

Lamorinda Schools

LASF Unveils New Identity: Lafayette Partners in Education

By Jean Follmer



The LASF/LPIE booth at the Reservoir Run.

Photo Jean Follmer

After days of rain, an unexpectedly beautiful Halloween morning greeted thousands of smiling Lafayette Reservoir Run participants. Adding to the delicious annual Rotary Club pancake breakfast was a community carnival to celebrate the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation's name change. Now Lafayette Partners in Education, President Maureen Bagley

could not have been more pleased. "I would like to thank the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce for letting us reveal our new name in front of a huge crowd on a beautiful day at the Reservoir Run. We had a terrific response to the unveiling of the new name, Lafayette Partners in Education," said Bagley.

Partners in Education (Partners) representatives greeted chil-

dren, parents and community members, handed out reusable shopping bags with the new name, and answered questions about the name change. Children had the opportunity to do scratch art, try their hand at a Warhol-inspired mural, use their math and judgment skills to make "estimates" and fly down the inflatable bouncy slide in the Plaza Center parking lot.

Thirty years ago, LASF was started to fill the state funding gaps in the arts and sciences. Over the years, LASF grew to meet the needs of the Lafayette School District, Acalanes High School and the Lafayette community. While staying true to the Arts and Sciences, LASF also provides extensive support in the areas of: Music and Drama, Health, Math, Humanities and Technology. "The name Lafayette Partners in Education more accurately reflects the current role of the education foundation. The financial needs of our schools have grown significantly and the

education foundation has had to reach out to a greater number of community partners to help us reach our fundraising goals. We work very closely with parent organizations, teachers and administrators, our own instructors and the local business community. We chose the name in recognition of these critical partnerships," explained Bagley.

Partners plans to continue to strengthen its working relationship with school site parent organizations. This month, Partners is forming an advisory committee that will review the way the education foundation is organized and to ensure all partner organizations have a strong voice in its operations.

"Although we have changed our name, we are still the same great organization with the mission of supporting and enriching the education of all public school students in Lafayette," finished Bagley.

Application Inflation in College Admissions

By Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D.

Recently I overheard a conversation between two high school students at a local coffee shop. One student told his friend "My grades aren't great and my SAT scores are mediocre, so my plan is to take full advantage of the Common Application and apply to about 20 or 30 schools just to see what happens. My mom and dad can afford it, so it won't be a problem." Then he asked his friend, "What do you think of my strategy?"

He didn't ask for my opinion so I thought I would address his question in this article. Picking which schools to apply to is an important part of the college admission process. So while it may look appealing to "play the odds" and just try to get in somewhere, you may be robbing yourself of both a rewarding education and future opportunities. Even if your grades have suffered and your test scores are not the greatest, you can still assemble a list of colleges that would best meet your needs. In fact, finding a list of appropriate schools is even more important for students whose grades and boards are less than stellar. These students generally benefit greatly from a supportive educational environment that matches well with their interests and needs. If you haven't been able to do your best work in high school, your college years present an opportunity to start fresh and take advantage of new opportunities. You are cheating yourself out of this chance by making your No. 1 criterion the ease with which you can hit the send button.

Another factor that this student may not have considered is how important it is for colleges to know the applicant has given care-

ful consideration to their institution before applying. Demonstrated interest is important because when colleges accept an applicant they want that student to enroll. You actually reduce your chances of acceptance at a college if they have not heard from you until your application arrives or if your responses to their supplement show you have not researched their school with care. If a decision comes down to a number of applicants with similar academic and extracurricular profiles, the college will choose the applicant who has demonstrated interest. The Common Application requires one personal essay and one short response, but most colleges that use this application also add supplemental essays to distinguish applicants who have a sincere interest in their school from those who are applying "just to see what happens."

Today, both applicants to college and colleges themselves are engaged in a vicious cycle. As the number of applications soars, colleges struggle to accurately predict yield (that is the number of accepted students who actually enroll). Yield is critical to the college's bottom-line. As colleges struggle with yield, they resort to longer wait lists and other enrollment management tactics. On the other side, students hedge against increasing competition and declining admit rates by flooding the system with more applications than ever before. This phenomenon is occurring nationwide as more students cast a broader geographic net.

Since larger applicant pools do not necessarily improve the quality of incoming freshman

classes, many higher education experts are lamenting that colleges are simply rejecting more highly capable students because they have so many to choose from. The number of "all-stars" in the country has not changed—they are just jumping into more applicant pools. Undergraduate admission offices across the country are staggering under the increase in the numbers of applications, and their evaluation processes and staffing are not structured to handle the volume.

Despite this struggle, colleges continue to employ a variety of recruitment strategies to attract even more applicants. In the early 1990's colleges purchased 35 million student names and addresses from CollegeBoard. In 2009 that number rose to over 80 million. And Fast Track Applications are increasingly common (with fee waived and pre-filled to boot!). Why are colleges actively participating in application inflation? Some of the reasons include: increase in applications is linked to perceptions of popularity, selectivity and quality. Greater application volume also slightly improves *U.S. News and World Report's* ranking (but every little bit counts!), pleases alumni, aids in fund-raising and helps to attract top professors and researchers. Even bond rating agencies use the number of applications a college receives as one measure of demand, and thus as an indicator of the institution's financial health.

There are many voices that question the ethics of intense recruitment strategies by colleges that wind up rejecting the overwhelming majority of applicants. And some colleges simply refuse to take the bait. Charles Deacon,

the dean of undergraduate admissions at Georgetown University, says his university has no plans to join the Common Application. "...this is a personal relationship between a student and college. We know people are applying who (really) want to apply. No college should appeal to everyone."



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an educational consultant and certified college admissions advisor. Her goal is to help students and their families understand the admissions process, research college and career options, create a customized college list and submit a strong and cohesive application. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC, and HECA and earned a certification in College Admissions and Career Planning from University of California at Berkeley. Contact her at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com.

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is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA

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Photos: Tod Fierner, Doug Kohen, Jordan Fong, Ohlen Alexander

Circulation: 24,200 printed copies; 23,200 mailed to homes & businesses in Lamorinda. 1,000 delivered to pick up locations.

Layout/Graphics: Andy Scheck, Jonas Scheck, Amanda Griggs. Printed in CA.

Lamorinda Weekly, P.O. Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570-6133
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