

# Table of Contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| About the Author . . . . .   | iii        |
| Reviews for This Book . . . . .  | iv         |
| Introduction . . . . .   | v          |
| Acknowledgments . . . . .  | vi         |
| Dedication . . . . .   | vi         |
| <b>Part I: Student Self-Assessment: Thinking and Writing Exercises . . . . .</b> | <b>1</b>   |
| Campus Culture . . . . .   | 17         |
| 10-Step Campus Culture Quiz . . . . .  | 17         |
| College Culture Descriptions . . . . .   | 20         |
| <b>Part II: Searching the Colleges—Building Your College List . . . . .</b>      | <b>21</b>  |
| The College Market Is Not a Tight Market . . . . .                               | 21         |
| Building Your College List . . . . .   | 22         |
| Step 1. Search College Guides . . . . .  | 22         |
| Step 2. Search Online for Colleges . . . . .                                     | 22         |
| College Search Worksheets . . . . .  | 23         |
| Step 3. Search College Fairs . . . . .   | 83         |
| Questions to Ask The College Fair Rep . . . . .                                  | 84         |
| College Fair Worksheets . . . . .  | 85         |
| Step 4. Search College Presentations . . . . .                                   | 91         |
| College Presentation Worksheets . . . . .  | 92         |
| Step 5. College Campus Visits . . . . .  | 98         |
| College Campus Visit Worksheets . . . . .  | 99         |
| Step 6. Final List of Ten Colleges . . . . .                                     | 102        |
| <b>Part III: Communications . . . . .</b>  | <b>105</b> |
| Applications . . . . .   | 107        |
| Application Organizer . . . . .  | 107        |
| The Common Application . . . . .   | 117        |
| College Essays . . . . .   | 122        |
| Essay Exercises . . . . .  | 123        |
| College Interview . . . . .  | 133        |
| Interview Exercises . . . . .  | 135        |
| <b>Part IV: College Admissions Calendar . . . . .</b>                            | <b>141</b> |
| Juniors . . . . .  | 141        |
| Seniors . . . . .  | 143        |
| <b>Part V: Glossary . . . . .</b>  | <b>145</b> |
| Endorsements for Joyce Slayton Mitchell . . . . .                                | 148        |

## Campus Culture

Who is this kid behind that GPA and those TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, or ACT scores?

The colleges want to know. You want to know!

Think about your family, friends, school, and activity interests and how you spend your time. With your understanding of who you are as a student, daughter or son, friend, country's citizen, volunteer, athlete, musician, or artist, take the Campus Culture Quiz to start thinking about what kind of college will be the best match for who you are.

Talking to a sophomore at the University of Maryland, the young man explained, "I enrolled for the architecture program, and they dropped it for financial reasons my first semester."

"Why didn't you transfer?"

"Because I love it here!"

Students leave college because they don't fit in. They stay because it's a great match, the place where they can relax enough to feel confident as they live and learn at their best. Where will you fit in? What's the best college culture for you and the person you want to be?

### 10-Step Campus Culture Quiz

Take this 10-Step Quiz and find your match. Choose one answer for each question. Then fill out the key on page 19.

**Step 1:** What is your favorite school club or activity?

- a. SAT prep group
- b. environmental club
- c. sports
- d. philosophy club
- e. music or drama club

**Step 2:** You're planning Friday night with your friends. Where do you go?

- a. A friend's party
- b. USA-exchange student program
- c. high school arts festival
- d. science fair workshop
- e. climate-change film

**Step 3:** What was or is your favorite subject in junior year?

- a. art, music, or dance class
- b. chemistry or physics
- c. psychology, economics
- d. history
- e. literature

**Step 4:** What kind of student are you?

- a. I like to read and discuss in small study groups everything an author writes.
- b. I like time and space to try new mediums and designs for my ideas.
- c. I like to study in the library until I really understand my homework before I relax.
- d. I like to do my homework and leave plenty of time to work on my community service projects.
- e. I study my favorite subjects and don't mind winging it once in a while for the rest.

## Part II

# Searching the Colleges—Building Your College List

### The College Market Is not a Tight Market.

There are hundreds of four-year accredited colleges with different campus cultures and high academic standards all over America. You would like many of them if only you knew more about them. In fact, there are more than 2,500 residential, accredited four-year degree-granting colleges in the USA. Every one of those colleges is wonderful for someone. Not one of them is wonderful for everyone. Some students find it so difficult to get in simply because they think that only a few are the best for them—the ones that they have heard of from their family or neighbors or friends. Knowing where the graduating classes from your school go to college is one way to begin your college list. Ask your school counselor where students with your academic record were accepted and enrolled, realizing that these colleges will take a few from any one high school. The purpose of this book is to get you to think about who you are as a student and person, to learn a lot more about the great variety of college choices, and to write an application for the colleges that will be wonderful for you. For example, families may have heard very little about some of America's most intellectual colleges: University of Chicago, Swarthmore, Pomona, and Carleton. Most engineering students know about MIT, and yet, just as selective for engineering, mathematics, and physics are California College of Technology (Cal Tech) Harvey Mudd, Olin College, RPI, Georgia Tech, and Purdue. This book will help you to search what's out there—so that you will have the best choices for who you are as a student—because it is not a tight market!

