



Kem College Advisor

Kathryn March

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May 2011

**1st – Common
reply date for
college enrollment**

**7th – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

**2nd–13th – AP
exams**

Juniors – work on
resume

Juniors – speak to
advisor about
military colleges or
ROTC programs

Seniors – notify
colleges that you will
not attend

Seniors – check out
loan options if
needed

June 2011

**4th – SAT
Reasoning and
Subject Tests**

(register by 5/6 - late
registration 5/20)

**11th – ACT and ACT
plus Writing**

(register by 5/6 - late
registration 5/20)

Seniors – thank
teachers and others
who helped you

Seniors – thank
scholarship providers
for aid

Seniors – have your
final transcript sent
to your college

A Look At The 2010-2011 Application Year

The 2010-2011 application year can be summarized with the phrase “even more of the same.” Once again, most selective colleges found themselves faced with more applications, more college-bound students, more grade inflation, and ever-higher test scores. Applicants appear to have participated in a greater number of extracurricular activities, and have taken advantage of numerous opportunities to enhance their learning. Applicants have also increasingly applied for financial aid and require this aid to attend the college of their choice. Let’s break this down and see what this admission year provides as clues into what can be expected for the future.

- More applications—students have made very good use of the Common Application and each applied to greater numbers of schools than ever before. Colleges, however, could not always tell if the applicant was a “serious” contender. Will she come if accepted or does she view their institution as a fall-back? Therefore, they needed to rely on evidence of interest to assess the applicant’s real intent. Did she visit the campus? Has she spoken with (or emailed) the admissions officer? Did she interview either on campus or with an alum? How well does she appear to know about the programs offered by this college? Demonstrated interest

played an increasing role in most admissions decisions— “stealth applicants” (those whose applications appeared with no earlier contact) were most likely to be either denied or waitlisted.

- The tough got tougher. The 200 or so most selective colleges dealt with their increasing applicant pools by becoming even more selective. Julliard accepted less than 6% of applicants while both Harvard and Columbia reported acceptance rates of under 7%. Stanford and Yale offered



Reed College, Portland, OR

admission to less than 8% of their applicants while Princeton accepted just over 8%. As families continued to grapple with economic issues, more students looked to their in-state public colleges, swelling the applicant pools of these institutions. Budget cuts also most impacted these schools, forcing some to reduce the size of their enter-

ing class, or to increase the number of out-of-state students (and their higher tuition fees) that they accepted.

- The ability to pay tuition sometimes counted in admissions decisions. Although colleges prefer to be “need blind” in admissions (accepting students without regard to their need for financial aid), many found that they had to consider the family’s ability to pay in at least some cases. Colleges with the largest endowments (often among the most selective institutions) were generally able to continue with their need blind policy.

Mental Health Concerns

The pressure to get into selective colleges has created a stressful high school environment as students spend every waking hour trying to rack up perfect grades and test scores, along with a list of dazzling extracurricular activities. These students often suffer sleep deprivation, anxiety and depression. They may tell themselves that all the sacrifice will be worth it once they get that acceptance letter, but even if they are successful, some of them will continue to be plagued by mental health problems in college.

In fact, even students who have not had problems in high school may find that the stress of leaving home, living more independently, adjusting to increased academic demands, getting along with roommates and managing other social relationships can trigger depression, eating disorders and substance abuse. Add the tough economic situation, which has students more concerned about all the money their parents are spending on college and worried about how they will find a job when they graduate, and it's not surprising that some students are so worried about their future that they are unable to enjoy their college experience. While many students are able to work through their concerns and adjust to college, others need professional help. According to the National Survey of Counseling Center directors, the number of college students seeking help for mental health issues is rising.

Twenty years ago, students sought help for adjustment or social issues, like dealing with homesickness, getting along with roommates, or ending a romantic relationship. Now, thanks to improvements in psychiatric medication, students who would not have been able to leave home and attend college in the past are able to function in a college environment. This is a positive development, but some of these students need ongoing support.

Now, more of the students seeking help have serious problems, such as depression and anxiety disorders. The highest rates of eating disorders occur in college-aged women. It is crucial that these students have access to comprehen-

sive mental health care, but counseling centers often lack the resources to provide that level of care, and, at the same time, more students are seeking it. Very few families ask about counseling services when they visit colleges, but for some students it is important to know if there's a limit on sessions, as well as what psychiatric services are available for students on medication.

While many college students do take advantage of the services offered at counseling centers, others suffer silently because they are afraid of the stigma associated with mental illness. Some schools are finding ways to reach out to students, by locating counseling services in academic buildings or student centers, or offering evening hours. Faculty and staff are also being trained to identify students who may need help. Student groups are also helping. Active Minds, a student organization that works to promote mental health awareness and education, has 279 chapters on college campuses around the country.

For the student who is not academically or psychologically prepared to handle college, the best solution might be to wait. Not everyone is ready for college at the same time. It doesn't mean that a student won't be ready the next year, perhaps after taking community college classes, developing study skills and working on psychological issues in therapy.

