

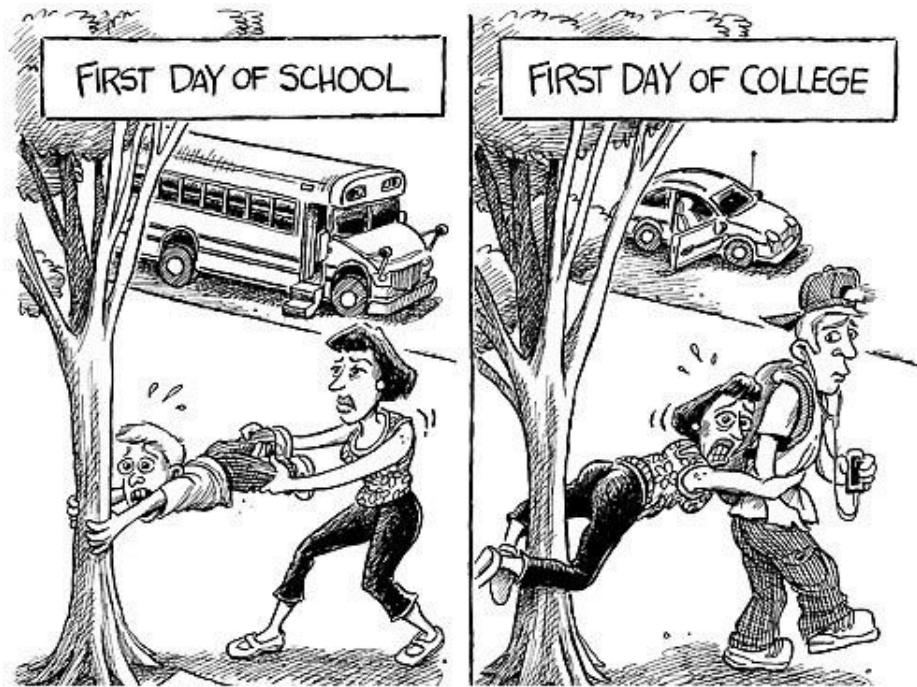
# Insider's Guide to the Admission Process

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Southern Methodist University



# Reality...



www.UShumor.com

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# Reality...



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# A Student's BIGGEST Fear...





## One Step at a Time

EVERYTHING  
YOU'LL NEED TO  
SUCCEED IN

2019

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## Basically Three Phases

- **YOU** decide the colleges you are applying to
- WE decide which students are offered admission
- **YOU** decide your final college choice

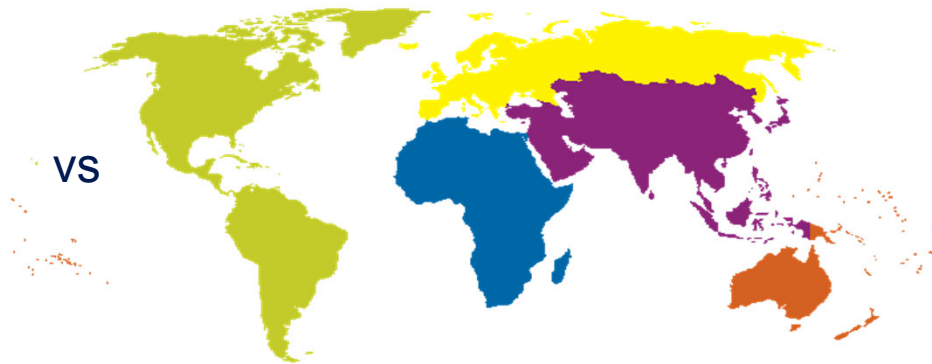
**YOU** have more control over the process and final outcome than you think.



