

GETTING NOTICED, GETTING IN: **HOW DOES A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT BECOME A COMPELLING COLLEGE CANDIDATE?**

At Elissa Caterfino Mandel and Associates, we appreciate that families need assistance both with college application strategy and the issue of “how it’s all going to get done”.

We help students capitalize on the talents and strengths they have, as we help position them for success in the application process. But we also manage the nitty-gritty of applying.

Engage us for all or any of the services listed below:

AN ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS, RELATIVE TO DIFFERENT COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STRENGTHS

We communicate current information about what admissions counselors are seeking in applicants, based on our visits to campuses across the country.

We analyze an applicant’s extracurricular activities to allow candidates to make the best case for themselves possible, given the tier of school targeted. If necessary, we advise students to “take it up a notch,” so that the activity has impact beyond the high school.

We also review course offerings in majors that may interest your child. This way, your student understands in advance what the prerequisites and course requirements are for different majors, such as psychology, business, or computer science.

We steer students to programs where they will likely be successful in the admissions process. Given the degree of difficulty of getting into the Smeal School of Business at Penn State, for example, it may be smarter for some freshman applicants to choose a liberal arts major if Penn State is a top-choice school.

We call schools to address specific questions that applicants have, such as will it matter in the admissions process if a student takes AP Chemistry or a fourth year of a language.

CREATION OF AN ADMISSION STRATEGY

We analyze your student's level of preparedness for colleges and universities at different levels and explain what needs to be adjusted or tweaked to make for a more competitive candidacy.

We make concrete suggestions about productive steps your child can take to improve his/her candidacy, whether that involves changing the level of courses taken or the pruning or enhancing of activities.

We help your child determine how current strengths and talents can be harnessed into a compelling story for admissions officers. We emphasize these candidacy features as we provide insight into all parts of the application that are within the student's control, namely: essays, interviews, and activity lists.

We develop an application strategy: explaining which schools make sense for early decision, early action, rolling, and regular decision applications.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCESS

We set up frequent meetings in the years and months prior to the filing of the application to assess whether your child is moving in the right direction. We offer achievable and individualized guidance about what can be done to supplement any efforts. This may involve suggesting at-home tutoring, coaching a child on how to better advocate for him/herself in the classroom, and working one on one with a student to find outlets for a particular interest or talent, both inside and outside the classroom.

We provide advice on how your child can make effective use of the guidance office, keeping them on track with the materials required to submit applications, including providing guidelines on how to complete the senior survey, the resume, and any other teacher or guidance office requests.

We communicate with your child regularly about schedules, so there are no sudden surprises -- missing transcripts or teacher recommendations, or late filings of test scores.

We serve, in an ongoing way, as a source of accurate information about the college admissions process for parents and students to reduce the anxiety attendant to the process.

We provide guidance on how students can communicate effectively with admissions offices at various phases of the application process: after a campus visit, post interview, and throughout the senior year.

GUIDANCE ON ESSAYS

We help students explore which aspects of their candidacy are unique and guide them in using the personal statement and supplemental essays effectively.

We assist as students brainstorm essay topics and help them develop writing that both tells a story and sells them well.

We insure that the essays work in concert with the other parts of the application to create an impression of the student that is authentic.

We help edit and revise the statements students have written to make sure they address what particular colleges value and that the student is presented in best light.

COMPLETION OF APPLICATIONS

We help students set up initial accounts for the Common Application and individual school applications.

We offer guidance on the all-important activity list to insure that your student's accomplishments stand out.

We advise on the proper use of the "additional information" paragraphs of the Common Application.

We proofread all applications prior to submission.

SOURCE OF INFORMATION ON COLLEGE RESOURCES

We maintain ongoing relationships with standardized test tutors and make recommendations about which tutor might be appropriate for your child.