

Ms. Casey Pedrick, Stuyvesant’s energetic, excellent College Office Director, has helped some of the best and brightest New York teens get into selective colleges for years. One of her missions is to encourage us to look beyond the elite Ivy League schools that have mesmerized generations of Stuy families, because other schools may fit our students better. Ms. Pedrick invited a panel of admissions officers from four “hidden Ivies” to tell us about their undergraduate programs. Kate Christensen, Assistant Director of Admissions at Bucknell University, Jaime Anthony, Senior Assistant Dean of Admissions at Carleton College, Erica Salm Rench, Associate Director of Admissions at Tulane University, and Gil Villanueva from the University of Richmond’s Office of Admissions impressed us with the diversity and creativity of their programs.

BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY

Located in Lewisburg, PA, Bucknell is the nation’s largest liberal arts university, and offers a premier undergraduate experience in engineering and the sciences. A unique element of the school is an animal behavior lab, which houses live primates on campus! It is the alma mater of Kiva co-founder Jessica Jackley. If you are considering schools like Cornell, Colgate, Lehigh, or Lafayette, Bucknell is a comparable option.

With a 3,500 undergraduate class and only 150 graduate students on campus, the school is focused on its younger students. Small classes keep students engaged. Research is available starting in the freshman year; undergraduates are published before they move on. The setting is rural: student life is truly on campus where there are more than 150 clubs and student-run activities, including a Quidditch team! Its students are known as “geeks with personality.”

CARLETON COLLEGE

Carleton is a highly ranked, small private liberal arts college in Northfield, MN with strong computer science and engineering programs. Carleton’s admissions office “crafts” a student body each year. They review the rigor of a student’s curriculum in the context of their available opportunities at their high schools. It is often compared to Brown, Yale, Williams, and Swarthmore. Notable alums include writer Dara Moskowitz and Editor in Chief of Politico, John F. Harris.

Carleton is organized into departments, not schools. There is no core curriculum and only one-third of the credits needed to graduate are earned from required courses. Other than a freshman seminar and a senior thesis, students have great freedom in course selection. It instills an appreciation for different cultures, with 85% of its students studying off campus, in internships and in study abroad programs; 90% of the student body is active in campus-based extracurricular activities.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Tulane is one of the most generous schools in the U.S. with financial aid. With five undergraduate divisions, it is a major research school with programs in pre-law, pre-med and architecture. Students study on a beautiful campus, four miles from downtown New Orleans. Tulane is comparable to University of Michigan, Vanderbilt, and Washington

University in St. Louis. Yahoo co-founder David Filo and Newt Gingrich both graduated from Tulane.

Tulane’s undergraduate class is mid-sized (6,600 students). With the exception of the architecture program, students can easily double major. It has a rich tradition of public service, with more than 100 service learning programs. There are theaters both on and off campus for the creatively minded. The tremendous amount of start-up energy in New Orleans, fueled by post-Katrina rebuilding, brings its students many rich opportunities.

UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

Richmond, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is a highly ranked liberal arts college with a range of programs from a business school to a competitive biology program. It is an alternative to Boston College, Georgetown or the University of Virginia. One of the wealthiest colleges in the U.S., it continues to make progress even in an economic recession. Like the other colleges on the panel, Richmond is focused on its undergraduates. Within six months of graduation, almost all of its students are either employed or in graduate school. NASA’s Leland D. Melvin and Stephen Aronson of Barclays Capital are notable alumni.



photo: Jessica Chung

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

All four schools use the holistic review process, which ensures a better “fit” between a school and student than traditional approaches. They seek well-rounded students to build a well-rounded student body. Demonstrated interest is critical. Test scores and interviews are often optional. All four believe in the global classroom and encourage study abroad (study abroad participation: 50% at Bucknell, 75% at Carleton, 35% at Tulane, and 70% at Richmond).

The schools’ financial aid approaches vary, but all require both a Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA) and a College Scholarship Service (CSS) profile. At Bucknell, 60% of its incoming class received aid last year, averaging \$28,000 per student, including merit- and need-based scholarships. It is need-blind except for international students. Carleton is need-sensitive, neither need-blind nor need-aware. The school’s philosophy is that Carleton should be affordable. No merit-based aid is available, but 85% of students receive work study (less than 10 hours a week). Tulane uses a need-based approach to determine aid amount and type; last year 80% of the incoming class received aid. Early Action admission is need-blind and most EA applicants are admitted. Richmond is one of the 35 U.S. schools that is need-blind for international students. Students who apply before December 1 qualify for merit-based scholarships, which are decided by its faculty. One in 13 students receives a merit-based scholarship. Richmond’s graduates have a \$22K to \$25K “level of indebtedness” four years after graduation.