# Make Your List



VS



221 colleges

It's all about *choices...*

Over 17,000 colleges

About 4,000 in USA

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## Make Your List

**Start with a large list – then narrow it down...**

Go beyond location, size, and majors offered

- Available facilities, such as labs, theaters and gyms
- Housing options – both on and off campus
- Variety of academic programs offered
- Special programs, such as study abroad
- Clubs and activities on campus



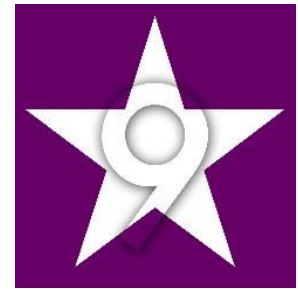


## Make Your List

- **Safeties:** These are colleges that you feel you have a very good chance of getting into and that you think you can afford to attend. They should also be colleges you would be happy to attend.
- **Good matches:** Colleges that you feel you have a good chance of getting into and that are good matches for you overall.
- **Reaches:** Colleges that you think may be more of a challenge to get into. Getting in is not a sure thing, but it's realistic enough to be worth the effort of applying.



# How Many Apps?



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## Quick Tips

- Create a student e-mail address for the college application process and share the password with your parents
- Spend time with your family – yes, even your little brother or sister
- Create spreadsheet to keep organized
- Don't believe the *hype*
- Google the college before you call or email
- Google yourself



## Create an e-mail address...

- RickWants2go2Standfard@gmail.com
- Coke4Me@gmail.com
- YouWantToAdmitMe2019@gmail.com
- Rick.05.15.2001@icloud.com
- Mr.RickD.2019@gmail.com



## Create Spreadsheet

School	Deadline	Sent App	Sent Trans	Sent Scores	Interview?
Stanford					
Princeton					
Yale					
SMU					



We decide...



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We decide...

Resume  
Curriculum  
Recommendations Grades  
Supplement Scores  
Application Activities  
Transcript Essay  
GPA





# What Tips the Scales?



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# What Tips the Scales?

APs

Scores

Activities

Essay

Recs



Low GPA



## What Tips the Scales?



Overall 3.5 GPA

Overall 3.5 GPA

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## All GPAs are not the Same

- Competitiveness of the student's high school
- Types of classes taken – i.e. what subjects
- Total Number of classes taken
- Number of classes taken each semester
- Level of classes taken – College Prep, Honors, AP, IB
- Dual Enrollment



## Test Scores

Take the SAT and the ACT at least once.

**SAT** October 6, 2018  
November 3, 2018  
December 1, 2018

**ACT** October 27, 2018  
December 8, 2018  
February 9, 2019



## Test Scores - Tips

**DON'T FORGET!**

It's important not to spend too much time on any question. You'll have on average one minute and twenty seconds per question. If you can't solve a question in a reasonable amount of time, skip it (remembering to mark it in your booklet) and return to it later.

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## Test Scores - Tips

**DON'T FORGET!**

In general, questions are ordered by difficulty with the easier questions first and the harder questions last within each group of multiple-choice questions and again within each group of student-produced response questions. This means that later questions may take more time to solve than those at the beginning.

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## Test Scores - Tips

**DON'T FORGET!**

Never leave questions blank on the ACT or the SAT – there is no penalty for wrong answers. Even if you're not sure of the correct answer, eliminate as many answer choices as you can and then guess from among the remaining ones.

And when time is running out – pick your favorite letter...

