

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

for students and their parents

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ALASKA'S LEARNING NETWORK

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YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU FIND IT

Steve Jobs once said, "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it." Part of the college application process demands that applicants seriously consider, perhaps for the first time, what career or occupational direction they want to take. How closely are you researching the type of academic or vocational programs offered by the schools which have attracted your attention? If you are completely undecided about what you might love to do, it's okay to enter most schools as an "undeclared" major while you explore possibilities. However, if you already feel a directional passion for learning and practicing a particular kind of work, you owe it to yourself to closely investigate whether quality programs in that field are available at the schools to which you want to apply. According to Steve Jobs, majoring in a field which you love, but may not be the most practical or high-paying, will more likely lead to lifelong satisfaction. Remember also that many companies are willing to train newly graduated college students in any major for specific jobs."

SELF-MARKETING TIPS FOR COLLEGE APPLICANTS

("College Spotlight", September 26, 2014)

In addition to the generally well known means of making your best impression on your targeted schools, here are three important tips to help ensure your best efforts.

+++ Addressing Past Mistakes. If you've have had some trouble in the past (discipline problems, low grades, etc.), it's better to address these issues head on rather than ignore them, and in the process, explain what you learned from your mistake(s) and how you've moved on. Additionally, proof of exemplary behavior since the problem and positive recommendations from teachers, counselors, and mentors will go a long way toward lessening the significance of that mistake.

+++ The Internet/Social Media. One sometimes overlooked issue you should keep in mind is that in this day and age, many admissions personnel turn to the Internet to check up on applicants—for example: Searching your name or checking your profiles on social networking sites. A good rule to follow: avoid posting any text, images, or video online that you wouldn't want your parents to read or see.

+++ Enthusiasm. Being enthusiastic about the college is one of the keys to being accepted—especially in cases where your academic credentials and test scores are identical to other applicants. Show enthusiasm in all of your interactions with admissions officials, and be ready to provide a genuine, knowledgeable explanation for why you want to attend the school if asked during a phone or in-person interview or in an essay.

Tips: Working with Your School Counselor

("College Spotlight", September 26, 2014)

+++ Always be on time, or show up early, for appointments.

+++ Have a game plan ready for each meeting that details the topics you'd like to cover and the questions you'd like to ask. This will save you both a lot of time during the meeting.

+++ Ask counselors to write letters of recommendation and complete other forms far ahead of the deadlines to submit these documents.

+++ Keep your counselor "in the loop" regarding your college admission campaign. If problems arise with your application or financial aid, the counselor can serve as an advocate with the college or scholarship-awarding organization.

+++ Don't be afraid to ask questions, but try to do extensive research on your own first so you bring only the most difficult questions to your counselor.

+++ After you're accepted into college, send a formal thank-you note to your counselor.

CSS/Profile Deadline for Early Decision Applicants

For Early Decision (not Early Action) students with financial need, it is essential to submit the CSS/Profile by November 15. Use your College Board login info to sign in at: <http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>. This will allow for a more realistic Expected Family Contribution (EFC) to be considered earlier in the game. An ED applicant is allowed to wait until the financial aid award letter is received before submitting a deposit and withdrawing applications to other schools. If the award makes it impossible to meet the family's financial need, the student is allowed to decline the ED offer. *(You will not often find this in writing on school websites.)*

CSS / FINANCIAL AID PROFILE

What is it??? Do I need it???

As you probably know, the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) is the main form to be filled out and sent in after January 1, 2015 when applying for financial aid. In addition, certain schools and scholarship programs require more financial information in order to establish your eligibility for institutional nonfederal funds (typically grants, loans and work). The College Scholarship Service (CSS) PROFILE Registration Guide is now available online (see weblink below). It lists the institutions which require the 2015-2016 PROFILE. Check to see if your selected colleges or scholarship programs use this service. You must complete the Worksheet included in the Guide before you register for a PROFILE Application packet which contains customized questions based on your selected colleges requirements for aid. Depending on the school, you could be asked to answer as many as 200 additional questions.

