
MEMORANDUM

TO: PROSPECTIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS
FROM: KENDALL MOORE
SUBJECT: SUGGESTIONS FOR CAMPUS VISITS AND THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS
DATE: FEBRUARY 1, 2019

1. **Get started early.** We suggest that you start visiting schools the summer before your 10th grade year.
2. **Get a separate, professional email address for scholarship and recruiting purposes.** Consider using your initials and your graduation year. For example, ABC2016@gmail.com. “Pookie,” “sexy,” and “Yoda” probably should not be in the name.
3. **Visit a lot of schools.** The more schools you visit and the more variety of schools you visit, the more options you will have. Visit large schools and small schools, public universities and private universities, colleges that are close to home and far away.
4. **Pay attention to the students that are attending the school.** Large schools have a very diverse population with students from all over the world. Smaller schools may also have that diversity, but they may also have more regional students, more students from the same faith tradition, more students who share a particular point of view, etc. Can you see yourself interacting with the students around you? Do you feel like you would “fit in?” By the way, most of the students visiting campuses are apprehensive or nervous. You aren’t the only one with butterflies in your stomach.
5. **Start with the recruiter assigned to your area for the college.** You can search for “admissions” and then look for “admissions counselors” or “recruiters” or similar names. Call the recruiter and introduce yourself over the phone and ask if she can help you set up a personalized visit. That is a large part of what they are paid to do, and most are really good at setting you at ease.
6. **Explore lots of interests and majors.** In addition to taking a campus tour and meeting with admissions staff, typically you can see a residence hall, eat in the food court, commons or cafeteria and meet with financial aid representatives. You can also meet with professors from any department you want. If you are interested in three very diverse possible majors, ask to meet with professors from all three departments.
7. **Ask professors what they wish their current students had done before college.** You will get some great advice and often surprising answers.
8. **Make as many friends as you can in the administration of a college.** You want the recruiter, the dean, the faculty member, and the administrator to get to know you and be able to associate your face with your name and your story.
9. **Don’t bring friends.** When you make a special visit to a college where faculty and staff are trying to get to know you, it is distracting and counterproductive to have a friend along. You may hesitate to be completely open, and you have divided the attention of the people you want to be focused on you.

10. **Have a plan but be willing to go off the plan.** Set the visit up with the admissions counselor, but don't be limited by that schedule.
11. **Attend the Discovery days, or Scholars days, but always go back for an individual visit.** Some of the Scholars Days and Discovery Days are great, and some are abysmal. A campus visit with 400 other students can draw speeches from the President and occasionally some great faculty presentations, but you want individual attention, and you don't want the pressure of someone else's agenda or schedule.
12. **When you are on a campus visit, TURN YOUR CELL PHONE OFF.** Those of us who are over 35 really, really, REALLY, appreciate eye contact and an attention span of more than a few minutes. Remember that the people you are meeting with are generously giving you something that they cannot get back – namely, their time.
13. **Visit a college campus on a Wednesday.** You want to see what the school is like on a typical day (not a football weekend). My order of preference is Wednesday, Tuesday, Thursday, Monday, Friday and then the weekend.
14. **It's about you, not your parents.** A good administrator or professor will make this gently clear when your mom tries to talk for you or your dad is asking all the questions. We had our turns when we were 18. It's your turn. That means you have to do your homework, and you need to be actively engaged with everyone you meet.
15. **Be polite to everyone you meet on campus.** One, it's the right thing to do. Two, the people who are hosting you will notice, and they will speak favorably of you, because common courtesy isn't common anymore. My son knew the name of every custodian in the freshman honors dorm, and the day we moved him out, they called him by name. I have never been prouder.
16. **You need more days than your high school gives you for college visits.** There's no way you can do the things I suggest in my scholarship memo with one day your junior year and two days your senior year. We found that most teachers find a way to work with you when you are giving your best efforts in their classes.
17. **Make several different kinds of visits over time to the same school.** You can't do this for every school, but you should do this for the schools in which you have a strong interest.
18. **When someone responds to you in any manner, write a thank you note.** Every time. Some people will be so impressed with your thoughtfulness (which frankly used to be expected) that they pass your information on to someone else for consideration.
19. **Talk to as many scholarship staff and officers as will give you their time.** Ask for their advice, and make notes constantly.
20. **Always keep a copy of your correspondence and applications.**
21. **Watch out for deadlines in the admissions and application process.** By the beginning of your senior year, you should have a plan for the schools to which you want to apply. Many professionals suggest that you apply to five (5) to eight (8) schools. Counselors may suggest that you apply to a couple of schools where you know you will be accepted, a couple of schools where you would like to be accepted that are more competitive and one or two schools where it will be a "stretch" to get in. You can't be accepted if you don't apply, and you might get accepted when you do apply.

