Comprehensive Counseling Model

All counselors are college counselors and all student interactions with counselors are college advising opportunities.

Indicators:

- All counselors attend state college conferences
- Counselors at all grade levels have ongoing collaboration
- Counselors distribute college information to all students, faculty, and staff

(McDonough, 2005)
Overview

- Visual ecology
- Helping students find right fit
- Writing letters of recommendation
- Helping students with essays
Visual Ecology

- Visual ecology refers to the visual elements of the environment such as the physical space, art, signs, décor, etc. that contain cultural messages.
- In terms of preparing students for college, those who work in schools may be particularly interested in examining the school’s visual environment to discover the kinds of messages their students may be receiving about attending college.
Points to Consider:

1. **Where can the college information be found at your school?**
   - School counselors should make efforts to display information throughout the school in hallways, multipurpose rooms, libraries, etc. where it can be viewed by as many students as possible – in addition to the college information displayed in and around the counseling office.

2. **What kind of college information is available at your school?**
   - School counselors should make efforts to display information on a variety of college opportunities including both public and private universities, community colleges, major and program descriptions, financial aid, and scholarships opportunities.
Other Considerations:

- What college-going messages are conveyed by the visual environment of your school?

1. Race
2. Gender
3. Socio-economic status
4. Ability (intellectual/physical)
5. Religion
Assisting Students with College Choice: Finding the Best Fit

**Student Characteristics:**
- Influence of significant persons (peers, family, mentors)
- Socioeconomic status
- Aptitude and Achievement
- Level of aspiration/expectation

**College Characteristics:**
- Location
- Availability of programs
- Cost of Tuition
- Size and campus environment
Factors for students to consider:

- Location
- Areas of study
- Student body size
- Financial aid available
- Public or Private
- Disability-friendly
- Campus demographic
- Housing
- Extracurricular activities
- Cost
- Religious affiliation
- Transportation
- Student to faculty ratio
Narrowing the choice

- **Location** - For many students, remaining close to home and having the opportunity to visit their family during an occasional weekend is an extremely important factor. For others, staying close to home is an insignificant factor and they would prefer to attend college out-of-state.

- **Size** – Does your student have plans to attend a smaller college, or would he/she prefer to go to a larger, more well-known university? There are advantages and disadvantages to both.

- **Programs of study** – Does the college have majors or programs of study that are in alignment with the students’ goals, aspirations, and expectations?

- **Cost** – How will the cost of tuition and other living expenses be paid for?
Other Considerations

- Student personality plays a mediating role in college success. When assisting students with their college selection, help them reflect on the following:

1. Conscientiousness
2. Emotional stability
3. Extraversion/Introversion

(Bauer & Liang, 2003)
Resource for Assisting Students with College-Selection:

http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/search/index.jsp
Letters of Recommendation

Ethical Complications

- **Confidentiality**: You have sensitive information that you believe would be beneficial to the student’s chances of being admitted. Do you include it?
  - Only with student and parental permission

- **Letters for problem students**:
  - Suggest the student seek someone else to write
  - Stress the student’s assets

- **Letters for weak students who deserve a chance**:
  - Focus on assets other than academics, e.g. personal characteristics (determination, resiliency, responsibilities)
• Notifying colleges about new information that would negatively affect standing, such as cheating:

    Do not notify college, but inform student that if the college called to ask (if a grade were lowered) you would provide the information.
Tips for Writing Good Letters

How, and how well do you know the applicant?
Has the student demonstrated initiative, gone beyond the normal classroom experience?
Does the student have particular competencies, talents, leadership abilities?
How well does the student interact with teacher and peers?
What will you most remember about this student?
What leads you to believe this student is a good fit for this university?
Are there any unique circumstances of which the school should be aware?
Helping students with college essays

Common problems with essays

- In the college essay students exceed the number of words required.
- Students copy or buy essays from the internet.
- Students do not address the essay question / topic.
- Students substitute thesaurus words for more colloquial phrases.
- Students turn in essays with misspellings and grammatical errors.
- Students write generic essays.
Useful reference:

The College Application Essay, revised edition by Sarah Myers McGinty

- Item #: 007115R
- Type: Book
- Price: $15.95
- Quantity: 1

"An invaluable resource for students, parents, and counselors—a down-to-earth guide to this anxiety-producing part of the admissions process."

--Scott White, counselor, Montclair High School, Montclair, NJ

A good college application essay takes admission officers beyond the numbers and shows them who you are, what you care about, and how you think. Maximize the opportunity to "tell us about yourself" with this simple guide to the craft of personal statements and application essays. Inside, you'll find:

- Ways to choose a topic
- Strategies for distinctive answers
- Examples of application essays
Useful handouts

Write a college essay

1. Choose a topic that is specific. Doing so will allow you to go in-depth into one idea rather than trying to cover a broad topic with a short essay. The more in-depth you go, the more unique your essay will be.

2. Write multiple drafts of your essay and get feedback on each one from a parent or friend. This will help ensure you cover the topic well, and give you the chance to choose the best of your work.

3. Write as well as you can, edit the document and get help if needed. Use a mixture of sharp adjectives and smart wit without sounding too tense, verbose or ostentatious (SAT words!).

Don’t:

1. Don’t choose offensive topics. Topics that may be offensive are those that surround religion, racism and even personal opinions on world issues. You won’t be doing yourself any favors if your essay leaves the admissions officer feeling offended or angry.

2. Don’t let anyone else dictate the topic of your essay. You can get help brainstorming if you want, but don’t write about someone else’s chosen topic.

3. Don’t write a negative essay. The more positive you are with the topic, the more enjoyable the essay will be to read. Avoid negative topics and negative ideas within the body of the essay.

4. Don’t be arrogant or pedantic with your writing. The admissions officers will see it, and arrogance will work against you in the admissions process.

Excerpted from "Admission essay do’s and don’ts" by Ross Blankenship.

Online info

Get tips on writing a great essay at NextStepU.com/Essay. Register for your chance to win up to $10,000 for college!
Don’t use the same essay: Using one essay for several applications may save you time, but it’s more effective to write each one from scratch, or at the very least, tailor each essay to the college.

Consider your audience: Entertain the college admissions officers.

Have an interesting opener: Catch the eye of the admissions counselor with a stunning introduction.

Discuss what’s important to you: Discuss what’s most important to you in your essay.

Put yourself as the focus: Even if your prompt is about someone else, always be sure to bring it back to you.

Be brief: You don’t need a 10-page autobiography to be effective.

Review your essay after a few days: Leave your first draft to sit, then pick it up again after some time.

Tell a story: Consider the beginning, middle, and end of your story.
**Answer the question:** Don’t just submit what you think colleges want to read, actually answer the question they have given you.

**Do not have your parents write your essay:** Admissions advisors read lots of essays—it’s obvious when they are written by parents.

**Show your motivation:** Demonstrate that you’re motivated to do well in **college**.

**Use your personal voice:** Don’t take on a different voice in your writing for college essays—let yourself shine through.

**Don’t buy an essay on the Internet:** College admission officers can spot an online essay a mile away.

**Go beyond the superficial:** Communicate what you care about deeply.
Don’t trust spell check: Watch for typos and grammar issues that spell check won’t catch.

Ask others to read your essay: Have your parents, English teacher, and mentors read your essay.

Be interesting: Counselors will read many applications each day—you want to be interesting enough to get passed around.

Send the right essay to the right college: Avoid accidentally referring to another college in an essay that you send.

Save time for editing: Be sure to edit your essay once you’ve written it, taking into consideration opinions from people who have read it and any fine tuning you’d like to do.
Thank you for your attention!

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