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## Test Scores - Tips

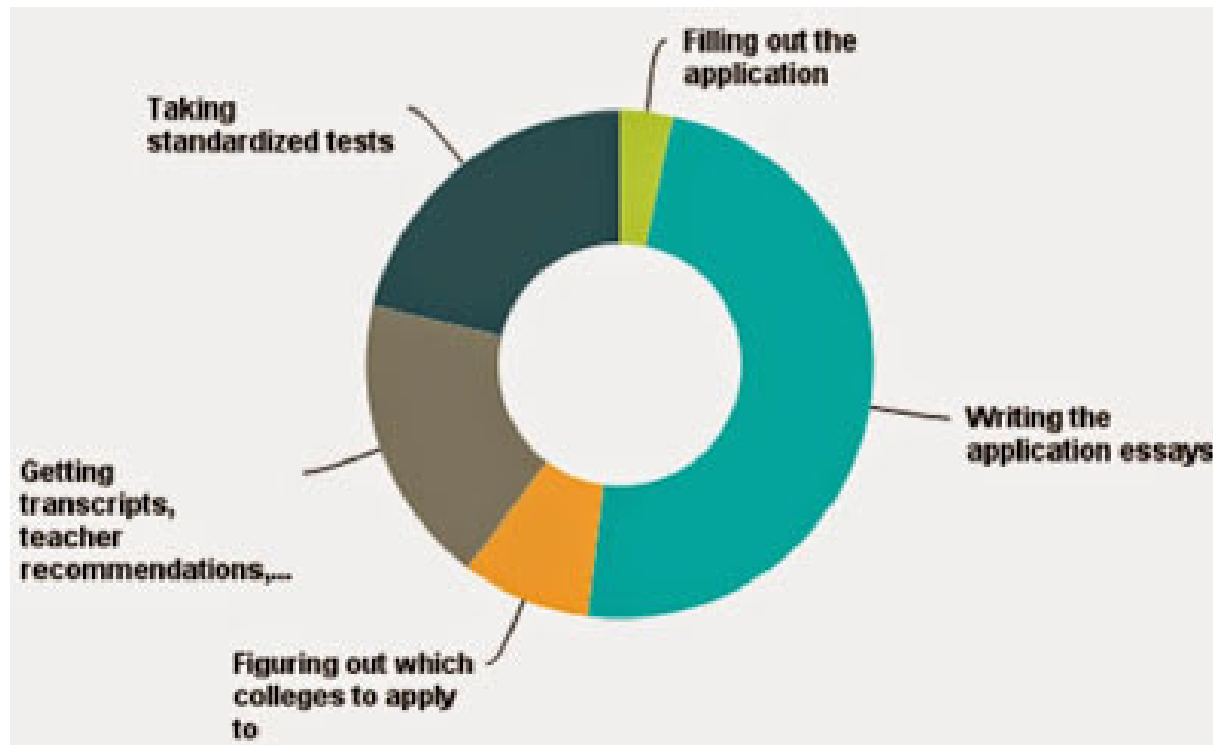
**DON'T FORGET!**

Familiarize yourself with all test directions now so that you don't have to waste precious time on test day reading the directions.

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## In a recent survey...



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# College Application Essay



Typical student writing the college application essay.

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# College Application Essay



Typical admission counselor reading a college application essay.

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## The Facts

- Over 1300 applications to read
- 40 applications per day
- 6 applications per hour
- 10 minutes per application
- About **3 minutes** to read the essay



## The Truth...

Students spend 6 months pulling 650 words from the depths of their soul, polishing each word and phrase to create a grand literary opus.

We spend more time trying to figure out how to ~~change the time on the VCR than reading your essay.~~ use snapchat.





## Question...

Does the college application essay **really** make a difference?



# Question...





## Choices...

- The Common Application
- The Coalition Application
- The University of California Application
- The Universal Application
- Individual University Applications



# Common Application Essay



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## The Prompts...

- Prompt #1 – Story
- Prompt #2 – Overcoming an obstacle
- Prompt #3 – Questioned a belief
- Prompt #4 – Problem you solved or want to solve
- Prompt #5 – Period of personal growth
- Prompt #6 – Lose all track of time
- Prompt #7 – Topic of your choice



## Prompt #1

Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.



## Prompt #2

The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?





## Prompt #3

Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?



## Prompt #4

Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.



## Prompt #5

Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.



## Prompt #6

Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?



## Prompt #7

Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.



# The Numbers

jnwX

Period of personal growth...

wigsrh

Topic of your choice...

xlmh

Story – Background that is meaningful...

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## Question...

Supplemental college application essays, do they really make a difference?



## Why Us?

- Why do you want to go to our university?
- Why are you a “good match” for our university?
- How will you contribute to our university?
- How will you take advantage of all of the resources our university has to offer?
- How will our university support your academic or professional goals?





## Why Us?

### Typical answer...

“I really like your school because it has nationally recognized programs and looks fun!”

### Two essential components...

- Deep knowledge of the university
- Convincing demonstration of genuine personal interest



## Supplemental Essays – Tips

- Dig for ways to make it personal – include personal connections to brighten a generic answer.
- Get creative in your research. Go beyond the Web site to learn what they're all about. Think hard about what you really care about – feature that in your answer.
- Do research. Include experiences from your own background that support what the school values.



