H-Soc • Rm 105 • College Friday #1 September 16. 2016

**Notes on the College Application Process**

# Fit

is the word that you need to remember when applying to college. Colleges and universities are not looking for the “best,” they are looking for the “best fit.” This means that some excellent students are not admitted to schools, because their strengths and interests do not fit well with what the college can offer. Other students who may not seem like superstar all-around students *do* get in, because they are a much better fit for the strengths of the college. Just as with job searches, you must think about how you as an overall person *fit* into the colleges you are investigating. As well, when you apply, you must prove to the school that you will fit in well.

**What does that mean?** First off, you need to have a fairly good idea of who you are: what are your strengths and weaknesses, what are your interests and dreams, what things do you see yourself doing in life? We will conduct two exercises in class that are designed to make you think outside the box about that.

Next, you need to figure some basic parameters of your search: do I want a big school, medium school, or small? Rural or urban? Close to home, within a day’s drive, across the country? Public or private? Sports school or academic? Frats and sororities, or not? It is best to make a list of what qualities you want in a school upfront. This will help you winnow through the hundreds of possibilities.

**Worry about the money second.** The money is not the primary concern in the “who-am-I” and school selection process. First, you need to figure out the fit and how you will present yourself to colleges; what will your narrative be? Only then do you worry about the money side. Remember, many expensive colleges have large financial aid programs and end up being cheaper than schools that look less expensive up front. Also, there are hundreds of millions of dollars of scholarships that are awarded each year to students who do the work necessary to get them. We’ll discuss that part next week.

**Talk with your parent(s)/guardian(s) early.** If you take initiative and show your parent(s)/ guardian(s) now that you are well prepared and serious about looking for schools and preparing for the college transition, you will have a much happier life for the next six months. This is a tough transition for those around you, too. Your thoughtful work makes it easier all around.

What do I do now?:

* Start a notebook or file and write a draft “Who am I / What do I want” essay
* Make a list of what you think your strengths are
* Start work on a resume if you do not already have one
* Think about who your recommendors will be
* Start a “what I want in a college” list
* Look at some college brochures and websites and take notes about what excites you and what repels you
* Talk with parent(s)/guardians about what they think about the college process; factor that into how you will handle the process yourself
* DON’T STRESS. It will not help you. Steady, thoughtful work will help you. Start now so that you do not stress later.