

5 Reasons Why You SHOULD Use a Professional College Advisor

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March 2019

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“Operation Varsity Blues” monopolized the news cycle last week. It was on television, all over social media and the main topic of conversation among adults and teens alike. Sadly, this story shines a light on what is terribly wrong with many of those affiliated with the college application process including advisors, coaches, parents and tutors.

While we are disappointed with the process and disgusted with those involved, we need to understand that the vast majority of professional college advisors are NOT unethical, using their services does not mean you are gaming the system. These individuals offer a skill set that can be valuable in preparing your child for the college admissions process. Below are five reasons you SHOULD consider using professional college advisors.

Personalized Assistance

High school guidance departments are woefully understaffed. According to the American School Counselor Association: “The average student-to-school-counselor ratio is 482 -1 - nearly double the 250-1 ratio recommended...” With so many students to serve, it is highly unlikely that your child is receiving significant attention. These professionals are simply overworked; there are not enough hours in the day to personally address the needs for all of whom they are responsible. College planning is personal, no two students are identical. Individual guidance is a key to successfully managing the college selection process.

Broad Based Expertise

Piggybacking on the knowledge that public high school guidance offices are understaffed is the fact that many counselors lack a sufficient understanding of the nation-wide wealth of college opportunities. Did you know there are over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States? Often high school counselors have considerable knowledge on those schools which are the most popular with the students in their high schools, likely the home public, state universities. While these schools may be perfect for certain students, other schools across the state and country may provide a better fit for others. Professional college advisors have a depth of knowledge and proven ability to help identify schools that match your child’s wants and needs.

Focus on Preparedness

Professional college advisors understand the importance of early college planning. They can leverage their familiarity with the admissions requirements of a broad base of schools to ensure that your child enrolls in the appropriate high school classes, those which align with specific college admissions' conditions. It is important to understand that this is not about force-feeding a pre-Ivy League curriculum. Many school requirements may differ from high school guidelines and those of your local state universities. For example, while students need two years of a foreign language to graduate high school in Florida, many institutions of higher education across the country desire three or even four. Awareness of this type of information can help your child select the appropriate classes throughout high school.

Financial Knowledge

A quick look at college "sticker" price indicates that public schools are generally less expensive than private colleges and universities. However, this is not always the case. A qualified, professional college financial advisor can help determine the "bottom line", out-of-pocket-cost for sending your child to school. This number is unique for each individual (based on [FAFSA and CSS](#) Profiles) and also varies by institution. In some cases, total cost (tuition, room, board, fees, etc.) at a private university (with a significant endowment) may be less than those at a public or state school. An understanding of the financial process combined with proactive financial preparation may open doors many would not have thought possible.

Academic Assistance

While many public schools now offer a broad range of tutoring, it is often geared toward the masses. It has to be. They simply don't have the funding to identify and staff individual needs. Private education advisors and counselors can evaluate your child and determine if they require additional assistance in specific areas. Sometimes the smallest adjustments have the biggest impact. Because high school counselors (and teachers) are responsible for so many students, issues may be overlooked, especially if your child is successful in the eyes of the school system. Professional education advisors can also help to identify providers who assist with specific tutoring on an as-needed basis.

In Summary

Public education, in general, is underfunded; clearly, we do not have enough guidance counselors in our schools. Often bogged down with paperwork and testing, most do not have the opportunity to spend the necessary time and energy with students to fully guide them through the college identification and application process. Most professional college advisors provide students and their families legal, moral, and valuable guidance throughout the preparation and application process. This information can be incredibly valuable. These professionals work with a broad range of families. They offer services in all price ranges. If you have children in middle and high school, consider leveraging the experience of a professional.