TIPS ON THE COLLEGE ESSAY

The panelists offered tips for good essays and turn-offs that students should avoid.

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DO'S	DON'TS
Write about relationships with family. Students who bring mundane topics to life write some of the best essays	Don't worry about including exciting events
Tell a story about you, the student	Don't tell a story about your grandparents
Write about a topic that excites you	Don't try to impress the admissions officer
Spread out the topics. You will write about six essays between the Common App and the Supplement	Don't just write about one topic
Do customize your essays for particular schools	Don't send an essay customized for one school to other schools
The little things indicate your level of intent	Avoid typos, grammatical errors, and misspelled words. Spellcheck!
Write like a 17 or 18 year old — the authentic voice is critical	Don't forget to make a point
Read your essay out loud (and catch your mistakes) before hitting send	Don't let an easily avoidable errors give a bad impression
Be genuine	Admissions officers don't expect super human stories.

The take away message from the evening is that there are many more high-quality options than the Ivy Leagues. Every student requires something unique to fit his or her interests. Not every young adult will be happy at Harvard or MIT, but many will be at one of the hidden Ivies. It is important to choose carefully and look beyond the brand name. □

COLLEGE CORNER *by Andrea Fastenberg*

With the school year in full swing, all students can begin to take steps to ensure a smooth college application process. While seniors have the most to do, there are important issues for juniors, sophomores, and even freshmen, to keep in mind.

COLLEGE OFFICE WALK-IN HOURS:

- **Ms. Casey Pedrick** is available during 1st period
- **Ms. Diana Ferrer** is available 5th period
- **Ms. Jearell Wilson** is available during second half of 10th period and after school

PARENTS WHO HAVE QUESTIONS
 Contact Parent Coordinator **Harvey Blumm**
hblumm@schools.nyc.gov or (212) 312-4926

SENIORS

First and foremost, your senior students should check the College Office page on the Stuyvesant Web site (under the ACADEMICS drop-down menu) at least weekly. This page provides up-to-date information on application deadlines, college reps' visits, scholarships, and open houses held by colleges throughout the city. Becoming a vigilant visitor to the College Office page will ensure seniors stay on top of Early Action (non-binding) and Early Decision (binding) deadlines this fall. For more information about the entire college application process and for answers to many of your inquiries, please consult the PA-published *College Handbook*.

The College Office offered a senior parent College Information session on Tuesday, October 1st. The PowerPoint file of Ms. Casey Pedrick's overview of the college application process is available to download on the PA's Web site at stuy-pa.org.

If they have not done so already, seniors should set up an account on the Common Application Web site at www.commonapp.org and

begin to look at the supplemental essays that may be required by the schools to which they want to apply. Visit Stuy's Writing Center (located in the library) for help with personal essays for college applications. Your son's or daughter's senior English teacher may also offer feedback on essays.

Is Early Decision or Early Action appropriate for your son or daughter? Applying and getting an early acceptance can transform your student's senior year. (Even a "deferred" or "rejected" decision might be helpful. It provides a reality check for whether your assessment of target schools is accurate and may steer you to tinker with your student's list of colleges.) Consult the *College Handbook* for guidance, and discuss this option with your child. If your child chooses to apply to a school early, he or she must indicate this plan in their Student Tools account as soon as possible. The college counselors will meet with students applying Early Decision or Early Action in advance of their application deadlines.

Consider using the occasional day off during the fall (such as Columbus Day, Election Day or Veterans Day) to visit colleges. Call ahead and plan your visit to take advantage of campus tours and information sessions, as well as to observe ongoing classes. In some cases, advance registration is required. Certain colleges offer Saturday tours and information sessions. For nearby schools, this option may expand your opportunities to visit colleges.

Finally, if the colleges request an alumni interview with your son or daughter, sign up online for those interviews as early as possible. Waiting until later in the fall can lead to being shut out of those opportunities. Even if the colleges do not require alumni interviews, it is very important for students to seek them out as they give admissions committees a more personal, human perspective on applicants.

JUNIORS

Juniors will take the PSAT/NSQT on October 16th. Use the results from this exam to start thinking about your child's study plans for the

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