22. **Keep in touch with your campus contacts during the application process.** They can help you keep on track, and your appropriate (but not pushy) level of interest helps.
23. **Ask for help.** Most adults who have dedicated their lives to secondary and post-secondary education to it because they love students and they love the process. They certainly don't do it for the money. Ask early, and ask often if you need to, but be kind, be patient and give plenty of lead time to the people from whom you are asking them to invest their time in you.
24. **Be careful about early admissions and early commitments.** This topic is beyond the scope of this memo and today's discussion, so read the fine print. For some students these are great options. For other students, this is a terrible idea. With some schools you are entering into a contractual obligation. With other schools, you are simply getting some priority treatment.
25. **Apply as early as you can for admission, housing, financial aid, scholarships and the honors college or program.** In many cases priority of some kind is attached to your application date.
26. **Consider tests to help you determine your interests and a starting major.** The Strong Interest Inventory is a great survey to help you determine your interests. Many colleges offer it for a small fee. Strengths Finder 2.) by Tom Rath is a great book that links to an assessment. Personality tests (Myer's Briggs, DiSC Assessment, etc.) may help. Many schools have online questionnaires to help. (e.g., <https://luc.edu/undergrad/academiclife/whatsmymajorquiz/>). BE CAREFUL. Don't let a computer tell you who you are and what you want to study and who you want to become. Your parents, your mentors, your teachers, your youth pastor and other adults who are invested in you can help you think through possibilities. Don't sweat this. Seriously. You will change and grow and adjust as you move through college (and life).
27. **Your admissions essays are worth a lot of your time.** You need to start with way more than you want to say and keep paring your words down. Take the time to refine your ideas and sharpen your points. This is a big deal, and this is where you want to put your best foot forward.
28. **Be yourself.** Be honest. Be forthright. Be real. Share your heart as well as your head.
29. **Don't pick a college because someone else is going there.** Boyfriends sometimes don't last. Friendships change. Just because a school was great for your parents does not mean it will be great for you (but it may be).

College Advice: How I Read An Application



Chris Teare, CONTRIBUTOR

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I want your voice in my ear as I make my recommendation to our committee.



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At this time of year, college admissions officers like me are bleary-eyed from weeks of reading applications. Many of us are now in committee sessions, determining which applicants will receive offers of admission. At the very few super-selective, single-digit-percentage-acceptance places, the process is Darwinian.


Admissions officers at the vast majority of places, however, those of us that accept more than half of our applicants, are spending more time trying to strengthen relationships with students who have been or will be admitted, in order to get them to accept our offers and enroll. These efforts to yield the best possible class are the main business of most offices in March, and they are the absolute business of all offices in April, before deposits are due May 1.

As I move into the stretch run of my second season on the university admissions side (after decades on the secondary school counseling side), I want to share how I read an application. This protocol is my own; others read differently. I offer my thoughts particularly for Juniors who will be preparing to apply over the next six to nine months—though they may also be of value to Seniors who are presently waiting to learn their fates.

I always start with the School Profile and Transcript:

- **First question:** What percentage of graduates go on to four-year colleges or universities? The higher the percentage of college goers, the more likely the

curriculum is strong and challenging. The farther south of that percentage, the greater my concern about the “speed of the pool” and the quality of preparation for college work.


- Second question: From the Profile I also learn what is on the school’s Curricular Menu: International Baccalaureate? Advanced Placement? Honors? Dual Enrollment? I want to know what challenges the applicant had available; then evaluate what the candidate “ordered from the menu.”
- Next, did the student “clean his or her plate?” There’s no point in ordering more food than you can eat, and no point in more academic challenge than you can handle. 
- When required (at [Drew University](#) only for our top merit scholarship), I look at standardized testing, to see if it corroborates, or leads me to question, classroom performance. (Those who underachieve their testing do not impress me.)
- If the student does not attend a school that prepares students well for college, fails to challenge him or herself, fails to meet the challenge selected, and/or underperforms ability, our consideration of this candidacy is probably over. You have to be able to succeed in the academic program, or you need to look elsewhere. If you have done enough to demonstrate that threshold academic capacity, you get a closer look.

