your list of the colleges where you’d like to apply, make a spreadsheet of each college’s admission requirements and register on the College Board, ACT, Naviance and Common Application websites. You’ve done everything correctly. And then...

You meet an additional, unintentionally frustrating and confusing source of college admissions rules, limitations and requirements: From your own high school.

In a profession where one constantly expects the unexpected, we are continually surprised by the decisions of high schools, both public and private, in relation to the admission process. With the best of intentions, schools often initiate new policies that cause significant angst among families. Or they maintain counseling practices that are outdated and problematic.

Yet when families consider the success of their college counseling experience at their school, they focus on the *process* to a much greater extent than the *outcome*. Of course, good process tends to lead to good outcomes, especially in terms of the most desirable result of matching students to the colleges that fit them best and where they will persist, succeed and graduate.

However, many high schools—public and private—set various deadlines and other

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HIGHER EDUCATION NATION

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compared with foreign counterparts, U.S. student performance is surprisingly mediocre in school districts that are often viewed as the pride of American K-12 education." The surprising finding was that even students in America's 50 wealthiest suburbs (such as Greenwich, Connecticut; Palo Alto, California; and Reston, Virginia) were "mediocre" compared to students in other developed countries. School districts can go to the interactive report card's web site and compare their stats with others. See, www.globalreportcard.org.

A Matter of Degrees. One Summit panel narrated by Andrea Mitchell, NBC correspondent, highlighted communities improving college attendance.

Pittsburg Promise. The City of Pittsburgh has promised to provide its high school graduates with up to \$40,000 as a scholarship to pursue four years of higher education. And thus far, 2,400 graduates have received scholarship awards. The program was launched in 2008 and the sponsors state it is now the largest of the seven "promise" programs in the country. Forty-one percent of participants thus far are African-American students, who represent 57

percent of the school district.

Students must have a 2.5 grade-point average and demonstrate "mastery of subject matter" through the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment. But also, "in order to give students multiple chances to demonstrate success and thus lower the pressure associ-

Scholarship Scoops

Two California Awards. Two California high school seniors will win \$5,000 scholarships from The California Museum. The Dreamers Challenge Scholarship asks students to articulate what they would do to change the world. *Deadline:* October 15. See www.DreamersChallenge.org.

Books That Inspire. James Patterson, the bestselling author, is giving away 230 gift certificates for college books to high school seniors as part of his second annual College Book Bucks program. Ten first-place winners of an essay contest on how books can inspire real life activities will receive certificates for \$1,000 worth of college books. Twenty second-place winners will win book certificates worth \$500, and 200 third-place winners will take home certificates worth \$250 each. *Deadline:* Dec.31. See, www.jamespatterson.com. ■

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

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test scores, and also are returning for a second year of college at higher rates, nearly 86 percent versus 83 percent before the change. According to the *Des Moines Register*, admissions officials now weigh class rank, grades, coursework and test scores to decide who earns guaranteed admission to the states three public universities.

Dorm Life. Catholic U. in Washington, DC, is turning back the hands of time by reinstating single-sex dorms. The new single-sex dorms will be for freshmen this fall, sophomore and upperclassman to follow. Why the change? "We thought it was a more wholesome environment," said John H. Harvey, president.

College Planning Toolkit. Meredith C. in Raleigh, North Carolina, developed a new College Planning Toolkit "to help identify the ways that families can be supportive" of the

college experience, according to Daniel Green, associate vice president. The kit, funded by the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, includes sections on preparing and applying to college, paying for college, enrolling in college, thriving in college and preparing for life after college. The kit is available as a book or online in English and Spanish.

Tuition Cut. St. Mary's C. in Southern Maryland hopes to cut in-state tuition by 12 percent to help ease the economic pressures on its students. The school has petitioned the state legislature for additional financial support so it can institute the change for fall 2012. "So far we've had constructive responses to it that are optimistic," said President Joseph Urgo. The school will launch its own fund raising effort to help as well.

Women Welcome. That's the word from Deep Springs C. in eastern California. After 94 years, the all male school has thrown open

ated with any single test-taking experience," students can also score 600 or higher on the College Board SAT exams which can be taken multiple times. Students scoring "Advanced" on the PSSA Reading, Writing and Math exams are awarded the most scholarship money. Those scoring "Proficient" earn less. See, www.pittsburghpromise.org.

