

Published March 11th, 2015

## Does Your 11th Grader Really Need a Resume?

By Elizabeth LaScala



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college advisor who draws upon 25 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or [elizabeth@doingcollege.com](mailto:elizabeth@doingcollege.com). Visit [www.doingcollege.com](http://www.doingcollege.com) for more information about her services.

strong and consistent theme will appear. A counselor or teacher who has a copy, and is writing a recommendation letter, would be hard pressed to miss it! And an admissions reader at a college the student sends an application would surely make note of it as well. If the student was applying to a department where a computer science background was considered an advantage (e.g. engineering, mathematics, statistics, economics or computer science itself) it would, no doubt, strengthen the student's admission chances.

I am not suggesting a student be pressed into performing activities for the benefit of supporting their college applications. I am suggesting that students follow their passions and develop successive resume drafts that summarize their academic and extracurricular activities in order to be able to document the emergence of common threads over time. If the effort to develop a resume is systematic, a cohesive picture of their interests will emerge. As the computer science example above illustrates, a resume is a far more effective approach to highlighting one's

"Does my 11th grader really need a resume?" is a question I sometimes hear from parents in my counseling sessions. Parents, quite reasonably, wonder why a young student would need a resume, what benefits it could serve, and whether this is just one more contrivance to make college admissions more stressful and competitive. Many of the same parents also tell me they do not know how to help their students focus and identify a major or a program of interest in college. The resume is a remarkably good tool that supports this process!

High schools often require that students complete a 'brag sheet' on which they record their activities and accomplishments over their high school careers. So, too, do college applications have sections in which to list academic awards, honors and extracurricular activities. I encourage high school juniors to go beyond the mere listing of activities and develop an early version of a resume, so that the student can organize and communicate their competencies in an authentic way unique to their skills and experiences. Over time, the resume can be used to organize a student's strengths so that common themes can be identified. Let's take a concrete example: A student may take Introduction to Computer Science as an 11th grader, enroll in a JAVA coding class at community college the following summer, and then register for AP Computer Science in 12th grade. The same student may identify the need for a computer science club for those with similar interests and head one up for her high school community. She may even volunteer to peer tutor underclassmen taking the introductory class she took in 11th grade. By recording this information in a resume over time, a

competencies than a mere listing of activities on a form. Development of a resume encourages the student to summarize her activities and accomplishments-in effect, a snapshot of one or more important aspects of her world. And a resume often can help get more effective counselor and teacher letters of recommendation. This is certainly an advantage to students in larger public high schools where the student to counselor ratio is a few hundred to one; but it is also an asset in smaller, private settings. While it is not polite or ethical to put words into a counselor's or teacher's mouth, a clear and concise resume can accomplish much the same objective. It can help the recommender to clearly recognize a student's special strengths, and these may well be incorporated into the letter. In addition, many selective summer programs for high school students request a resume, such as NYU's Tisch School Summer Arts Program. When an application deadline looms large in the second week of February for an 11th grader, having a well-developed resume will be a lifesaver. And, later next fall, when a senior is looking at a blank admissions application with no idea where to start, having a resume handy will help kick start the process with confidence. For part-time jobs, internships and as a foundation for the many resumes to come in a young person's future, a high school student with an effective resume is off to a good start.

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA