

TOP FIVE PREVENTABLE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS MISTAKES

opportunity cost

: the added cost of using resources (as for production or speculative investment) that is the difference between the actual value resulting from such use and that of an alternative (such as another use of the same resources or an investment of equal risk but greater return)

Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/opportunity%20cost>

1. STANDARDIZED TESTING


At MCA, we see parents repeatedly get caught up in the carpool, sideline, or bleacher rumor mill surrounding standardized testing. With the best of intentions, parents often develop a standardized testing plan spurred by these conversations, not by data-driven insights. There is absolutely a right way to time these tests, and MCA will guide your approach. Our insight will help reduce testing anxiety, improve performance, and streamline the application process.

2. COLLEGE VISITS

With over 4,000 higher education institutions in the US, what is the best way to narrow down the list for college visits? Consulting with a professional is critical to carving out the correct amount of time to devote to these visits, building the right list of schools to tour, knowing the best time to visit a school, and connecting with the most fruitful opportunities during the visit. Equally important to the time on campus, we counsel students on the steps they need to take before and after the visit so that these significant efforts are implemented to their full advantage.

3. MERIT AID

Ever been shopping for a really expensive and indispensable item, only to have the cashier ring up an entirely different price than what you were expecting? That is the experience for far too many families. Though the most elite schools typically can and do charge the “sticker price,” the majority of colleges have complicated algorithms and internal mandates that can cause your tuition bill to vary mightily from the tuition fees posted online. Access to



and interpretation of the data calculating tuition costs are some of the most essential tools for families because they allow us to help manage expectations and point our families toward real savings. For example, we routinely find students with a 2.5 GPA at least \$10k in merit aid.

4. COMMUNICATION

Paying for college can easily be the largest financial decision your student has ever confronted. Yet, parents often hold back from engaging in necessary conversations about this decision. This hesitation may stem from a desire to shield the child from the nuances of family finances, or because parents may hold varied value perceptions of different colleges and therefore, may struggle to articulate what price tag they are willing to accept at different schools. Expectedly, this opacity and lack of communication can lead to needless frustration on both sides. To prevent misunderstandings, we emphasize the importance of determining a targeted range of financial investment per year, per child. Then, we help parents initiate appropriate dialogue with their child about their level of financial commitment. This dialogue, when framed correctly, can be a relationship and trust-building exercise, rather than an added layer of avoidable confusion.

5. JUNIOR & SENIOR YEAR

We put the last two years of high school on a pedestal, and for good reason. Very often, the years as upperclassmen are filled with challenging coursework, activities, leadership roles, sports, celebrations, and competitions that have kept students up at night, refined their interests, fostered their social community, and revealed glimpses of their incredible potential. Yet, juxtaposed against this meaningful and fulfilling time is the college admissions process, an experience that can fill families with an ever-constricting sense of dread. Rather than let these concerns erode the excitement of these last two years at home, take the right steps to find a support system that will help your family competently and joyfully embrace this season of life.