

A Note to Parents

The period during which your child is considering college options and making future decisions is one of tremendous excitement. However, it is equally often characterized as stressful and overwhelming. It generates feelings of empowerment, yet also anxiety and helplessness. Like all the major milestones in your child's life, it is a time for parental involvement and support. Parents can ensure that the student allows time to plan and complete the many application tasks. Parents can, and should, encourage students to talk about their decisions and help them analyze the vast amount of information they will amass. Most of all, you can ease the stress for them by keeping them on track and helping them learn to manage their time efficiently. Never forget that you are probably the most influential factor in your child's life. As such, here are some specific things that you can do for them:

- *Be sure that your child takes all high school years, including senior year, very seriously. Keep an eye on study time, progress reports and other indicators that your student is still engaged. They can't afford to slip. Get in touch with school counselors if you have any doubts.*
- *Keep a file of all honors, awards, articles, leadership accolades, volunteer work certificates, etc. relating to your child. This saves a lot of time when preparing applications.*
- *Discuss college choices with your student. Help them articulate what is important to them and why. Encourage them to talk about majors and careers. Talk openly, but tactfully, about your student's strengths and weaknesses.*
- *Emphasize the value of a college education as opposed to the prestige associated with certain school names.*
- *Be sure to remember that this is your child's future and not yours. Students who take ownership of this process and make their own decisions will have a greater stake in their own success. It's easier to rationalize failure if someone else made their decisions.*
- *Parents should be sure to guide, not steer. Guiding implies support, whereas steering implies control. Constantly ask yourself if you are guiding or steering. Remember, this is not about you. Guard against over-involvement.*
- *Participate when and where appropriate. Attend college visits with your child and join in parent programs there. Read this entire handbook, help them with research, and keep them focused and organized.*
- *Talk openly and honestly with your child about finances, although be sure they don't eliminate schools on that basis initially. Financial aid is available at a surprising level for more families than you might think. Still, your child should have some idea of what the family can afford to contribute.*
- *Reassure them throughout the process that you are proud of them and encourage them when things seem overwhelming. Let them know that you will be pleased no matter where they ultimately decide to go. Then be true to that statement.*