I read the Recommendations next:

- I like to get a sense of what the Counselor and Teachers have to say about the student. I read for key descriptive words and phrases, also for anecdotes that show the student in action. Curiosity, energy, humor, tenacity, grit, resilience, and the qualities of someone I would like to invite into our 24/7 residential community are what I seek.
- If I find evidence of immaturity, insensitivity, laziness, or a lack of personal responsibility/accountability, the applicant may be done—or at least have sustained mortal injury—before I get to the Application itself.
- I emphasize this point in particular, because many school counselors urge Juniors to make their “asks” before the end of 11th grade, enabling over-burdened teachers to do some, most, or all of their recommendation writing over the summer.
- Juniors are well-advised to be careful about whom to ask for a letter of support. Ideally it is someone who is excited about the prospect of doing additional work for no additional pay for a student who may or may not remember to say Thank You once admitted to the college of his or her choice.

Finally, if I like what I’ve seen on the Profile and Transcript, and what I’ve read in the

Recommendations, I spend time on the Application itself:

- I note citizenship, ethnicity, family system, educational background of the parents. Then I reach the resume of Activities. Having demonstrated via Transcript and Recs that the student can be successful in our program and is a quality human being, I now read for what he or she will add to campus life.
- I look for length of commitment and significance of impact. Grades 9, 10, 11, 12 says a lot to me about duration of commitment as it might benefit my college. Those who dabble, with a bit here and a bit there, do not impress me.
- After Activities, it's time for the Essay. I have read many fabulous ones this year, some predictable ones, and a few poor efforts. The last are quite sad: short, with little insight, and sometimes with glaring flaws in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. If I have gotten this far in your application, don't disappoint me with avoidable errors.
- My advice on essays: Be yourself, sound like a teenager, and tell me the story you'd share if we were in an Uber together for a brief ride across my home island of Manhattan. You want me leaving the car wanting to stay in touch with you; I want your voice in my ear as I make my recommendation to our committee. 

A final note: if you'd like to see a two-minute video of my advice to Juniors and their parents at a wonderful independent school in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, check this YouTube link:

Conducting a Thoughtful Search: <https://youtu.be/-ytJjbuQcvo>

After three decades in secondary education in the United States, Caribbean and Europe, Chris Teare is now Senior Associate Director of Admissions at Drew University in Madison, NJ.

The Washington Post

On Parenting

What college admissions officers say they want in a candidate

By **Judy Mandell** August 30

Watching your kid sweat over college applications? Wondering which college is the best fit for your child and how to help them make that happen? We asked dozens of admissions officers to reveal the truth about admissions today. Here is what some of them told us. *[Responses edited for length]*

Martha Blevins Allman, Wake Forest University dean of admissions: Concentrate not on being the best candidate, but on being the best person. Pay attention to what is going on in the world around you. If you do those things, not only will the world be a better place because you're in it, your greatest admissions worry will be choosing which college to pick from. I look for beautiful, clear writing that comes to life on the essay page and offers insight into the character and personality of the student. Beware of being someone you are not in the essay. Beware of outside influence. Editing by adults or professionals often removes the very elements that admissions officers seek.

Tim Wolfe, College of William & Mary associate provost for enrollment and dean of admissions: Essays can help an admission committee better understand the individual and how he or she will add to the campus community. They are also an opportunity for us to evaluate a student's ability to communicate through the written format. Whether you major in physics, history or business, you'll need to write and be able to share thoughts and ideas with your professors and fellow students. The college application is an opportunity for the student to share his or her story and allows students the opportunity to add their voices to this process. We can get a glimpse into their personalities, and perhaps, learn something new about them, their backgrounds and experiences that doesn't necessarily show up elsewhere in the application.

Ken Anselment, Lawrence University dean of admissions and financial aid: Writing an application essay might feel like you're singing for the judges on "The Voice," hoping that what you write

will get them to pound their giant button, turn their chairs and say, “I want you.” It’s true that your voice is what we are looking for. When you write your college essay, use your authentic voice. If you’re a serious person, write your essay with a serious voice. If you’re a funny person, be funny. If you’re not a funny person, your college essay might not be the best place to try on that funny writer voice for the first time.