## Supplemental Essays – Tips

- Know why you want to go there. Yes, it may seem obvious but you would be surprised that some students don't know why they are applying.
- Start with your best point or idea which should include details or specific examples, which are natural “hooks.”

In many ways, these essays are more important than the main college application essay. **WE** get to choose the questions.



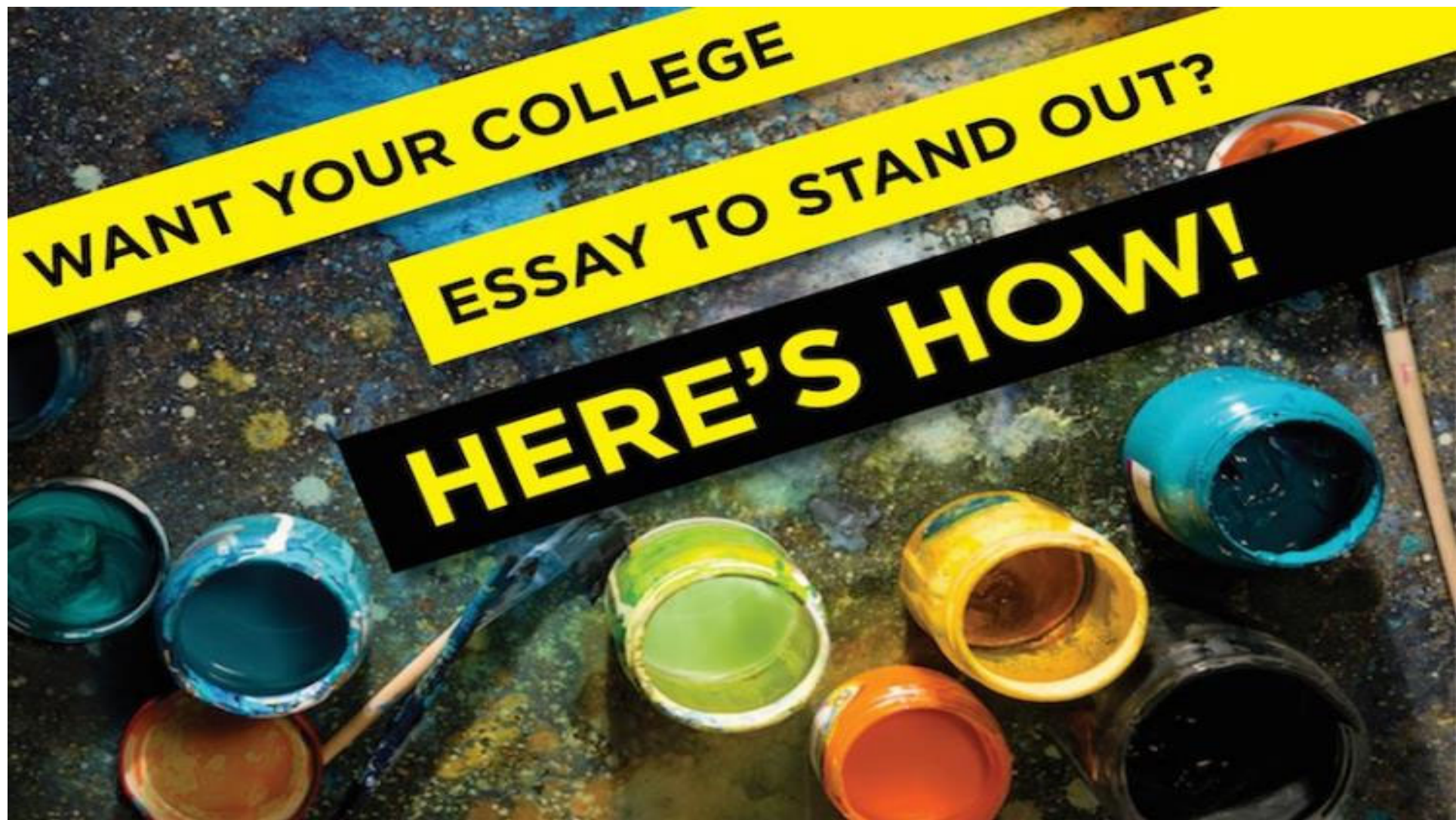
## Supplemental Essays

- What do you hope to find over the rainbow?
- Tell us about a time when your curiosity led you someplace you weren't expecting to go.
- If you could travel anywhere in time or space, either real or imagined, where would you go and why?
- What does #YOLO mean to you?
- What's your favorite word and why?