You can register online (\$9) at: <http://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile> You can then print a copy of your customized application and use it as a worksheet for filling out the application online and sending it electronically. All students are charged a minimum of \$25—(\$9 reg. fee + \$16—first college) for the initial application. This covers the cost of creating your PROFILE Application and the first school report. You will be charged \$16 for each additional college or program to which you want information sent. Students who are from low-income families with limited assets will automatically receive fee waivers. Applying online reduces the chance that you will have to correct your information later. Using online edits, the online system will tell you about missing or incorrect information before you submit your application.

All of the needed information is covered in the PROFILE Registration Guide. It is important that you do this as soon as you know your schools. Registrations are now being processed. If possible, complete the PROFILE process this fall, before you send in your completed FAFSA after January 1st. But, by all means, be sure to register at least four weeks before the earliest school or scholarship program stated PROFILE deadline.

After you submit a 2015-16 PROFILE online application, the following year you will be able to pre-fill some of your information using this year's application.

SENIOR CHECKLIST FOR NOVEMBER

- _____ Ask one of your teachers to proof your essay and resume.
- _____ Request letters of recommendation from teachers. Choose those who truly know you, and your academic abilities. This is not necessarily the teacher who gave you your last "A." You might also request letters from an employer, or your athletic team coach.
- _____ Request college applications from college admissions offices by calling phone numbers listed on websites or by filling in online application request forms. Remember you do not have to wait until you have completed test exams or requested letters of recommendation before making applications to colleges.
- _____ Make a list of all the essay questions found on your college applications and start drafting your answers now. Many will be very similar. Remember, your objective is to show (not tell) members of the admission committee how you are unique and why you are a good fit for their school.
- _____ Submit University of California and certain California State University applications before November 30. Get a certificate of mailing for each or apply online.
- _____ If applying for early admissions, make sure to get all required materials in on time or you will be put in the regular admissions pool.
- _____ Last chance to take SAT, SAT Subject Tests, or ACT in early December for use in many selective colleges' admission and scholarship programs. SAT test date: 12/6—Registration deadline: 11/6. ACT test date: 12/13—Registration deadline: 11/7. If you send your score report immediately after you get your online score, there is no reason to rush Nov. and/or Dec. scores. College Board is ready to report them to your listed colleges just as soon as they are reported online, usually 19 days after the test date.
- _____ Keep working to keep grades up and continue to attend college visitations.
- _____ **November 8 SAT scores should be available online around November 27.** If you have questions, call SAT Customer Service: 1-866-756-7346.

When to Begin the FAFSA Online Process

Be sure to wait for the 2015-2016 Online FAFSA, available free on January 1, 2015, only at the official FAFSA website: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. The current year 2014-2015 FAFSA is for current college students. However, you can apply for a parent and a student PIN now on the FAFSA website by clicking on "PIN Site" at the top. These two PINs will be used to electronically sign the submitted FAFSA in early January. **DO NOT** use the website <http://www.fafsa.com> which charges (\$80) families for what they can easily do themselves. A change in the law has forced **fafsa.com** to mention **fafsa.gov** as a free FAFSA service. Although not the government website, <http://www.finaid.org/fafsa> contains lots of useful, free financial aid information under "Essential Links".

Making Sense of ED/EA Options

(*BestCollegeFit.com*)

Early Decision (ED) - A student may only be active as an ED candidate at only one college. If admitted ED, a student is expected to withdraw all other Regular Decision applications that might have been active and enroll at the ED school. It is now the case that “reasonably competitive” candidates can also benefit from the ED option as many colleges seek to build their enrollments with “high yielding” students who are more willing to commit earlier.

Early Action (EA) - Students who choose this option are not presumed to be declaring a first-choice interest in the colleges to which they apply EA. They are not committed to enroll if admitted and may apply EA to multiple schools. However, a handful of institutions offer “Restricted” EA as a “single choice” option that prohibits students from applying EA to any other school. Unlike ED, EA really doesn’t improve one’s chances of admission. EA does, however, provide peace of mind for those who use it early in the process.

Tips for potential ED/EA applicants

+++ Remember the ED Round II option. Many schools will give you the opportunity to “convert” your Regular Decision application during a second round of ED in January. The conditions are the same as with ED Round I, but you might be better prepared to make a commitment later in the year.

