

## The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

### Don't Let College Application Deadlines Blindside You

from the American Counseling Association

So what can be more summer fun than studying college catalogs, looking at long college applications and worrying about where the money will come from to make college possible? Yes, all exciting activities that make having a family picnic or a visit to a nearby lake sound ever so boring.

Admittedly all the paperwork, planning and hassle that goes into selecting and applying to one or more colleges isn't all that enjoyable, but there are really good reasons to dedicate some of this summer's free time to getting the job started.

A main reason is simply to reduce the stress that's going to show up as those application deadlines creep closer. Gathering all the necessary paperwork, recommendations, essays, test scores and other requirements of the typical college application is always going to take a lot of work, and it's easier when there's still plenty of time to get it done.

Starting before the demands and the distractions of the school year also makes things less stressful. Right now there's no chemistry exam looming, no big English class essay due, no after-school activities demanding attention. It's easier to make time now and get the application process started.

Begin with a family discussion about how school will be financed. College costs today run all the way from somewhat reasonable (or at least not horribly expensive) to extremely expensive. Will a scholarship be possible? Are there savings available? Will one or more college loans be necessary?

Finances are one early means for limiting college choices. Another is the student's past academic performance. Grades and standardized test scores are major factors in deciding what schools might be good fits for your student.

College guidebooks, either from your local bookstore or library, can be very informative about a school's admission requirements, costs, degrees, school size, sports, social programs and much more. Now, months before that college application is due, is a great time for your student to consider issues like whether a large or small college suits him or her best, or whether an urban or more rural setting will be more comfortable.

Choosing and applying to college is always going to be a stressful job, but by starting it early, eliminating last minute pressures, and giving oneself enough time to consider all the pros and cons, it's possible to remove at least some of the tension and deadline anxiety from the process.

*Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.*

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