

11th Grade Parent Panel: Real Talk from Real Parents

Top 10 Things to Know About the College Search

Note: These are meeting notes from the 11th Grade Peer Parent meeting on Friday, October 23, 2015. This information is based on experiences from the parent panel* whose children have successfully navigated the high school years, as well as lessons learned by the 11th grade peer parents. Your experiences may be different from those described below.

- 1) “It’s a Marketing Process”: Understand the College Search Process**
- 2) Demonstrate interest — students need to show they “bleed the school’s colors”**
- 3) Let Your Child Guide the Process**
- 4) Set Expectations: Monitor the Application Process**
- 5) Read, Read, Read! and Proof Read.**
- 6) Use Naviance**
- 7) College Recommendations: Ask the Teacher Who Knows Your Student Best**
- 8) Number of Applications to Submit**
- 9) Early Decision v. Early Acceptance**
- 10) Gap Year is an Acceptable Option**

- 1) “It’s a Marketing Process”: Understand the College Search Process.** Consider this is a marketing exercise. Colleges are marketing themselves to your student and your student is marketing himself/herself to the colleges. Your student will receive lots of mailers and emails from colleges marketing themselves. This does not necessarily mean that your student will get into those schools. Colleges market to increase the number of applications they receive so that they have a large pool to choose from and so that they can appear to be more selective. Build a strong application, understand what the colleges’ values and goals are for their student body, have your student clearly articulate who they are, their skills, capabilities and aspirations.
- 2) Demonstrate Interest: Attend local college fairs, B-CC college visits, sign up for official tours of campuses; writing hand-written or electronic thank you notes to regional admissions representatives. Our students need to demonstrate to the colleges and universities that they "bleed their colors." College admissions representatives have territories similar to sales people. Find out who the representative is for our region and start to build relationships through all of the above activities and interactions. If you visit a campus, take the time to register for an “official” tour. This will be noted as a demonstration of interest and go into your child’s folder. Every expression of interest is a point in their favor.**

Demonstrate Interest (continued):

B-CC Visits: Attend College Representative Visits to BCC. If your student is interested in a school or wants to learn about a school, encourage them to attend the college visits at BCC. Attendance is taken so it is recorded that your student “demonstrated interest.” Usually the representative is the first person to review the application. Most regional representatives have emails. Have your student send a note indicating their interest in advance. After a tour or conversation, send a thank you note via email or through snail mail.

College Fairs: There are regional college fairs. Many are listed in the 11th Grade Parent Tool Kit. Searching the universities’ websites will also tell you where they will be or contact the regional admissions representatives for information and locations.

Campus Visits: If you are considering a campus visit, register online through that school’s website as soon as possible. Some campuses, such as University of MD have limited schedules and the dates that MCPS students don’t have school fill up quickly.

Unable to Visit Campuses? If you and your student are unable to take time to visit an array of colleges demonstrate interest and explore options in other ways.

- Consider visiting after you child has been accepted.
- Visit/walk through campuses in the Washington region to get a feel for rural; urban; big; small etc. This will help your student understand what environment they want.
- If you can’t make it to a college in person, have your student take the on-line tour and register his/her interest.

Read the college mission statement and incorporate some of the wording into the essay.

- 3) Let Your Child Guide the Process: Keep saying the mantra, “I am not the one going to college.” This is your child’s experience and choice. They are going to college, not you. They know their interests, their skills, their dreams. Let them lead and self- direct with your support and guidance. Listen: Be in tune with your student’s comfort level. S/he may not feel ready to take on the college experience- moving away, living with a stranger, handling the social and academic stress. Community college is a great option. Your student gets a college experience, and can complete core college courses at a fraction of the cost of a 4 year college. At Montgomery College 85% of the 2 year associate degree students continue on and are successful at their college.**
- 4) Expectations: Monitor the Application Process. Verify that the correct boxes have been checked especially if you are applying for financial aid or merit-based scholarships. Applying for financial aid or indicating your interest in doing so does not in any way affect the application or place your student in a different group for consideration. So don’t hesitate to check it if you want to be considered for assistance. Keep track of deadlines: This is particularly important for applying for financial assistance. Gather the necessary documents early and be prepared to submit the full application on time.**

5) Read, Read, Read! And Proof Read. *College Mission Statements:* **Be sure your student reads the college's mission and understands its goals and objectives for its college student body. Recommend that they weave that information/understanding into their essay questions to show that they have read the college information and have a understanding of the college's mission.**

Applications: Go through each application carefully with your student. Be aware that many of them differ in slight ways. Be careful that your student is applying to the correct school. For example, University of Maryland and University of Maryland University College often get confused as the application looks similar. Be sure that the correct school application is submitted.

Check the Boxes: Don't miss checking off boxes that affirm your students is interested in scholarships — some schools don't offer unless the "box" is checked. Don't assume your child will be considered for scholarship, including merit-based scholarships, automatically. Often a "box" has to be checked for consideration.

College Application Essay: B-CC-s Education Foundation provides funding for essay classes taught by B-CC teachers over the summer. Nothing feels better than getting that essay written and ready for the application process in the summer before senior year.

6) Use Naviance:

Sign-up for Naviance now! Become familiar with Naviance and experiment with different options. It is an extremely useful tool and will help you as a parent to understand the college options. It will be a good guide for what is appropriate for your student to consider but it isn't fool proof. Naviance provides an option for parents to write a 'letter' about their child. Do it. This provides context for the counselor who will write your student's recommendation. They won't know your child or what s/he does outside of school – health challenges, family circumstances, service, sports, mentoring etc. Share it. Write it. Your student's B-CC counselor will appreciate and use this information when writing recommendation letters. Naviance is fairly accurate re: scores, GPAs etc. and college acceptance rates. Don't let those scores stop your child from applying to a college! College acceptance decisions are complicated and involve a number of elements including demonstrated interest.

