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College Admissions Part 1

Tags: college admission deciding high school HSLDA preparation selecting spirituality

Dear Friends,

Summer is winding down, with a new school year fast approaching. For many families with high school students, another year means coming one step closer to the often confusing college admissions process.

This email is one in a three-part series to be presented in August, September, and October--all focusing on college admissions. And it's not just for parents of seniors. Even if your child is just entering high school, it's a good idea for you to become familiar with this information before you start making college choices.

In this first newsletter, we will address the topics of spiritual preparation and the college search. In September, we will cover the application process and the campus visits. We'll wrap up the series in October with a discussion about alternatives to the traditional college route that make it possible to accumulate many college credits (and sometimes all of them!) from the comforts of home.

Finding your way through the college admissions maze can seem daunting, but by spreading our information out over three months, we hope to give you a map that lets you enjoy the journey.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Spiritual preparedness is crucial for your student as he enters this next phase of his life. Below are some suggestions and tools to help you in this process.

First, we recommend that you and your child set aside a special time to pray together as you explore this next phase of his educational journey.

Second, help your student develop a biblical worldview that he is able to articulate. You can start this process by asking him to write out his own personal spiritual manifesto--what he believes and why. As preparation, consider having him read Paul Little's books, "Know What You Believe" and "Know Why You Believe" (http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3067). Organizing and articulating his thoughts will challenge him to evaluate his core convictions and let you both know where he is in his spiritual journey.

You might also consider sending him to camps such as Worldview Academy or Summit Ministries or have him sign up for the Generation Joshua high school program. Most of these opportunities are offered in the summer, so you can choose one close to his departure for college. Click here for more information.

Third, to help you and your student further understand where he is in his thinking and what college might be the best fit for him, have regular chats together. Discuss topics you feel are important: what he wants to do with his life, what are his gifts, church attendance during college, Christian ministries on campus, Christian friends, and other like topics. Encourage him to think through his responses to peers who might urge him to participate in drinking, sex, or online gambling. Formulating his convictions in these areas now can help him resist peer pressure later.

Last, parents--keep on praying!

LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT COLLEGE

If your child does not yet know which colleges he is interested in applying to, begin with some serious research. Almost all of this research can be done online as most college websites are extensive and able to answer most, if not all, of your questions. Many schools will offer virtual campus tours, provide direct email for staff, and much more.

As you do your research, some of the parameters you will want to keep in mind are:

College size--Large and small colleges each have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, large colleges have a wide range of majors (helpful for when a student starts out in one major, but later determines he or she is really interested in pursuing another). On the other hand, smaller schools often have smaller classes with professors who are more approachable and able to make themselves more available outside of class.

Proposed major--Not all colleges offer all majors. Certain colleges are well-known for specific majors, while some concentrations that are not as sought after may only be offered at a few colleges nationwide. School websites list their majors and often will let you know if a particular major necessitates particular high school courses for admission. Students in high school may have no idea what major they may want to consider, but if they are interested in two or three different possible majors, you may want to be sure that a particular college offers all three of the possibilities or a transfer to another school may be required.

In the latter years of high school, you may wish to help your child discover his possible career interests by using career testing through
such places as Career Direct or the Call or any number of career interest types of testing. These resources are available at: http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3200 and http://www.hslda.org/elink.asp?id=3201.

During the high school years, consider having your child set up a number of short-term internships--maybe just a week or several days or even longer. Internships or job shadowing is a great way to know if +there is a particular field of interest your child may want to pursue. An internship may confirm whether a particular area is really suited to his interests and abilities.

Location--Location is an important factor when choosing a college. How far from home do you want your student to be? Will she be coming home for weekends? Is the school within driving distance, or will it necessitate plane fares for each trip home? Also consider whether the college is urban, in a small town, or in a rural area.

Secular or Christian--Carefully consider whether or not a secular or Christian school will best fit your child's education. To help you narrow down your search for a college, the College Board website (www.collegeboard.com) has a great college search engine. Just specify your parameters and the search engine will bring up a listing of colleges that match your criteria. Christian colleges also have a similar search engine (www.christiancollegementor.org) .

Cost--Consider all costs including tuition, books, fees, room and board if relevant, and the cost of a computer (an essential these days). Also, consider miscellaneous types of fees such as school supplies, clothes, cost of transportation, etc.

Proximity to a sound local church--Check to see if there is convenient transportation provided to local churches each week and if the church of your choice is student friendly (Do they encourage members to adopt a student?). Take time to visit possible churches with your student during the campus visit. Doing such homework and searching out a good local church is extremely important. Also, investigate the campus ministries that will be available to your student.

For some families, this may be completely new information, but learn as you go and remember that we are here to support and help you through the college process.

Next month we will discuss in detail how to apply to colleges as a homeschool student and what to keep in mind as you plan that college visit. Until then, have a wonderful August, enjoy the children you've been blessed with, and delight yourself in the Lord.

Blessings to you,

Becky and Diane

This resource is an article from the *Homeschooling Thru Highschool* newsletter (8/3/2006), and is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association as a service to the homeschooling community.

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