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The Admissions Shift in California State University

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live nearby or who live at home, thus easing the strain on campus housing; adding extra admissions requirements for "impacted" majors (such as nursing, engineering and business); and generally raising the bar for overall admission requiring higher grades and test scores that are combined into an Eligibility Index.** In light of all these changes, current high school students who plan to apply to a Cal State campus will need an admissions strategy. Here are some basic suggestions:

- Students in 10th and 11th grades should take greater care to achieve good grades and higher SAT or ACT test scores. Rigor of the coursework is important as well.
- As students prepare a college list, they should think carefully about the majors they want to pursue. Academic aspirations must take priority over campus location preferences. In other words, the availability of a major or program of interest and the academic requirements necessary to pursue it must supersede the student's desire to attend a particular Cal State campus.
- Students and their families should look carefully at colleges outside the Cal State system, in part because the average time it takes to graduate may increase over the coming years. Six-year graduation rates are already low at many campuses. (e.g. 61% of entering freshmen at San Diego State graduate in 6 years.)
- When considering the costs of attending college, be sure to include the costs involved in added years of paying tuition and fees as well as the loss of potential earnings. Once these are added to the equation, the cost of an education at some private colleges might be more attractive. Many private institutions have financial aid policies targeted toward making attendance more affordable for middle class families.

While I am definitely not discouraging students from applying to Cal State, I am strongly suggesting that that students carefully

The California State University is the largest system of higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, approximately 450,000 students and 48,000 faculty and staff. Since its founding in 1961 the system has awarded nearly 2.5 million degrees. Its mission is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever changing needs of the people of California. With its commitment to excellence, diversity and innovation, "Cal State" is the university system that has provided a valuable infrastructure for public education in California for nearly 50 years.

Unfortunately, the Cal State system is in serious trouble. Cal State campuses are shifting from non-competitive admissions to competitive ones. So getting admitted to one of the 23 CSU campuses will continue to become more "iffy" for many college applicants-especially students who are attracted to certain campuses and majors. The shift is not the result of a change in State philosophy. Instead the change is driven by deep cuts in the State's budget which have led the university's leadership to curtail enrollment at a time of rising demand. Due to the economic downturn more students than ever are turning to the less expensive state system to meet their higher education needs.

Consider the following:

- Cal State applications have risen over 19% from last year. Approximately 600,000 applications are expected for fall 2010. Officials attribute the surge to many factors; these include an increase in community college transfer applications, concerns over cost-cutting measures that are expected to slash enrollment by 40,000 students over the next two years, and the increasing difficulty of being accepted to the University of California.
- Last year two-thirds of Cal State applicants were admitted; that ratio is expected to decline for fall 2010.
- Last year six of the 23 campuses were "impacted" (more qualified applicants than space). This year 12 campuses are "impacted" and that number is expected to rise.*
- Last year only 6 campuses stopped accepting applications by the November 30th deadline; as of this writing 17 are closed for applications and some campuses are establishing waiting lists. The crux of the situation is that "impacted" campuses will require additional admission criteria that go beyond the basic requirements of grades and test scores originally designed to guarantee a place in the Cal State system for many California high school graduates. These new standards are likely to include: favoring students who

research every school they apply to and make informed decisions. Shop wisely when your precious education dollars are at stake.

* Detailed information about impacted campuses, programs and majors can be accessed at www.calstate.edu/impactinfo.shtml.

** Visit www.csumentor.edu for up-to-date information on the Cal State system, including how to calculate the Eligibility Index.

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