## Supplemental Essays

- Tell us about the most embarrassing moment of your life.
- You have 150 words... take a risk.
- If you could choose to be raised by robots, dinosaurs, or aliens, who would you pick? Why?
- What invention would the world be better off without, and why?
- Give us your Top Ten list.



**WANT YOUR COLLEGE**

**ESSAY TO STAND OUT?**

**HERE'S HOW!**



## Topics to Avoid...

- Your Drug Use or Dating Strategies
- Your run-in with the law
- Your List of Accomplishments
- One-track Social, Religious, or Political lectures
- Woe is Me
- The Travel Journal
- Excuses



## Beware of Clichés...

- Sports
- Travel
- Injuries and Illness
- Childhood Anecdotes
- Community Service
- Influential Parents
- Anything Risqué
- Preaching
- Kooky Topics
- Broad Conclusions





# College Application Essays

- Reveal something we can't find on the transcript
- Make your point quickly
- Make yourself memorable
- Tell us something we don't know
  - “This is how I feel about...”
  - “This is what is important to me...”
  - “This is what I value...”



## Common Mistakes...

- Not putting in enough time to brainstorm –  
START EARLY
- Trashing ideas before you fully explore them –  
keep everything so don't throw anything away
- Trying too hard to come up with ideas that are  
quirky instead of authentic
- Ignoring your instincts



## Remember – It's an Essay

- Check for content not just spelling
- Style, flow, tone, and mechanics
- Opening sentence – Closing sentence
- Students who take a risk with the content and structure are generally more successful
- Content and structure **MUST** make a larger point about **YOU** the applicant



## Spelling DOES matter...

- “I was so excited to finally be a candy stripper at the UCSD University Health Center.”
- “I recall with great fondness the many hours my brother and I spent hunting peasants.”
- “I have made the horror role every semester.”
- “I never personally experienced death until my grandfather died.”



## That darn opening sentence

- “1800 miles from home – no car, no cable, no Chick-fil-A.”
- “Being Greek is a full time job!”
- “Unfortunately, many people know what it is like to be the fat kid in school – I certainly do.”
- “It’s true - I don’t speak fluent Chinese, I haven’t solved world hunger, and I can’t play the harp. But I’m a middle child and I think that’s pretty special.”



## That darn opening sentence

- DO – Get to the point. Make me want to read your essay.
- DON'T – Re-state the essay prompt or tell the reader the purpose of your essay.



## That pesky closing sentence

- Just as important as the opening sentence
- Don't begin the last sentence with "In conclusion" or "To summarize" or "Finally"
- Leave the reader wanting more



## It's all about style

Standing at the ship's weathered wooden railing, the biting cold wind reaching into his very core, he gazed at the approaching island shrouded in foreboding grey clouds and realized that he, Napoleon Bonaparte, was beginning the final tragic chapter of his once glorious life.

Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled to the island of St. Helena in 1815 where he would eventually die.





## It's all about style

“I am honored to apply for the Bachelor of Library Science program at Southern Methodist University because as long as I can remember I have had a love affair with books. Since I was eleven I have known I wanted to be a librarian.”

“When I was eleven, my great-aunt Gretchen passed away and left me something that changed my life: a library of about five thousand books. Some of my best days were spent arranging and reading her books. Since then, I have wanted to be a librarian.”



## BIG Takeaway

Colleges want to know something genuine about the applicant that shows reflection and/or growth. We want to know what the student wants us to know beyond grades, test scores, and the rest of the application. What truly matters is the story **YOU** want to tell about yourself and of course how you tell it.