Gateway Community and Technical College

One of the fastest growing community colleges in the nation is located in Covington, Kentucky. It now offers a "targeted" education to students in northern Kentucky and for businesses near Cincinnati. Part of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, it has three campuses and provides two-year associate degrees in Business Administration, Criminal Justice, and shorter certificates and diplomas tied to the needs of businesses in the area.

Gateway has formed a Consortium with area business to build partnerships that include apprenticeship-type programs. Businesses also commit to providing tuition assistance in addition to a salary for working students. See, www.gateway.kctcs.edu.

These and other Education Nation Summit conversations are now on line and can be seen at www.EducationNation.com. ■

its doors to the opposite sex. Some 20 faculty work with the 26 current students, who after academic study in the morning, work every afternoon on the college's ranch, farm, kitchen and office. Students do not earn a degree, but usually transfer to selective institutions.

Groupon Tuition Tab. National Louis U. in Illinois is the first college to jump on the Groupon website discount phenomena. Using Groupon, students saved up to 60 percent on tuition for a three-credit introduction course. Regular tuition for the course is \$2,232. But Groupon participants paid only \$950. The deal was limited to 25 students.

Odds and Ends. Rhode Island C. will offer the Common Application for the 2011-12 admission cycle for the first time. . . . Meanwhile, the 129-year old Atlantic Union C. in Massachusetts has closed its doors and turned out its 450 students. Officials said finances have been shaky for the past few years. ■

THE COUNSELOR'S BOOKSHELF

Top 50 Entrepreneurship Programs. The U. of Houston, Babson C., Baylor U., Syracuse U., U. of Southern California, Washington U. in St. Louis, Brigham Young U., U. of Arizona, Northeastern U. and U. of Oklahoma operate the top 10 undergraduate entrepreneurship programs, according to a new survey from The Princeton Review and *Entrepreneur Magazine*. Babson C., Brigham Young U. and the U. of

Virginia run the top graduate programs. To view the entire list, go to www.entrepreneur.com/topcolleges.

"Cost Aware Searches." Ruth Vedvik and Carol Stack have co-authored a new book *The Financial Aid Handbook* that they said is a tool on how to find out what schools will give them the most money. This might be a school where

the student will rank in the top 25 percent academically of incoming students or where special skills are needed. They cite the example of an \$8,000 scholarship at The C. of Wooster for a student who can play bagpipes. See, Career Press; 240 pages; ISBN-10: 1601631669; \$16.99; www.careerpress.com.

Essentials of Transition Planning by Paul Wehman focuses on students with disabilities and provides checklists and tools; ISBN: 13-978-1-59857-098-4; 181 pages; \$27.95; www.brookespublishing.com. ■

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internal restrictions covering letters of recommendations, working with outside counselors, setting up interviews or filing applications online or through the school counseling office which differ from a college's policies or add further requirements for students. Some of the most challenging issues relate to when and where students may apply, in ways that differ from what colleges allow or don't allow. For example,

Early Versus Regular. One competitive independent school prevents a student from applying to regular decision colleges if they have been admitted Early Action (restrictive or non-restrictive) at a college that admits fewer than ten percent of applicants. This goes directly against the decisions of Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Stanford, which have adopted Restrictive Early Action, rather than Early Decision or standard Early Action, in order to take pressure off students and allow those in need of financial assistance to apply to other colleges through regular decision.

Limiting Apps. Another private school limits student applications to a list of ten colleges and universities. Students are allowed to add a public university in their own state in addition to the ten, but must go through an appeal process to expand the list further. Students are also limited in terms of the number and combination of Early Action and Early Decision applications they may file, regardless of what colleges allow. Yes, keeping the size of college lists in check is a goal most counselors share. But using an arbitrary number is not a restriction found anywhere among the colleges themselves and it impacts students differently depending on their needs, interests, background and home state or country.

Against State Laws. A selective public high school limited students to seven applications, excepting international, California, and local and in-state institutions. But it had to withdraw the policy when shown that state law prohibits schools from limiting the number of applications to colleges and universities.

Limiting Early Action. An independent day school limits students to one Early Action or Early Decision application. If admitted to an Early Action college, the student may apply to only two additional colleges. What about the student seeking to balance the college list by applying to a few more and less competitive, non-restrictive early plans? What about priority dates for merit scholarships? What about the number of public universities that have adopted Early Action in place of less formal Early Notification or Rolling Admission?

