

A few thoughts to keep in mind as your son or daughter begins the college process:

It's helpful for parents to:

- Focus on the best fit for your child, rather than an institution that ranks highest in an impersonal ranking.
- Listen to what your child says as plans begin to unfold. Foster his or her sense of autonomy.
- Respect the challenge of this search and try to help your child clarify what he or she wants by asking good questions.
- Establish the legitimacy of your interest in this decision and of possible constraints that may limit college choices.
- Encourage your child to make full use of the College Counseling Office, the best way to make sure that all of us are in the same loop.
- Use the Family Connection on Naviance. Take the data contained therein to heart. It is your single most authoritative source in predicting your child's chances at a given institution. If you need help in interpreting the data, call the College Counseling Office.
- Encourage your child to balance the final college list. Show genuine interest and respect for each school under consideration. Campus visits and interviews, a good way of showing interest, are generally more important at 'likely' schools than at 'unlikely' ones.
- Make arrangements ahead of time for application fees and enrollment deposits. A credit card facilitates payment for the various services provided by the Educational Testing Service. Be in touch with our office with any questions regarding fee waivers or financial hardship; we're here to help.
- Expect periodic emails and communication from the College Counseling Office containing reminders, advice and opportunities being offered in the near future. PLEASE read these communications to remain informed.
- Complete the CSS Profile and FAFSA for financial aid as early as possible (November for the Profile, early January for the FAFSA).

Parents should also keep in mind some college-application pitfalls:

- Don't take over the process. It is easy to think that the senior is just too busy. Every year, between 80 and 90 Brooks seniors handle their studies, their leadership responsibilities, and their applications just fine. Taking over can convey doubts about your child's capabilities.

- Do not register your child for SAT or ACT testing. Let him or her learn the process and take care of it, right through sending those scores to the colleges.
- Do not write or over-edit your child's essay. The more time you (or anyone else) spend on it, the greater the risk of losing the applicant's own "voice." That does more harm than all the benevolent editing in the world can redeem.
- Do not send applications via FedEx or UPS or any other special delivery service. Someone has to sign for them and that adds an extra layer of effort at a very busy time in a college admission office. It may also slow down the delivery of the application.
- Do not initiate contact with a college coach. A coach will be interested in the student, not the parent — and that student's own initiative will be important.
- Don't count on friends or friends of friends to help your child gain admission to a college or university. In our experience, such efforts result in more disappointment than satisfaction. If you do want to pursue a connection, play it down with your child and be in touch with our office to keep us in the loop so we can be helpful.
- Don't assume that an independent counselor will turn a magic key for your child. While we've created a process meant to serve the needs of the full range of our students, we will happily work in concert with an independent counselor on your child's behalf, and you should not hesitate to let us know if you have chosen to work with an outside counselor. At the same time, success ultimately rests with the engagement and good work of your son or daughter. Work not to let the student feel that someone else is taking care of their process for them, and make sure our office's work with your student doesn't happen at cross-purposes with an outside counselor's process. Communication is the key.