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Top 10 College Planning Tips For Middle School Parents

1. Assess The Current College Landscape

Larger Overall Student Population

- From U.S. high schools and foreign countries

Competitive Admissions at Selective Schools

- Increasing application numbers, decreasing acceptance percentages

Enrollment & Revenue Challenges at Others

- Fewer students at small private / mid-size public universities

Increasing Cost & Debt

- College costs and student loan debt have risen dramatically

2. Define The “4 Fits of a S.A.F.E. College List”

Social Fit

- Size & location, activities & interests, support services

Academic Fit

- Potential major, college selectivity, rigor, GPA, test scores

Financial Fit

- Family budget, need-based aid, merit aid, private scholarships

Employment Fit

- Career services, internships / shadowing, job placement rates

3. Understand High School Academic Factors

Class Selection

- Review college requirements & learn your child's limits

Rigor of Curriculum

- Dual credit, Advanced Placement (AP), honors, regular

Grade Point Average (GPA)

- Weighted vs. un-weighted GPA ... know the difference!

4. Create A Strong Resume

Activities & Involvement

- Sports, clubs, music, student government, service, employment

School & Community Impact

- Colleges want students who have made a lasting impression

Stand Out Factor

- Take initiative and seek leadership opportunities

5. Prepare For Standardized Tests

PSAT

- PSAT 8/9, PSAT 10, PSAT junior year, National Merit Scholars

Advanced Placement (AP)

- Take after course completion, may receive college credit

ACT vs. SAT

- All colleges accept both, understand the differences, create personal testing plan with prep, superscore vs test optional schools

SAT Subject Tests

- Required / recommended for selective admissions schools

6. Learn the Realities of College Costs

Cost of Attendance

- Tuition, room & board, books, fees, transportation

Sticker Price vs “Discount Rate”

- Actual price nationally is under 52% of sticker price

What Price Will You Pay?

- 1/3 of families pay full price, 2/3 of families receive aid

7. Assess Need-Based Financial Aid Parameters

FAFSA & CSS Profile

- Financial aid forms used by schools to determine what you can afford and how much aid you may receive

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

- Determined by parents' and student income and assets, age, marital status, number of kids in college and other factors

Financial Aid Eligibility

- Can differ dramatically depending on EFC and school list

8. Find Merit Aid & Private Scholarships Opportunities

Merit Aid

- Varies greatly by school, preferential packaging to top students

Every Point Matters

- Small differences in GPA and or ACT/SAT can have a significant impact on the amount of money received

Private Scholarships

- Many go unclaimed, sources include your high school/district, community organizations, family, corporations, search sites, etc.

9. Learn College Application & Essay Requirements

Application Forms

- Common App (700+), Coalition App (100+), School Apps

Application Options

- Rolling admission, regular admission, restrictive early action, early action, early decision, early decision II

Essays

- Common app, coalition app, school specific supplemental essays, honors colleges, housing, scholarships, etc.

10. Understand Timelines, Best Practices, & Deadlines

Proper Planning Starts Early

- Assess PFA's "4 Fits", get involved, begin college research

Demonstrated Interest

- Show schools you care, visit campus, build key relationships with teachers, counselors, admissions reps, professors, etc.

Requirements & Deadlines

- Course selection, summer programs, teacher recommendations, applications and essays, financial aid forms, scholarships

THANK YOU



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2 Mid America Plaza, #1010, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
Kevin Krebs, Founder & Managing Partner, p | 630.730.8825
e | KKrebs@PFAchievement.com, w | PartnersForAchievement.com