+++ Resolve all \$\$ questions and concerns before applying ED. Once you are admitted, there can be no contingencies. Ask the school’s financial aid office to provide an “early estimate” of your expected family contribution (EFC) before you submit your ED application.

+++ Sprint to the finish! Even though you might hold an EA or ED acceptance letter, it is likely to be conditional on your completion of the senior at the same level of achievement that earned you the offer of admission. More than a few colleges are known to rescind offers of admission when final transcripts show performances that drop measurably after offers of admission

University of California Application Update

The UC Application for Undergraduate Admission and Scholarships is open for submissions on Nov. 1 and will close on Nov. 30. There is no benefit or disadvantage to students who choose to submit their applications earlier or later in the month. Once the application is submitted, only limited edits can be made. Students who need help on their application can call the UC Application Center at (800) 207-1710. The Application Center can also be reached at ucinfo@applyucsupport.net. Remember that the purpose of the additional comments box on the application is not to write an additional personal statement, but rather to explain anything that may be unclear in other parts of the application. Downloadable guides: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/downloadable-guides>

California State University Update

Many of the most popular CSU campuses will close their filing periods on November 30. Each new application you submit to another CSU campus already includes your information from the previous one. You will need a transcript for filling in your 9-11 required courses and grades. For detailed CSU campus profiles with photos, links and videos, go to: <http://www.csumentor.edu/campustour/>

COLLEGE NEWS

+++ **Rice University (TX)** has just launched a *free Advanced Placement biology course*. The site, edX, was created by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University in 2012 as a nonprofit platform for those universities and selected others to offer massive open online courses, or MOOCs, to the world.

+++ According to The Princeton Review *College Hopes & Worries Survey* of college applicants and their parents, 79% of student respondents report that their college application stress levels are “high” or “very high”—up 14% from 2009. Close behind their biggest college worry of “level of debt to pay for the degree” is “won’t get into first-choice college”

+++ There were as many as 200 women’s colleges in 1960, according to the National Institute on Postsecondary Education. Today that number hovers around 44, as schools facing sluggish enrollment are forced to find ways to survive.

+++ With elite colleges under growing pressure to enroll more, the **University of Chicago** is taking a series of rare steps for low-income students to make applying faster, simpler and cheaper, and to make studying there more affordable. The package of measures includes guaranteeing paid summer internships after the first year in college, and providing career counseling beginning in that first year.

+++ Even as college administrators accommodate freshman requests for singles, one research study argues that a first-year roommate can be a critical component to retention and college success.

+++ SAT results for the Class of 2014 show mixed – and very slight – changes from last year. The average score in critical reading increased one point, while average scores in math and writing fell by one point. Scores have been slowly declining for the past several years, dropping 11 points in reading and seven points in math in the past decade.

INTERESTING AND USEFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.fkcc.edu/academics/associate-in-applied-science-diving-business-and-technology.da> - Employment for commercial divers is expected to grow by 29% through 2022. The Diving Business and Technology Program at Florida Keys Community College (FKCC) in Key West, Florida offers various scuba diving courses and programs with industry certifications including commercial/work diving, divemaster, scuba instructor training, dive medical technician, public safety, research diving, and underwater photography. Check it out!

<http://www.depaul.edu/academics/undergraduate/majors/Pages/costumedesign.aspx> The Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago offers a BFA in costume design. This conservatory program provides students with course work that supports this specialized training with costume design courses, make-up design courses, costume technology (including draping, mask-making, painting and dying, etc.), courses on drawing and rendering (including Photoshop) as well as courses in theatre history, art history, and collaboration techniques. Students get experiential training by working as costume designers and assistant designers on shows produced in DePaul theaters. The costume design program is highly selective.

<https://www.linkedin.com/edu/rankings/us> - Which schools are best at launching graduates into desirable jobs? LinkedIn has analyzed millions of alumni profiles to find out how schools around the world stack up across a variety of careers. From university to career, see which schools are launching graduates into desirable jobs and careers.

<http://www.scholars4dev.com/> - Have you ever considered enrolling at international universities that are tuition free or foreign universities offering scholarships. This website has compiled information and provided links to scholarships and tuition-free Colleges and Universities in several international countries. Begin by clicking on "Undergraduate (60)" under "By Level of Study" on left for scholarships. Then explore the rich links covering many countries and programs.