Stefanie Niles, Dickinson College vice president for enrollment, marketing and

communications: Nothing is more important than a high school transcript showing strong academic performance in a solid curriculum. We want to admit students who will persist to college graduation, so knowing that you can do the work starts with a thorough review of high-school performance. The essay also matters; we want to see that you can write, what you write and what we can learn about you. We want to enroll students who will contribute to the life of the campus, so we are eager to see how you have contributed to your high-school community or the community in which you live.

Toni Riley, Illinois Institute of Technology director of undergraduate admission: If you had a bad semester or a bad year, and your cumulative GPA doesn’t reflect your ability or your overall high school career, still apply, but talk about the decline in your grades in your application. It is a pet peeve when we see an anomaly in grades and the student never addresses this. Tell us what happened and how you turned it around. This is a great way for us to see how you respond to setbacks. If you had a recent decline in grades we may ask to see another semester of work before making a final admission decision, but you have nothing to fear if you turned it around.

Anthony Ferguson Jr., Drake University admissions counselor: College will be a fun time, but it also may seem like a daunting journey, so relish the time you have with your friends and lose yourself in the small moments that make you laugh till your stomach hurts — college will be there when it’s all over. Applicants who are able to convey that they have spent their high school years exploring different classes, activities and opportunities immediately grab my attention. The most attractive applications ultimately grant me insight into the applicant’s passion, motivation and reasoning behind wanting to be at Drake.

Anthony E. Jones, DePauw University vice president for enrollment management: Institutions exist to supply the world with new knowledge and an acculturated, well-informed society. This takes an optimal graduation rate, and the main ingredient contributing to that is persistence on the part of the student. Whether reflected in the essay or the thoughtful confluence of the academic course load and extracurricular activities, a successful applicant should highlight an ability to overcome obstacles and garner results. It’s about proving you can produce outcomes, both on the part of the student and the university.

Kaitlyn Botelho, Lasell College associate director of admission: I would rather a student tell me about the handful of clubs and activities they have been involved with and excelled in, rather than an

exhaustive list of clubs they that they feigned interest in, kind-of-sort-of-one-day. This leaves students with little time to flourish in any one organization, or worse, they suffer academically due to over-involvement. A student that has been a leader in one or two organizations will typically make for a better citizen on campus than a student who is already burned out before they even get to college.

Robert D. McCaig, Monmouth University vice president for enrollment management: The most important things students should do when applying to college is pace themselves and prioritize. Starting early certainly helps students with the pacing, and knowing when to put time into SAT prep versus studying for an exam versus visiting another college, for instance, is an important part of prioritizing. There is this great myth out there that where you go to college will dictate your success in life. For the vast majority of students, that simply isn't true. What you do in college matters far more than where you go.

Chris Hooker-Haring, Muhlenberg College vice president for enrollment management: Think about your extracurricular contribution — community service, athletics, the arts and elected leadership. What are you good at and what do you care about deeply outside the classroom? The college application process is a wonderful opportunity for self-discovery. You will find out things about yourself, what motivates you and what excites you. This is a passage to an exciting new chapter in your life. We want to get to know you and your story, and we want to help you in this process. This is a people-helping-people business. If you see it that way, it can help you relax and enjoy the process.

Ross R. Grippi II, Ohio Wesleyan University director of admission: Finding the right fit for you (not mom and dad) isn't a cliché, so be yourself throughout the process. We'll read right through you if you're not. You can't fake it during the admission process. If you do, you'll end up at a college or university that's a poor fit.

Michelle Curtis-Bailey, SUNY Stony Brook senior admissions adviser: Students should self-advocate by being in contact with a specific representative within the office of admissions. This is one skill that will continue to serve students, not just in college planning but also through navigating their educational journey.

Meaghan Arena, SUNY Geneseo vice president for enrollment management: Keep in touch with us. Students who keep in touch with us themselves build better relationships with our admissions counselors. Getting to know students on a personal level is one of our most rewarding experiences and really helps us to advocate for you when it's time to make offers of admission.

