



Before You Choose a College... Talk With a Counselor

I recently read an article in one of the US newspapers on school counselors. The article mentions how school counselors in America have an ever increasing work load as more students apply to colleges. The average number of colleges most students apply for is 7 and the average acceptance rate is down. The article mentions what we see regularly that the number of students on waiting lists is

growing and 1 in 3 actually gets in. What is interesting is that the number of students graduating from high school in America has also risen. How then can parents and students maximize their chances of getting accepted?

Another concern freshmen have is acclimatization to their colleges. This problem would not occur if the college choice is based on the

student's personality and interests.

As more students from the UAE are applying to the US colleges for a 4-year program talking with a counselor to narrow down the selection list of colleges to apply too becomes very important. From dream colleges to achievable the list needs to be prepared looking at many factors that include students and parents points of view. Tuition

fees, small town, rural, city campus to the diversity of student intake. Here a counselor with an overall knowledge can bring focus to the list.

Some colleges may not be among the top in the rankings chart but might have a great faculty for a certain field of studies. Quite a few colleges have really good theatre, music groups or certain sport teams. And some might be looking for a student with a slightly different background. Once all these factors are put together only then can one put together a comprehensive list.

A good counselor acts like a psychologist in parts because he or she finds the perfect fit for stressed out teenagers and manoeuvre their families through the maze of

college admissions. A lot of time and money can be saved by a well-informed counsellor.

When a counselor is trying to shape the teen into a perfect mould for certain prestigious colleges I would avoid that. An honest evaluation and finding the appropriate options for the individual is the role of a good counselor.

Yes, sprucing up resumes and highlighting certain achievements on the student profile, editing your personal statements, organising paper work and meeting deadlines, practicing for college interviews, preparing reading lists, and being available for pep talks...that is the counselor doing his or her job well.

Private or Independent counsellors

help edit essays, plan test schedules, campus visits, remove doubts and myths and spend more one to one time with the child and his,her families.

Early decisions are another issue. Many students get deferred and they feel they cannot do anything about it. Here again is when a counselor helps shape up a plan to remedy the situation maybe by sending in more material to show your interest.

Private counselors study each client and then individually tailor their services to suit the student. He or she evaluates each case and finds solutions to each problem. Enough cannot be said about going early to a counselor and working towards achieving the perfect match.

After illustrating the benefits of a private counselor let me also say that it is not a must. Some students feel happier handling admissions themselves with help from their school teachers and families. Each individual is different and I would not get pressurized to go to a counselor just because of my peers. Sometimes, we can't afford a counselor, then the net is a valuable source for research and many discussion boards are available to answer questions.

This article has been written by Sanjeev Verma, Director Intelligent Partners. At Intelligent we help students achieve their dreams. We guide students and parents through the entire process of selecting colleges, applications and all the necessary paper work...

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