COUNSELOR'S CORNER

New login process for the FAFSA

In spring 2015 FAFSA will implement a on the Web and other borrower-based websites. The new ID, which will be comprised of a user-selected username and password, will replace the Federal Student Aid PIN. The change is meant to eliminate the need for individuals to enter personal identifiers (Social Security number, name, and date of birth) when accessing Federal Student Aid's systems. Existing users will be able to link their PIN information to the new Federal Student Aid ID.

Great volunteer/leadership opportunity for your students

The U.S. Green Building Council has developed a national chapter network dedicated to helping volunteer advocates to lead campaigns to transform their local schools, provide their communities with on-the-ground support as local experts and provide a direct link to the programs and initiatives of the Center for Green Schools. Find a chapter near you by clicking "USGBC Chapters" near the bottom of the page, then enter your zipcode. <http://www.centerforgreenschools.org/usgbc-chapters>

Writing Requirements for the Common App

In the 2014-15 Common App member colleges and universities can ask for writing samples on either the Member Questions page or the Writing Supplement. This is a change from last year's Common App. Some applicants and counselors are finding it tricky to identify all of the writing samples that a college might require, especially those that are triggered based on responses to other questions. The First-Year Writing Requirements Overview posted within the Applicant Help Center will help you identify whether a college requires writing of any kind. It lists all of the colleges and universities that have short answer and/ or essay questions as part of their First-Year application and where those questions appear. Some short answer and essay questions are conditional. These conditional questions are required for applicants depending on responses to earlier questions, specific majors, or areas of interest.

COLLEGE NEWS

+++ **George Washington University (DC)** has a huge recruiting pipeline to China: Preliminary counts show 113 of its freshmen this year come from the world's most populous country. That's seven times more than the 16 Chinese in Georgetown University's class of 2018.

+++ Employment for composers is expected to grow by 5 percent through 2022, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. They will increasingly be needed to write scores for films, television shows, commercials, and Web-based content.

+++ An *I'm Shmacked* video titled #SaveCuse, shot following the shutdown of a popular tailgate spot at **Syracuse University**, after the *Princeton Review* named it the No. 1 party school exhorts students to stand up to the college administration and to save students' right to party.

Tips for Writing a Great College Admissions Essay

(by Charlotte Lazor, Associate Director of Admission Information Systems at Wesleyan University, and Elizabeth K. Lyons, Associate Director of Admissions at Hawaii Business College)

1. Be yourself. Choose a topic that is meaningful to you. Speak in your own voice. Write what you feel, not what you think the admissions committee wants to hear. The essay is the candidate's opportunity to explain who they are and why they are unique.
2. Don't overextend. Don't take on too big a topic and don't adopt a "preachy" tone. College admission officers don't want to be lectured on rainforest destruction. Instead, tell them how you became interested in environmentalism.
3. Be creative. Try to come up with something different. Remember that the people reviewing your essay will have read hundreds - if not thousands - in the past. Don't give them one more "The Teacher Who Influenced Me Most" or "Drinking and Driving is Bad" to wade through.
4. Accentuate the positive. If you're writing about a traumatic experience, describe the negatives but don't dwell on them. Rather, explore how the experience changed you and what you took away from it.
5. Read each draft aloud; your ears can pick up problems that your eyes may miss. Pursue perfection. No essay needs to be error-free more than this one. Quadruple-check the spelling. Type your essay carefully.
6. Ask people for input. Teachers, counselors, friends, parents, siblings - ask people you respect for some candid feedback. "What do you think I'm trying to say?" "Does it sound confusing?" "Is it boring?" "Do I come across as the person you know?"

Campus Visit Strategy

If time and finances have not enabled you to visit the colleges you are planning to apply to, here is a way to manage that challenge. First be sure you have done a thorough job of online research for each college. Apply well before the application deadlines. Then plan campus visits after applying, usually during Jan., Feb., and Mar. It is important to develop a list of questions and plan specific activities in order to accomplish your goals.