To get you some college choices in April of your junior year or December of your senior year, you are going to learn how to go beyond the college rankings and the few colleges that you have heard of. A special problem for students is that they think that rankings means what's best for them, so they all apply to the same few colleges. In other words, students tend to think alike rather than realizing that there are many other colleges for different personalities of students. For example, think about cars... the car of choice in China is the Audi, so everyone wants an Audi. In America, many students would want a Ford pick-up truck, an open Jeep, or a little VW Beetle convertible. There wouldn't be "one" that is the best for everyone... not cars, or colleges, watches, or jeans. When April of senior year comes around, and college decisions are sent out, you will want to have thought through a wide range of school choices during the previous year. The purpose of building your college list is to use this book to think about what it is that you like—what's best for you—and then to search for ten or twelve colleges that vary in selectivity and to be sure that you would go to each one where you apply. If you do your search well, and you learn to write an application and essay that is unique, you won't sound like every other student, "I only want to go to a college I've heard of."

What is the College Dean of Admissions looking for to admit a student to her/his college? The dean is looking for someone who has something special to bring to this particular campus. A student who writes about and will talk about the politics, history, art, and literature that he likes or she doesn't like. A student who wants to play in the college band or plays sports or loves snowboarding. Someone who asks great questions and knows things. Someone who reads books not required. Someone with courage to learn and try new things. A student who will add diversity to the campus because of the school they are from, or state, or interest they have, or one who wants to start something new on campus.

You are going to learn about and fill out 20 college worksheets in this book to build your list. Finally, by September of senior year, you will choose your final 10 and apply to each one. You will find these 20 colleges from college guides, your friends, online searches, college fairs, college events, college tours, and some colleges may just drop out of the air in your dreams!

## Part III: Communications

### Applications, Essays, and Interviews

#### Applications

You've got your final college list—10 to 12 colleges where you are going to apply. They are all places you know well enough to tell them apart by the time you complete each unique application. Your final list must give you different levels of selectivity so that you will be sure to have a couple of choices in April, when decisions are sent to you. No one knows the levels of selectivity that colleges accept better than your school counselor – your college counselor. No matter who else gives you advice, you will want to work closely with your school, guidance, or college advisor. (Whatever your high school calls the person responsible for college admissions.)

The dean has already read your high school transcript and test scores, and so you are in the group of “qualified” students who have the necessary academics to do the work at her/his college. Your application is the very first thing that the college reads from YOU. This is where you use everything that you've learned in “Part I: Self-Assessment” and “Part II: Searching the Colleges.” You are going to think about who you are and where you want to go as you complete your applications. “Part III: Communications” gives you the chance to show how you are different from the hundreds of other applicants who are applying. This is where the college deans select from 6% to 60% of the students from the 85% who are qualified to do the work. Everyone knows the essay is important in this selection; everyone does not know how important the application is. Therefore, this book is going to help you be creative, think about who you are, what the college is like, and take your time to write out your fit with each of your 10 applications. And speaking of “write out,” be sure to write out all of your exercises in complete sentences and good English. It is important for you to practice your self-assessment exercises, applications, and essay exercises in well-written sentences. You need the practice!

In “Part III, Communication Skills,” take a look at the Application Organizer form. First of all, choose if you are going to use the Common Application, the Universal Application, the Coalition Application, or the School Application. The colleges say the application you choose makes no difference to them. I always tell students that if the college spends the time, creativity, and money on creating their own application, use it! If not, go with the Common. Keep track of each college application you complete with the Application Organizer. Write in the different test requirements, deadlines, recommendations to be sent, test scores to be sent. Use this book to keep accurate records so that all requirements are fulfilled by the deadline of the application.

Next you must decide if you are going to apply to one of the early plans or the regular plan. There are so many myths about the value of applying early that it's hard for you to believe what's best. No matter what you do, don't get stuck on, “I have to go early!” Even if you decide to apply early, try to think of 8 to 10 first choices. An early decision closes your mind. If you think 10 first choices, you will learn more about each college and write a stronger application for each of them. If you think 10 first choices, that means that you will always get into your first choice!

Before you start writing your application, think about what the deans of admission are looking for when they read applications. They already know you can do the work at their college by reading your transcript which was sent by your high school. Next, they want to know what special contribution you can bring to their campus life. The application asks you about your family, your school and community activities, your thoughts on your major and future career, your work experience, honors you've earned, and an opportunity to add something not requested. It also asks for school record, test scores, recommendations to be sent in at your request to your college office, and your essay. Sometimes a personal statement as well as an essay is requested. You will have some flexibility in filling in your thoughts on your major and career, summer and holiday experiences, and “other relevant information” not requested that you would like admissions to know about you.

Besides the essay, the application often includes questions asking for one paragraph or shorter answers. Most students slide over these, but here's another opportunity for you to get the edge and get in.