



How to Survive the College Admissions Frenzy

Getting into a top college is tough, but so is weeding through all the advice about it. To sort out the good tips from the bad, I recently talked with college freshmen about what they wish they'd known when they applied to college a year ago.

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The story in today's Personal Journal gathered suggestions from several types of applicants: the student who didn't get into any of his dream schools, the longshot who made it to a top school even though his college coach told him he'd never get in, the striver whose application was pockmarked with embarrassing spelling errors (i.e. "chemistry"), and others.

Weekend Journal Reporter

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It's easy for kids to get psyched out. Web sites like CampusExplorer.com and MyChances.net help students calculate the odds of getting into their top choice, store shelves groan with college admissions how-to books and an army of private college coaches is ready to do business. And there's still no way around the element of luck and timing: great applications end up in the reject pile through no fault of their own.

Over the past few years, I've spoken with admissions officers, parents, teachers and kids about applying to college, and many say the best advice is simply to remember that everything will work out, and no matter what happens, it's not the end of the world. Still, I have to think that when I applied to college all those years ago, that wouldn't have gotten me through my long nights with the 15th draft of my essay and my bottle of Wite-Out.

I've also heard my share of sketchy admissions advice, like stand out in your interview, a logical suggestion that some kids are taking to the extreme. **Jeannie Borin, president of College Connections, a private college consulting firm based in Los Angeles, says some parents have asked if it'd be OK for their children to dye their hair a bright color or get some unusual piercings so they'll get noticed. Ms. Borin advised the kids not to take such measures.**

What about you—do you have a favorite piece of college admissions advice? What do you think about the tips kids are receiving today? Where do you seek guidance—school counselors, college coaches, how-to books, Web sites, current college freshmen, other parents?