“

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~ *Mark Twain* ~

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## YOU make the FINAL decision

In a recent national survey, new college freshmen were asked to list the fears about going to college that they had as high school seniors...



## YOU make the FINAL decision

- The Admission Office let me in by accident.
- My roommate will be awful.
- I don't know anyone there and I'll have problems meeting new people and making friends.
- I won't be able to cut it academically.
- I'm really going to be homesick for my friends, family, boyfriend or girlfriend back home.



## YOU make the FINAL decision

- I don't know how I'll balance so many things.
- I'm nervous about being on my own for the first time.
- I'm worried about gaining weight and the "freshman fifteen."
- I don't think I can handle all of the stress.
- I have no idea what I want to do after college.



**YOU make the FINAL decision**

None of these fears were **specific**  
to out-of-state colleges...



## YOU make the FINAL decision

### Fears about going out-of-state...

- Too far from home
- I won't fit in
- It costs too much





# YOU make the FINAL decision

- Too far from home



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# YOU make the FINAL decision

- I won't fit in



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# YOU make the FINAL decision

- I won't fit in





# YOU make the FINAL decision

- It costs too much



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## YOU make the FINAL decision

- It costs too much

**Net Price Calculators** are available on a college's or university's website and allow prospective students to enter information about themselves to find out what students like them paid to attend the institution in the previous year, after taking grants and scholarship aid into account.





## YOU make the FINAL decision

- It costs too much



**Grants** – Free money for students based on financial need

**Loans** – Money that needs to be paid back, sometimes after a student graduates from college

**Work Study** – Requires students to work part-time

**Scholarships** – Free money for students not based on financial need; may include academic, athletic, artistic, or other factors



## YOU make the FINAL decision

- It costs too much

**WESTERN UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE**  
(**WUE** – pronounced “*WOO E*”)



### What is it?

Students in Western states may enroll in participating two-year and four-year public college programs at a reduced tuition level – up to 150 percent of the institution’s regular resident tuition. In all cases, WUE tuition is considerably less than nonresident tuition.



## YOU make the FINAL decision

**Just like you shouldn't wait until the end of the semester to get help in that class you're struggling in, you shouldn't wait to address your college finances.**

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**YOU make the FINAL decision**

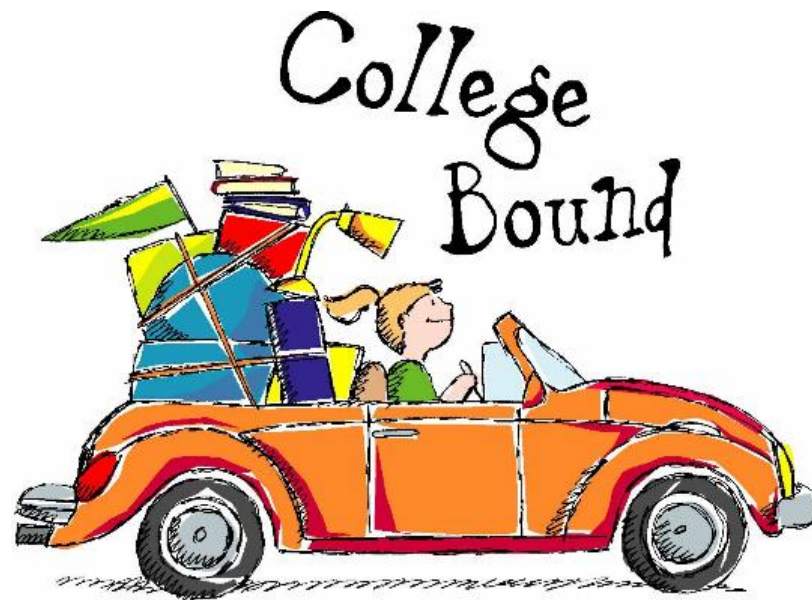


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## YOU make the FINAL decision

It's not a matter of **IF** or **WHEN** – only **WHERE!**



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**Who Am I?**

**RICK DIAZ**

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF ADMISSION  
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY**



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**LET'S GO  
PADRES!**