Janine Bissic, Whittier College director of admission: Don't try to play the game, as there are no tricks to getting admitted. Listen to the advice of admission counselors from each institution to provide

insight on their admission process, but don't believe your girlfriend's uncle's cousin who told you that only students who apply in the morning, who play badminton get admitted.

On Parenting newsletter

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The issues and ideas shaping parenting today.

Jaime Garcia, former admissions counselor for Northwestern University and presently director of college access at Chicago Scholars: If you are 100 percent sure where you want to go, seek early admission. Generally, college admissions officers know that those who apply for early decision are those who have a higher satisfaction rate when they are on campus. Because early decision is a great indicator for this satisfaction, schools frequently have goals and benchmarks for admitting a particular percentage of students through early decision. They won't tell you this, but early-admission acceptance rates are often higher than regular acceptance rates. It is also less competitive because the applicant pool is smaller than regular decision.

Andy Strickler, Connecticut College dean of admission and financial aid: Applying for admission and being denied is not the end of the world. This is a great opportunity to experience and learn that one can emerge from it a stronger individual. Ignore all the outside noise and don't think about specific schools, think about yourself. Ask yourself the hard questions about what kind of environment you need to be successful in college. Then think about specific schools that match your ideal set of characteristics. Finally, invest the time and energy to visit campuses and test the assumptions you have made about these attributes.

Justin Rogers, Canisius College director of undergraduate admissions: The only thing colleges and universities have in common is that we are all different. The same can be said for the students who apply. Make sure the colleges know that. Tell your story. Some of my most memorable offers of admission have gone to students who like to color outside the lines.

Judy Mandell is a freelance writer.

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How to Respond to Short Answer Questions in Your Application

Nov 29, 2018 • Views 357



By Deborah Vieyra

Oh, I'll just leave those short answers to the end.

I'll focus on everything else first and get to those when I have time.

What? I've still got to answer these?

If this string of sentences sounds at all familiar, you are probably mid-application and have just come face-to-face with those sneaky little short answer questions. If, on the other hand, you have yet to arrive at this part of your application, I'll let you in on what can be expected.

Some applications require short answers of 100 to 200 words regarding your experience, skills and motivations for applying to a particular school or fellowship. While these questions might not seem to hold the same weight as, say, your **personal statement** or **resume**, they are still a vital component of your application and should be considered with care. Every word that you submit as part of your application package is important. Putting time and energy into making sure that you compile your entire application to the best of your ability will dramatically increase your chances of success.

If you're wondering how to approach these short answer questions in a way that does justice to the hard work you've put into the rest of your application, here are a few tips to keep in mind.

#1 Be direct.

Answer the question asked of you. While this may sound obvious, you will be surprised at how many people digress when it comes to answering simple questions. Longer responses, such as your personal statement, offer a little more leeway when it comes to including tangential information — but even then it is always important to continually link back to the main thread of your piece. Short answers offer no time for divergences whatsoever. This is not the time for musings or prose. Make sure you answer the question directly with as much detail as the word count will allow. Once you have written your answer, go back to the question and ask yourself whether you have answered what was asked of you. If not, revise until you have provided a direct answer.

#2 Cut out fluff.

Verbosity has no place in your application, and especially not when it comes to your shorter answers. Be careful not to use repetitive words or filler. You have to be supremely disciplined with how you express yourself. Compose your answer and then return to the beginning. Be meticulous. Every phrase should be valuable in making your point. If there is a single word that feels superfluous, revise the sentence. When it comes to your short answers, you only have so many words to make your point. You have to make sure that every single one helps you do so.

And now for the tip that many of you may not want to hear:

#3 Don't procrastinate.

Just because these questions require short answers, doesn't mean they are any less important than the longer parts of your application. It is worth spending time on them. Use them as an opportunity to give the selection committee more insight into why you are the perfect candidate for them, rather than something you have to rush to finish. Instead of leaving them to the night before the application is due, why not make them your first priority? Completing the short answers first may be the ideal way to propel yourself forward into finishing the other tasks required of you.

Here's the bottom line — every detail of your application counts. Just because a question requires a shorter answer, doesn't mean that it is of any less importance. Ensure that you put the time and energy into these questions that they deserve.

Deborah Vieyra is a Fulbright alumna from South Africa who completed her MA in Applied Theatre Arts at the University of Southern California. She now works as a writer, proofreader and performer in Vancouver, Canada.

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