

The National College Planning Summit

Learn How to Become the College's Ideal Applicant

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1. What one thing sets a college applicant apart from everyone else, to the point that colleges are anxious for you to apply?

- a. Leadership - Colleges fantasize about applicants being able to show evidence of leadership ability.
 - i. They want to know that you're the captain of a team or president of a club.
 - ii. This shows that you influence other people enough to convince them to make you the captain of the team or the president of the club.

2. How do you define leadership?

- a. Leadership is to influence - a newborn baby is the perfect leader because the infant's behavior influences the mother to react to every sound and every gesture the baby makes 24/7.
- b. When the student is exercising the same kind of leadership, they are influencing college officials - those same officials will recognize the student owns the admissions process and is very impressed as a result.
- c. Typically, except for colleges that receive over 20,000 applications per year, colleges will be very responsive to students showing an interest in the school and showing evidence that they are actually trying to influence the school's decision in the student's favor.

3. How does the student convince the school they are a leader if they are not the captain of the football team?

- a. There are 2 ways:
 - i. The first way is to visit the college more than once. By visiting a second time, you are influencing the college officials to take you very seriously because you have taken the initiative to visit a second time.
 - ii. The second way to convince the college that you are a leader is to get an interview with the college. You actually want to hope that the college does not do interviews because it gives the student an opportunity to exercise leadership.

The National College Planning Summit

1. Don't call in advance and request an interview (you won't get one) but instead call the Admissions Office in advance and ask if you can just stop by and meet someone in Admissions. (They will say OK.)
2. This will signal to the Admissions Department that they won't have to take time and energy to interview the student.
3. Then the student shows up with 4 questions.
4. You have now turned around the whole interview process, so the student is now interviewing the college, not the college interviewing the student. And that really impresses a college official.
5. It is a very unique way of showing leadership by turning the whole college interview on its head.

4. What might 1 or 2 of those questions be?

- a. "What assurances can I give my parents that your school has good safety mechanisms in place?"
- b. "I've been researching a lot of colleges and the reason why I'm here is because I really like what I see on your website, but can we cut to the chase - Can you tell me why should I apply to your school?" This puts the College Admission Official on the spot and they love that.

5. When you say you are turning the interview process around, some listeners may say "I'm not sure I want to do that!" Do you have some examples of students who you have worked with that have used this approach and how has it worked for them?

- a. Here is what happened to 2 of my students.
 - i. One student arrived at a school that required interviews, Holy Cross in western Massachusetts. The student started the interview by asking, "Would you mind if we started with me asking a few questions?" Interviewer said, "Yes, go ahead." When the interview was over, the Admissions Official said, "In the 17 years I've been here, I've never had a student walk into this office and present himself the way you did today, so I really hope you decide to attend Holy Cross." This statement was made by the official before he had seen the grades, test scores or athletics about the student.
 - ii. Another student was wait-listed at Washington & Lee University and when he was on a college visit, he interviewed the college official. The official said his questions were very good and he was taken off the wait-list and accepted, because the student had taken the initiative to come up with good questions in order to influence the final outcome of his college application process.

The National College Planning Summit

- b. A student needs to be proactive and not passive in the whole college application process.
- 6. Are there any schools where this process will not work?**
- a. At highly selective schools (top tier schools) this is not the best approach. They have too many applications and too many good students.
 - b. At really large state schools this won't work. University of Massachusetts gets 37,000 applications per year, they don't have time to talk to any student on an interview level.
- 7. So what are the best schools to use this approach?**
- a. Smaller, private universities are a good place to ask for this interview.
 - b. 2nd, 3rd or 4th tier schools are responsive to gestures of "I'm just going to stop by."
- 8. If schools require essays, should students ever incorporate leadership in their essay?**
- a. Colleges are looking for students who can demonstrate evidence of leadership, and we have just talked about how you can do this without being captain of the football team. So I would not write about leadership in their essay.
 - b. I would recommend that they write about their passion in the essay. "What are you passionate about? What do you like to do on a Saturday morning when you don't have to go to school?"
 - c. Students need to be able to demonstrate that passion in their essay. Colleges know what you are capable of with your grades and test scores, but they want to learn about you. The essay should answer the question, "Who are you?"
- 9. Besides Leadership, what are the other qualities that colleges are looking for?**
- a. According to a survey of College Admission Counselors, the top 2 things colleges are looking for is good grades and good test scores.
 - b. Leadership and passion show the college that you are more than a good grade or a good test score and this differentiates you from all the other students applying.
 - c. This survey also indicated that work experience or a job is ranked last on the list of important things that colleges are looking for in their applicants.
- 10. Where can families learn more about you and how you help student and families?**
- a. Go to my website www.planning-for-college.com. You can see Television Interviews I've done & my books and videos that are for sale. Please visit the

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Testimonials Page – I have video testimonials from families that talk about how I have helped their student and their family.