Other Restrictions. Some high school policies are less focused on admissions procedures, but impact admissions nonetheless. These include limiting the number of Advanced Placement classes a student may take, requiring students to take the SAT or ACT at certain times or requiring or discouraging test preparation.

We find many such policies misguided. These rules may be well-intentioned, for example, aiming to lessen admission competition and "application creep," de-emphasize casual early applications, lower the overall workload and increase the ability to focus and advocate in the counseling office, discourage "trophy hunting" in the regular admissions round or serve any number of other rationales. But often they confuse and frustrate students and parents and the counselors forced



Matthew and Howard Greene

to defend them, and, perhaps, colleges that do not know about the various high school policies.

In an age when the college admissions process is already confusing and complicated enough, students do not need additional roadblocks. It would be much clearer and simpler for all schools to stick to the National Association for College Admission Counseling's Statement of Principles of Good Practice, individual college admission policies usually published each year and a cogent counseling-oriented approach that guides students toward appropriate early and regular decision choices, but is flexible enough to work individually with each student and his

or her unique needs and situation.

GUIDELINES

Here are some questions and guidelines to consider when reviewing school policies about college counseling:

1. When do families learn about the policies and any restrictions they entail? Is there an appeal process for exceptions that should be made? If not, why not? If so, is it reasonable?
2. Is the policy made clear upfront to families? Is it published on the school website, in a handbook or as part of the school profile?
3. Who gains and loses from the policies? The highly-prepared student who needs no aid? The middle-income student looking to apply broadly for need- and merit-based assistance? The lower income family that might not know "how to play the game"? The recruited athlete? The international student?
4. Does the policy fit with the mission of the school? Are counselors comfortable explaining it in public and to prospective ninth graders, as well as current seniors and college recruiters? Does the policy serve the interest of the school or the interest of individual students?
5. Do colleges know a school's rules? Are they explained clearly in a profile and/or counselor reports? Are colleges asked for feedback about the policies and how they might impact admission decisions?
6. Do schools study the impact of the policies if they supposedly "help" students in one way or another? Are admissions decisions and results improved? Is the process "better"? How do current and past parents and students feel about it?
7. Is the policy "reasonable" and "fair"? What are peer schools doing? Why?
8. How fully are the policies considered? Whom do they serve? Does the principal or head of the school, and board of trustees or board of education, know about, understand and support the approach?
9. Are such policies legal, or ethical? Are student's rights and responsibilities reflected in the admission process? Does your state have anything to say about such practices? Finally, do they fit within the framework of NACAC's Statement of Principles of Good Practice? To see these, go to http://www.nacacnet.org/AboutNACAC/Policies/Documents/SPGP10_10.pdf. ■

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CURRICULUM CAPSULES

Network and Digital Tech Degree. U. of California Santa Cruz students now can earn a B.A. in network and digital technology. "This degree is designed for students who have an interest in technology but don't aspire to be engineers," said the chair of the computer engineering department. "They won't be building computer systems, but they will understand systems and networks and be prepared to work in teams with engineers."

New Science Center in Maryland. Loyola U. of Maryland opened the expansion of its Donnelly Science Center, a \$12 million, 15,000-square-foot addition that includes class laboratories, research labs, conference room for the natural sciences, a microscopy center, a robotics lab and gathering area for students and faculty in biology, chemistry, physics, computer science and engineering. A focus

on science is part of Loyola's Strategic Plan.

New School of Education. Pacific Oaks C. & Children's School in Pasadena, California, has launched a new School of Education. "Our approach to teacher training is not to look at children and adolescents as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge, but to honor the whole child; to recognize the experiences, skills and cultural awareness that each bring to the classroom," Carl Kalani Beyer, dean, said.

Non-Profit Management. Hardin-Simmons U. in Abilene, Texas, has launched a new major in non-profit management. Students will learn skills to help them run the business operation of charities, political organizations, schools, government agencies and other nonprofits.

HSU also is offering a new major in public administration in which students study

accounting, government and economics. "Often students interested in faith-based universities also have interest in nonprofit or government careers," said Michael Monhollon, dean.