- ___ Check well ahead for campus tours and arrange for info sessions
- ___ Meet with an admission officer
- ___ Checkout the school calendar and catalog online before visiting
- ___ Ask about merit scholarship cut-offs and opportunities and forms required.
- ___ Meet with faculty in the department of your intended major
- ___ Attend a class to get an idea of typical size, academic atmosphere
- ___ Talk to students re: general academic environment, amount and kind of study and campus life such as dating and social activities.
- ___ Investigate transportation options.
- ___ Visit campuses with your friends to cut down on expenses and the number of parents needed to accompany you.

COLLEGE NEWS

+++ NACAC, a national association of high school counselors and college admissions officers, wants the federal government to stop providing student information to colleges that some institutions are using to disadvantage students who apply for admission and financial aid. Unbeknownst to students, their list of as many as 10 colleges is passed on to all the colleges on the list. Colleges have discovered that the order in which students list institutions on the FAFSA corresponds strongly with students' order of preference. To avoid this, colleges should be listed on the FAFSA in alphabetical order.

+++ **California Lutheran University** is stepping up its commitment to veterans by working with the government to cover all tuition and fees for an unlimited number of qualified undergraduate and graduate students.

+++ CNBC has reported that **Navarro College (TX)** has denied admission to at least two Nigerian applicants because that country had experienced confirmed cases of Ebola.

+++ When young college graduates decide where to move, they are not just looking at the usual suspects, like New York, Washington and San Francisco. Other cities have reached a high overall percentage, led by Denver, San Diego, Nashville, Salt Lake City and Portland, Ore., according to a report just published by City Observatory, a new think tank.

+++ Despite the recent fallout* over new guidelines for Advanced Placement U.S. History, the College Board is making similar changes to most science and other history AP courses in an effort to emphasize critical thinking. The new courses - from Art History to Physics - will cover fewer topics and aim to address charges that the old courses prized rote memorization over imaginative thinking. *A conservative commentator has said the new AP US History framework will lead kids to want to join ISIS. In Colorado, a school board proposed reviewing the district's AP history curriculum to ensure that it promoted patriotism, not "civil disorder."

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS AND CONTESTS

JFK PROFILE IN COURAGE ESSAY CONTEST

Contest is open to high school students in grades 9-12. The essay requires 1000 words or less, that is original, creative, and demonstrates an understanding of political courage as described by John F. Kennedy in *Profiles in Courage*. The **deadline for the contest is January 5, 2015**. Winner receives \$10,000. A second place winner receives a \$1,000 cash award. Up to five finalists each receive a \$500 cash award. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Education/Profile-in-Courage-Essay-Contest.aspx>

CHOPIN FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Applicants must be American pianists, ages 14 to not older than 17 on May 15, who plan to major in piano at the postsecondary level. They must also have a "special affinity for the interpretation of Chopin's music. Applicants should submit a formal application, a statement of their career goals, at least two references from piano teachers or performers, two copies of a performance DVD of selected Chopin works and a \$25 registration fee. Amount: Up to 10 renewable \$1,000 scholarships + Half-awards of \$500 may also be granted to select applicants. **Deadline: May 15, 2015**. Details at: <http://www.chopin.org/scholarship-requirements.html> Phone: (305) 868-0624

THE KAISER PERMANENTE HEALTH CARE CAREER SCHOLARSHIP

Scholarships are awarded in amounts of \$2,000, \$5,000, or \$10,000 to at least one qualified high school senior, pursuing a career in a human medical or dental health care field, at each of 132 eligible public high schools in the Kaiser Permanente areas of Oregon and Washington. See list on website. **Application Deadline: January 14, 2015**. All details at: kp.org/communitybenefit/scholarship/nw

DENNY'S HUNGRY FOR EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

\$1000-\$3000 scholarships for college available for high school seniors with 3.3 GPA or higher. Requires a 300-word essay on "How Denny's can impact childhood hunger in their communities". Denny's coordinates with three national scholarships. 1) *The US Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation* 2) *The Magic Johnson Foundation* 3) *United States Hispanic Leadership Institute* All have **April Deadlines**. <https://dennyscholarships.versaic.com/login>

