

College Confidential

Volume 1

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Check Your Kollege Knowledge

Do you know about:

- Required High School Courses?
- College Entrance Exams?
- Scholarship Opportunities?
- Financial Aid?
- Application Deadlines?
- Application Procedures?

Did you score 100%?

If not, don't worry,
you are not alone.
College Admissions
Counselors can help.

Getting Into College:

What the books don't tell you
by Melanie Rome

Chances are if you, as a parent, are reading this article, your child will probably go to college. At this point, you are probably thinking to yourself, "How does she know—she doesn't know my kid!" Well, you're right. I don't know how well your child is doing in school. But, I'm willing to bet that you care about your child's education and you have probably been keeping an eye on the situation since preschool. And, I know all about those magazines you see in the market and on the news stands that tell you about the colleges your child **must** attend to succeed in

life and how only they can give you all the inside tips about how your child will get admitted. But, let's face it, what they really want is for you to become so-o-o anxious about the college admission process that you think you must have their publication in order for your kid to go to a good college. What a great sales pitch! However, what *I* want is for you not to go crazy with worry about whether or not your child will get an education after high school. No, I don't know the secret to getting your child into Harvard. But, I do know a few things that, hopefully, you will find useful as you begin the process of helping your child get into college.

Counselors

Have you and your child get to know his/her guidance counselor as soon as possible which means beginning in the
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About Melanie Rome, College Admissions Counselor

Since obtaining her Certificate in College Counseling from UCLA, Melanie has helped many, many students navigate the college admissions process while at the same time working in the counseling departments of several local high schools including the College Office of a large, academically challenging and nationally recognized school. In her private practice all of her students have been admitted to college including such schools as Harvard, Dartmouth, UCLA, Berkeley, and Penn. Melanie specializes in providing very personalized service from assisting students with completing applications, financial aid forms, essay writing and evaluating and making school choices. Her love of working with students prompted her to further her own education and this past August she received her Master of Arts in School Counseling. She is member of several professional associations including the American School Counselors Association, the Western Association of College Admission Counseling and the Higher Education Consultants Association. Melanie is also a non-fiction freelance writer and her stories have been featured in both national and local publications

will have the same counselor all through high school and at others; the counselor's caseload may be determined by grade. This doesn't mean you call and bother them for a weekly progress report on your kid. But, what is important to understand is that this hardworking and dedicated individual is in charge of your child's schedule of classes, the completion of which, can dramatically affect his/her chances of not just going to college, but which college. In addition, a lot of colleges require a letter of recommendation from a counselor or counselors as part of the application. The more the counselor knows your child the easier it is for him/her to write the letter.

In addition, it is good for your child to get to know the school's College Counselor. This person is a wealth of information and expertise on the college admission process, so have your child make it a point to frequent the College Office from time to time during lunch or nutrition or may even become a TA. College Counselors are usually the first people at the school to find out about scholarship opportunities. Generally, college counselors are some of the busiest people at school, and most schools only have one of them, so that is why it may be so difficult to get an appointment for a one-to-one meeting. But, they also can write a letter of recommendation for your child, which most will do if they are asked. But don't wait to the last minute to get whatever you might need from the college counselor. They are only too happy to help out. Just give them some time to do the work.

Extracurricular Activities

Have your child choose at least one extracurricular activity in ninth grade and have him/her stick with it for four years. Don't have your child wait until senior year to start volunteering at that hospital. Colleges like to see that your child is capable of making and keeping a commitment. Colleges also like to see demonstration of leadership. So, if possible, have that extracurricular activity be one where there is room for advancement, such as a club where your child can be an officer or one in which there is an increasing level of responsibility.

Resources

One of the most important things you can do is to empower yourself. Learn about the college admission process. There are some wonderful and highly credible sources for information and a lot of them are free. I urge you to check out the following:

Websites

- www.collegeboard.com
- www.nacacnet.org (The National Association for College Admission Counseling).

Books

- *The Fiske Guide to Colleges* (2009 ed).
- *Colleges That Change Lives*, by Loren Pope (*one of my favorites*).
- *Getting Ready for Life After High School, 2008-09* (*This is a great booklet put out by the LA County Office of Education and LAUSD. It is FREE. Just request a copy from your school's College Counselor*).

The Good News

Finally, take comfort in the fact that that the new buzz word in college admission circles is the "less than perfect" student. They want a well-rounded freshman class that just might include your child; the one that may have earned a couple of "B's," has an extensive collection of comic books who works part-time at Blockbuster and who maybe has written a few quirky and funny articles for the school newspaper.

Just One More Thing

When it comes to actually filling out the applications for colleges, this is NOT the time for your child to learn a lesson in responsibility. Keep in mind that the frontal cortex of your child's brain is not fully developed yet. That is, certain executive functions like making the connection between getting an application in on time and being accepted to college may not connect. This is not to say that your child is not brilliant. It just means that they need your help. Now, more than ever.

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