7) College Recommendations: Ask the Teacher Who Knows Your Student Best. Have your student build relationships with teachers for recommendations. It is important to have your student get recommendations from teachers that know and support them. It is not important to get a recommendation from a teacher in the possible academic field of their proposed major.

8) Number of Applications to Submit: Some students apply to more than ten schools. This may not be necessary. Identify your student's top four or five to explore in-depth. Work with the counselor to ensure that they are correct for your student. Parent panelists recommended 8 as a good number, depending on your student.

- 9) **Early Decision v. Early Acceptance** — ***Early Decision:*** If your child really knows where s/he wants to go, consider applying early decision (ED). ED acceptance rates at many colleges are significantly higher than regular admissions. If your student chooses to apply ED they are indicating to the school that if accepted they will absolutely go there; they will not apply to other schools and they will not attend another school. ***Early Acceptance:*** is another avenue for application and does not tie the student's acceptance to his/her acceptance but let's her/him know earlier if they are in college. Not all colleges offer this option. Talk with the counselor about this choice.
- 10) **Gap Year is an Acceptable Option.** If interested in a gap year, encourage your student to apply to colleges during senior year and then defer attendance. S/he doesn't need to know when they apply that they want to take a gap year. Most colleges have a process of applying for deferred attendance that can be completed after a student has been accepted. Some colleges in their acceptance letters even note the option to take a gap year. They must be able to answer the question "why are you taking a gap year?" Over 40,000 U.S. graduates of the Class of 2015 opted to take a gap year. There are structured programs for gap years ranging in prices and some colleges even offer 'gap year' programs. Your child does NOT need to do anything like this and can develop their own personal gap year plan which could include working or playing an organized sport. A gap year allows the student to mature, gain a broader view of the world and to enrich themselves through different life experiences. Studies show that students who take a gap year enter college and finish college more focused and successful.

FINAL NOTE: Before Your Child Attends College: Understand Your Rights As a Parent. When your student goes to college and turns 18, you, as a parent, no longer have any rights to know what is happening academically or otherwise. Talk with your child and with them submit HIPAA and FERPA documents that are signed by you both. These are legal documents that allow the school to inform you of any health emergencies that might affect your child. If these forms are not signed and registered with the college they may not legally be able to share information regarding the health status of your child. You may want to check with an attorney to be fully informed about the laws.

***Parent Panelists: Background**

1. Lucy Harvey:

Lucy Harvey has had two very different daughters go through the college application process and look at very different colleges. Her first daughter, Molly Lo Re, is a junior at Barnard, the women's college of Columbia University, majoring in English. Her second daughter, Katie, graduated B-CC in 2015 and attends Tulane University. She is considering majoring in Political Science. Lucy also has a junior at B-CC — Ellie. Because of what Lucy and her husband learned the first time around, her second child who applied last year, had a much smoother application process.

2. Marleece Barber:

Marleece has a 2015 B-CC Graduate. After applying to a wide swath of colleges and universities including the west coast; and public and private institutions, Marleece's daughter Helena selected a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). She visited campuses across the spectrum, but decided that returning to her family's hometown of New Orleans and attending Xavier University for undergraduate would be a smart choice as she pursues her dream of becoming a physician. Marleece also has a son, Alton, in 8th grade at Westland.

3. Marjohn Heath:

Marjohn's daughter, Marina, is a 2015 B-CC graduate. She also has a son, Noah, who is a junior at B-CC. Marjohn's daughter was not ready to take on the pressures of going away immediately, and has chosen to live at home and attend Montgomery College — a local community college — to experience the work required for the next step of academics and get basic requirements out of the way."

4. Carrie Witkop:

Carrie has three B-CC sons. Bobby, her oldest, graduated with a biology and Spanish degree in June from St. Mary's College of Maryland. He is now an oysterman working for True Chesapeake on the Western Shore of Maryland. He works closely with the Department of Natural Resources to gain leases for a number of oyster farmers including his own. He spent a semester in Costa Rica on a turtle sanctuary working with the local and environmental communities.

Her middle son, Will, is pursuing a civil engineering degree with a specialty in water issues at the University of Maryland. He will be spending next semester in Australia.

Her youngest son, Tommy, is a junior at B-CC and is considering attending Carrie's alma mater — University of Wyoming.

5. Ruth Robbins:

Ruth's son, Lee Evans, is a 2015 B-CC graduate. Lee had a very busy senior year, playing varsity football and volleyball, serving as the president of the student governing body, and participating in the full IB diploma program. He applied and was accepted early-decision to Duke. But, in early May, Lee decided he was not ready to take on the challenge of college before he recuperated from senior year and before he knew himself a whole lot better. Lee was able to defer his admission to Duke and plan a GAP year.

6. Lauren Rubenstein:

Lauren's son, Jake Shapiro, is a 2013 graduate of B-CC. During his senior year in high school, Jake joined his mother on a volunteer trip to Haiti. The experience broadened his world view and created a desire to take a Gap Year. Through International Volunteer HQ (IVHQ) [www.https://www.volunteerhq.org](https://www.volunteerhq.org), he spent the year doing service in Nepal and Indonesia. Now, he's a sophomore at University of Maryland in the Scholars Program for International Relations.