



COLLEGE COACHING SERVICES

We take the anxiety out of the college equation!

Essential Action Steps for the College Preparation/Application Process

By Laurie Cortez, MA

College...Challenging classes, exciting dorm life, thrilling basketball games, memorable football tailgates and lasting friendships. Yes, college life is all very exciting, but people don't just end up in college by chance. College acceptance is a result of wise choices and actions made while still in high school. Below are action steps designed to help you achieve your own college acceptance.

Action Step #1 - Take your classes seriously, study for tests and put effort into homework. Admissions officers look for strong GPA's combined with rigorous classes. Set up a study schedule and adhere to this schedule. If you are having a difficult time understanding a concept, request extra help. If a tutor is feasible, work this out as well.

Action Step #2 - Balance rigorous classes with good grades. Some students are capable of earning A's in all advanced level courses. However, the majority of students need to balance the rigor of their course load to ensure their GPA stays strong. Colleges do look at academic rigor, but it is important to remember that they also highly value a strong GPA. Parents know their teenager's strengths, and should encourage students to take advanced courses in areas of strength. If a student has an aptitude for English, but struggles in math, I would not advise pushing into an advanced math course; rather making sure the student learns a solid foundation, ensuring success at the next level. I would, however, advise this student to enroll in an AP or Honors English class.

Action Step #3 - Develop a standardized testing timeline and stick to it! After the transcript, colleges give most weight to test scores. Preparation is key, and students need to make sure they set aside plenty of study time for these tests. Students will compete for college admission against others who have taken advantage of preparation opportunities.

Action Step #4 - Become involved in school activities and take on leadership positions. Whether through sports teams or high school organizations, find something that interests you freshman year and stick with it. Colleges like to see depth of activity. If you have a passion for soccer or basketball, play for your high school and club team, look for ways to provide leadership on these teams...share your passion for the game through coaching youth leagues.

Action Step #5 - Use your summers wisely. Demonstrate intellectual curiosity by enrolling in a college level course or attend a pre-college program hosted at select universities. Give back to your community by sharing your talents with young children or the elderly. If dance is your passion, teach classes to children or arrange performances at retirement communities. Summer is an opportunity waiting to happen.

Universities look for students who possess intellectual curiosity, demonstrated through a strong transcript and solid standardized testing scores. Leadership and school involvement in areas of interest combined with community service are other important factors. Colleges are looking for students who can make a difference on their campus, and in their community.