High school students who learn to manage stress will be better prepared to handle the transition to college. This is a great time to establish habits that enhance mental health. Getting enough sleep is crucial. It's hard to feel good about life when you are constantly exhausted. Regular exercise is a great stress reliever. Making and sticking to a schedule for studying, socializing and physical activity enables students to feel more in control and create balance in their lives. Everyone feels overwhelmed at times. Talking to someone and realizing you're not alone can be a tremendous help.

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Focus on Finances: Cutting College Costs



With college costs rising far faster than inflation, and financial aid awards taking a hit by the general economic downturn, many families find themselves searching for ways to reduce college costs. One sure-fire way is

to shorten the length of time it takes to earn a bachelor's degree. Some ways to do this include:

- Take and pass AP classes while in high school to reduce the number of classes needed for your college degree.
- Explore career ideas and decide on a major before beginning college. Students who change majors are likely to take more than four years to complete their bachelor's degree.
- Take some required classes at a lower-cost institution such as your local community college during the summer.
- Sit for and pass CLEP exams (College Level Exam Program) and earn college credits that can be applied to your degree.
- Explore combined degree program options and

earn both bachelor's and master's in 4-5 years.

You can also reduce college costs by applying for special tuition discounts through regional tuition reciprocity agreements such as the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) or the Academic Common Market. Check out options if you will be attending college in a neighboring state. Some states even allow continuing students to apply for in-state residency and, therefore, reduced tuition..

Housing costs can be lowered by selecting a "triple" when indicating housing choices, or by signing up to work as a residential advisor after your freshman year at college. Some families even purchase a group residence near the university and then rent out rooms to fellow students.

Participate in Americorps for a year and you can earn money for college, or join ROTC and you'll find your college expenses covered in return for your military service.

Tuition discounts are often given to children of alumni or faculty, while some colleges provide discounts when siblings attend. Purchasing used textbooks can also reduce the high cost of college.

Mid-Year Admissions—Ideas for While You Wait

To ensure that their residence halls are full, colleges are increasingly offering qualified applicants a place in their freshman class, but only if they agree to begin college in the spring. Since the schools offering mid-year admissions tend to be very selective, many new high school grads decide to put off the start of freshman year so they can attend their dream school. But what can students do with this unplanned-for break in their formal education?

Happily, many graduating seniors discover that mid-year admissions offers time to travel, to volunteer, to pursue a career interest, or to begin taking classes at a lower-cost institution. City Year and Americorps both provide wonderful opportunities for giving back in the United States, while Dynamy and Amigos de las Americas offer opportunities to make a difference abroad. Gap Year programs (many lasting a whole year but others offering programs of shorter duration) also provide good ideas for a meaningful semester. Check www.EnrichmentAlley.com for some good

Gap Year ideas.

Some students prefer to create their own internships. An unpaid internship is easier to land during the school year when you don't need to compete with the hordes of students off for the summer. Still other students choose to begin their college degree at a local community college, getting in some of their required courses at a lower cost than would be possible at most four-year institutions. Check with your college to be sure that they'll approve and accept these classes before registering.

A job (either part-time or full-time) can yield extra savings for those upcoming college expenses while also giving you a glimpse into the realities of the working world.

Whatever you decide to do with your "time off", make the experience meaningful to you. You'll start college in mid-year refreshed and ready to thrive!

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Needed Skills Before Leaving for College

Before leaving for college, there are skills every freshman should have acquired. If you haven't learned these yet, this summer is a good time to start!

- Laundry—hot or cold wash? To bleach or not to bleach? Colors or whites? Make sure you've mastered the basics of doing laundry before taking off for college.
- Balancing a checkbook—if you plan to utilize a checking account or debit card, be sure you know how to balance your account. Those "bounced check" fees run up really fast.
- Credit cards—make sure you're clear on the use of credit cards and payment options. Plan on paying your entire balance each month to avoid the hefty credit card interest rates. Paying on time also helps you establish a good credit rating—you'll need this when it comes time to buy a car or a house or even rent an apartment.
- Basic cooking—sometimes you just need a "home-cooked" meal. Practice a few good and easy recipes that you can make at your dorm and you'll have loads of "friends".
- Keeping in touch—decide with family and friends just how this will be accomplished. For some, occasional text messages and emails will do; other people in your life will expect phone calls and even letters. Avoid hurt feelings by addressing this issue before you leave home.
- Avoiding procrastination—college assignments differ from what you've been used to in high school. Expect fewer but longer assignments and learn to use a planning calendar to make sure you keep up to date. "All-nighters" really are no fun!
- Advocate for yourself—make sure you know how to get help if you need it, be that help academic, medical, or personal. Explore the services available at your college and know how to access them before you step on campus.

Website of the Month: CollegeWeekLive.com

CollegeWeekLive provides free virtual college fairs, and serves as the host of online events that bring students and colleges together. Students can register on their website for access to each of these events and can also join webinars on a variety of subjects of interest to college-bound students and their parents. Check out the site for a list of upcoming programs.

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