JACKIE ROBINSON FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Provides 40-60 scholarships of up to \$24,000/four years to minority high school seniors showing leadership potential and demonstrating financial need. **Online Application must be received by February 15, 2015**. <http://www.jackierobinson.org/apply/general-applicants.php>

C-SPAN STUDENTCAM DOCUMENTARY COMPETITION

Open to all students in grades 6-12. Must create a 5-7 minute video documentary on the theme: "The Three Branches and You". Tell a story that demonstrates how a policy, law, or action by one of the 3 branches of government has affected you or your community. Students may compete individually or in teams of either two or three. Cash prizes totaling \$100,000 will be awarded for top 150 student documentaries, and 53 teacher advisors! **Submission Deadline: January 20, 2015**. Upload video file & complete online entry form at: <http://www.studentcam.org>

DELL SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Open to HS seniors with financial need who are participants in approved college readiness programs such as AVID, Aspire, GEAR UP & Upward Bound. Focus is not just on grades/test scores but on how you have prepared yourself for college. Dell Scholars receive \$20,000 each to complete their higher education over the course of six years. Semifinalists must submit a current copy of their high school transcript, a complete Student Aid Report (SAR) from their FAFSA, and an online recommendation. <http://www.dellscholars.org/scholarship/> **Application deadline: January 15, 2015**.

FOUNDATION FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION ESSAY CONTEST

Open to high school juniors and seniors. Offers one \$10,000 first prize, one \$5,000 second prize, and three \$1,000 runner-up prizes. Four \$500 winners will be chosen from the remaining entrants in a drawing. Essay must be 800-1000 words on: "Why is free speech important at our nation's colleges and universities?" **Essay Deadline: January 1, 2015**. <http://www.thefire.org/student-network/essay-contest/#details>

AXA ACHIEVEMENT COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Awards up to 375 non-renewable \$2,000 scholarships. **Application Deadline: February 1, 2015**, but if 10,000 applications are received before that date, the program will automatically close. All details available at: <http://www.axa-equitable.com/axa-foundation/community-scholarships.html>

RONALD MCDONALD HC U.S. SCHOLARSHIP

Graduating high school seniors may apply for one of four scholarships. **Application deadline: January 20, 2015**. All post-mailed back-up documents must be postmarked by the same date. Four types of scholarships are available to choose from at: <http://www.rmhc.org/rmhc-us-scholarships!>

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS AND CONTESTS

PRIDE FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP This scholarship is for HS seniors and college students who are self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender students and straight-ally leaders. There are over 50 types of scholarships offered but only 1 application to complete. Must be a Northwest resident of WA, OR, ID, MT or AK Emphasis is on demonstrated commitment to human and civil rights for all people. **Online application deadline: January 16, 2015.** <http://www.pridefoundation.org/what-we-do/scholarships>

GE-REAGAN FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS Awards 20 renewable scholarships of \$10,000 annually to graduating high school seniors, based on financial need. Must write a 500-750 word essay on "How your leadership and service has made a positive difference". Semifinalists will be notified by email on or before February 3, 2015 and required to submit a copy of pages 1-2 of family IRS tax returns. **Application deadline: January 8, 2015.** Website will close after the first 25,000 applications are received. <https://www.scholarshipamerica.org/ge-reagan/index.php>

GEORGE S. & STELLA M. KNIGHT ESSAY CONTEST National prizes of \$2000, \$1000, and \$500 are open to all 9th-12th grade students. State and chapter prizes vary. Must write an 800-1200 word essay dealing with: an event, person, philosophy, or ideal associated with the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, or the framing of the United States Constitution. During the 2014-15 contest, to commemorate the 800th anniversary of Magna Carta, contestants may also choose a topic that relates to Magna Carta and its influence on the Revolution or one or more of the Founding Fathers. Click on "Essay Contacts" at bottom of page on right to locate your local contact. **Postmarked Entry Deadline: 12/31/14.** http://www.sar.org/Youth/Knight_Essay_Rules

WASHINGTON CROSSING FOUNDATION ESSAY CONTEST Available to high school seniors who are *planning careers in government (local, state, or federal) service*. Awards are granted as renewable scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$5000 per year. Students must submit essay not to exceed 300 words stating why applicant is planning a career in government service including any inspiration to be derived from the leadership of George Washington in his famous crossing of the Delaware. **Application deadline: January 15, 2015.** <http://www.gwcf.org/rules.html> Phone: 215-949-8841

YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR AWARD The NFIB Award program for high school seniors will grant two \$15,000 scholarships to the top applicant, three regional \$5,000 scholarships and approximately 100 NFIB Young Entrepreneur Awards nationwide in the amount of \$1,000 each. These awards are non-renewable and are not based on financial need. Application 1000 word essay: "Describing your entrepreneurial experience and your involvement with small business." **Must apply online by December 18, 2014.** <http://www.nfib.com/yef/yef-programs/young-entrepreneur-awards>

AFSCME FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP An ongoing program of scholarships available to children and financially dependent grandchildren of members of American Federation of State County Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Offers 10 renewable (4 years) scholarships of \$2,000 each. For application: <http://www.afscme.org/members/scholarships>. Click on: "AFSCME Family Scholarship". **Postmarked Application Deadline: December 31, 2014.**

Balancing Your List of Schools

(Toby Brewster, Director of College Advising, St. Paul HS, Concord, NH)

Students anxiously wondering if they got accepted by an elite school should be prepared for the thin envelopes even as they hope for the thick ones. Such anxiety depends on how well you have built a balanced list of schools to apply to. If you only sent applications to Harvard, Princeton, and Yale, you are in trouble. If your focus is on finding the right "fit" and not just trying to find the most selective schools, then "fit, not prestige" should become your mantra. Last year the Ivy League schools deferred or denied an historic number of high-achieving St. Paul students who had their hearts set on an acceptance letter by Christmas. Deferral of early decision applicants can also be a great disappointment to parents, particularly ones who insist (as one of our fathers did a few years ago) that "anyone who goes to St. Paul's should be able to get into Yale." I am the Scrooge who tells parents, "In addition to applying to Yale, you should also apply to Gettysburg, UNH, and Dickinson." When some parents hear this, they react as if I have told their child, "You're just not good enough." Having a balanced list of second-choice schools doesn't hurt.

The Invisible Force Behind College Admissions

(*“Forbes Magazine”, August 18, 2014, by Maggie McGrath and Matt Schifrin*)

Despite the windowless, bunker-like atmosphere inside the Erie conference room of the Sheraton in downtown Chicago, Galen Graber has to be impressed by his audience: a swath of the 1,500 top admissions and financial aid officials from 635 different schools who have gathered to set policies that determine which kids get into which college and how much money they’ll receive. Graber asks: “How many of you would say that the primary motivation for offering students merit scholarships is to reward academic achievement?” *Not a single person raises his or her hand.* That response goes a long way to explain college tuition rates that have risen 12% in the last decade while median household income has declined 6% over the same period. And why student debt levels have hit \$1.2 trillion, a burden that surpasses even U.S. household credit card debt. Elite universities like Harvard, Stanford and others on the top of the FORBES list exist in their own orbit—they admit students without factoring in need, their multibillion-dollar endowments providing generous grants for the middle-class and poor. (Get into any Ivy League school with a family income of less than \$60,000 and you can pretty much expect a free ride.) Those not raising their hands at Graber’s seminar do so knowing that one of their core missions is to ensure that revenue—a.k.a. tuition—keeps flowing and growing, ever higher. As a result, the tuition pricing at America’s universities has evolved into something akin to a discount mattress retailer, though Graber’s employer, a consultancy named *Noel-Levitz*, has come up with a more august name for it: “financial aid leveraging.” Noel-Levitz might be the most influential force in higher education pricing that you’ve never heard of, empowering what’s become a three-stage, market-distorting game for college administrators. First, conjure as high a sticker price as possible for tuition. Second, schools plow a lot of that extra money into student amenities, including country-club perks that outwardly justify it—and help with college rankings that reward such largesse. Finally, use your financial aid pile not necessarily to help needier students but rather to offer discounts to lure richer kids who might pay the rest of that inflated tuition price in full. Noel-Levitz has 220 full- and part-time staff and consults with 1,100 schools each year. Industry insiders estimate that its revenues top \$35 million annually, but its influence over higher-education finance is several zeroes larger.