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Start to plan a meaningful summer now!

By Elizabeth LaScala



Doing College and Beyond College and Graduate School Admissions Services 970 Dewing Avenue, Suite 202, Lafayette 925.385.0562 (office) 925.330.8801 (mobile) www.doingcollege.com Elizabeth@doingcollege.com Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the US. Elizabeth attends conferences, visits campuses and makes personal contacts with admissions networks to stay current on the evolving nature of college admissions. She and her professional team offer resume development, test preparation, academic tutoring, value analysis, merit and need-based scholarship search and more.

usually get a job in the summer and learn many vital life lessons and sometimes gain valuable leadership experience - if they can continue the job into the high school year on a part-time basis, all the better. I had one student who held down a part-time hostess job in the summer and then received a promotion to lead hostess for upcoming school months. Her new position required that she train new employees, often individuals older than herself. This is impressive to colleges, and she was admitted to several strong schools of business.

Internships/Programs: Internships and programs are tremendous opportunities for students to build specific skill sets and gain valuable experience in a field they want to explore more fully. There are many language immersion, service, humanities, math, science, computer science and engineering programs to choose from and costs vary greatly. It is best to get an early start researching these opportunities as many of the more competitive internships and programs have December and January deadlines. Another bonus of applying to more selective internships is that the application is similar to the college application (many selective programs require one to two letters of recommendation, school transcript, test scores and one or more essays). A 10th or 11th grader who completes this type of application process often has a head start on the college application process. High school students who get a later start on summer plans should not despair; each week I hear about another great opportunity a student finds by exercising due diligence with a

On both the Common Application and the University of California application there is a section to list and describe your accomplishments, including summer activities. If it is on the application, it is safe to assume that it is important in the admissions process.

Younger students still forming their interests should have the most leverage to explore rather than select something that 'looks good' on a college application. For example, a student may want to volunteer for an animal rescue foundation over the summer but may show little or no interest in becoming a veterinarian. Knowing what you don't want to do is as important as knowing what you do want to do. As a student develops a deeper interest in a particular area of knowledge, career, or research they should focus on depth rather than breadth and aim to immerse themselves in several substantive activities related to that interest, both in and outside the school environment. For example, if a student believes she wants to become a doctor, she should take advanced placement science courses as well as demonstrate an active interest in clinical medicine by volunteering in a healthcare environment or doing research.

It is important that a student's interests not be judged as good or bad depending on whether it fits an adult's idea of meaningful or career focused. That's a surefire way to kill passion before it has a chance to take root. Also, I recommend students be encouraged to pursue their interests rather than prestige; when they do so they often enjoy far better admission results.

You do not have to travel or spend a ton of money for your summer to have an impact. Here is a list of possibilities:

Online courses: I had one student who was on a tight budget. She enrolled in an inexpensive online design course and was guided through the creation of a 3-dimensional model of a bedroom (complete with furnishings, complementary fabrics, window treatments, rugs, the works). Her summer project became part of her college portfolio, and she was successfully offered admission to several excellent architectural programs.

Employment: This is an often underrated experience that is highly valued by admission offices. Students

deadline still in the future.

Community Service: Time is more plentiful during the summer and students who are drawn to volunteerism can expand this interest over the break. That said, it is best if the project is planned well in advance and executed over the summer. It is also best if something lasting can be achieved for the nonprofit organization where the student volunteers. The impact on the community should be both positive and lasting.

Teen Tours and Travel: Frankly, most of these programs are exorbitantly expensive. They can be a terrific investment if you keep in mind that the experience needs to be transforming in some way (like language and cultural immersion for a student who wants to major in international affairs) or has an otherwise special feature (like a strong community service component).

College Research and Visits: Early summer is a perfect time to develop a balanced list of good fit colleges and explore each college fully. You can research colleges carefully at home and, if possible, plan to visit a few in order to develop an appreciation of the differences among institutions.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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