Female Computer Science Majors Triple. Harvey Mudd C., recently ranked by *U.S. News* the number one engineering college in the nation, has tripled the percentage of female computer science majors in recent years, in no small part because of its president, Maria Klawe, according to a recent article in *Bloomberg Business Week*. Klawe divided introductory courses—which once put advanced students with beginning students together into one class—into three sections, one for those with some background in programming, one for beginners and a third focused on biology. Today, 40 percent of students in more advanced "hard-core" CS classes are female. President Klawe's next goal is to recruit more underrepresented groups including blacks and Latinos interested in STEM subjects. ■

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Liberal Liberal Arts. "Can Antioch College Return from the Dead Again?" asks the September 18 *New York Times Magazine*. In fact, Antioch, "the most liberal of the liberal arts colleges," the article said, has come back from four different closures over its 158-year-old history. The Ohio college is restarting this time with 35 students selected from 145 applications. Antioch expects to have 110 students next year and 1,200 within a decade. The new curriculum includes a series of "global seminars" on sustainability, energy, food, water and health. And its mission is still inspired by a challenge posed by its first president, Horace Mann: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

Also of note in the article, in 1900 as many as 70 percent of college students pursued the liberal arts, while today's academy is "increasingly vocational." And in 2009, there were only 225 colleges in the nation where "the majority of students major in the liberal arts and live on campus," educating 350,000 students, or 2 percent of all higher ed students.

Rich College, Poor College. Over the past decade, from 1999 to 2009, spending per student at large public research universities rose by about \$7,500 to \$36,000 for each of the 1.1 million enrolled students. However, during the same period, spending remained at slightly more than \$10,000 for each of the 6.7 million public community college students.

These stats can be found in a new report, "Trends in College Spending," issued by the

Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity and Accountability, a Washington, DC, research group.

The Delta Project found that during this recession, tuitions are up, but other revenues are down at the nation's colleges and universities. And while many institutions have had to make deep cuts in their programs, instructional spending has been protected in public four-year schools. See, www.deltacostproject.org.

International Students in USA. Where do most international students enroll in U.S. colleges? According to recent statistics, the U. of Southern California tops the list with 7,987 students or 23 percent of the student body. This is followed by: U. of Illinois Urbana/Champaign with 7,276 or 17 percent; New York U. with 7,276 or 17 percent; Purdue U. with 6,903 or 17 percent; Columbia with 6,833 or 28 percent and Houston C.C. with 6,125 or 12 percent. Others include the U. of Michigan Ann Arbor, UCLA, Michigan State U., U. Texas Austin, Boston U., U. of Florida, U. of Buffalo, Harvard U., Indiana U. Bloomington, Ohio State U. and U. of Minnesota Twin Cities.

Students Feel Unprepared. A majority of students in a recent survey from McGraw-Hill Education said that they could benefit from increased proficiency in technology applications, financial literacy, time management and communication and study skills. Additionally, over half of high school graduates did not feel they chose the right career for them. Some

61 percent felt that practical work experience would have helped them make a better choice; and 96 percent said that an internship would have made them feel better prepared for the workforce. And 72 percent said that time management was the biggest differentiator between high school and college.

The survey also indicated that guidance counselors spend more than 50 percent of their time with students who may not graduate, and only 36 percent of their time on college-bound students. When it comes to college preparedness, they look to "eligibility" as set by the colleges, as opposed to "readiness."

Vital Statistics. Each fall, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* publishes an Almanac of vital statistics. Here are a few that caught *CB's* eye: Last year, private colleges spent 42 percent of their total tuition and fee income on aid for first-year students, up from 37 percent in 2000. About 44 percent of young women are enrolled in college; 38 percent of young men. Also, about 38 percent of young African Americans are enrolled in college; 28 percent of Hispanics; and 45 percent of whites.

Most Expensive. What schools have the highest tuition for 2011-12? Sarah Lawrence C., \$57,384; Landmark C., \$56,500; Columbia U. School of General Studies, \$54,782; Wesleyan U., \$53,976; Columbia U. \$53,879; followed by Johns Hopkins U.; Georgetown U.; New York U.; Harvey Mudd C.; Barnard C.; Bard C.; Trinity C. (CT); Washington U. at St. Louis; Bates C. and U. of Chicago at \$53,244. ■

For subscription info see
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Production: Design|Americom; Salsedo Press, Inc. COLLEGE BOUND is published monthly, ten times a year. Inquiries should be directed to P.O. Box 6536, Evanston, IL 60204; 773-262-5810. Annual subscription: \$59 in North America, \$69 for international orders, including airmail postage. www.collegeboundnews.com

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