

July 15, 2012

Reach High Scholars Program

A Few Helpful Hints For Seniors

Each of you will be finishing a summer enrichment program in the near future. It is remarkable that there are seven of you active in the Reach High Scholars Program with five to ten weeks of these programs under your belts. That is wonderful “mud on the walls” of college admission offices.

There is a lot of work in the next few months to maximize the wonderful college opportunities that can be yours. You are familiar with the highly competitive colleges where several members of the RHS Class of '11 are attending as well as those where an equal number of the Class of '12 will start in a few weeks. Their rush to the finish line contains some useful lessons that are of value to you.

The following comments are intended to help you assemble more “mud” for admission offices to add to your excellent summer enrichment experiences. The website of the Reach High Scholars Program has considerable information of value: (www.reachhighscholars.org). The detailed data on the Class of '11: (<http://www.reachhighscholars.org/newsletters/The%20Serious%20Six%208.25.11.pdf>) is particularly worthwhile. The Class of '12 had equally good results with somewhat different data, resulting in part from early decision acceptances and recruited athletes.

The college handbooks of Phillips Exeter Academy and St. Paul's School have a wealth of good advice on the steps that you will be taking in the next few months. They are available on our website:

<http://www.reachhighscholars.org/Articles/Phillips%20Exeter%20College%20Counseling%20Guidebook%202011-2012.pdf>

<http://www.reachhighscholars.org/Articles/St.%20Pauls%20College%20Handbook.pdf>.

Standard Tests

SAT tests are taken by students from all over the world who apply to top U.S. colleges. They are a chance for you to show that you are as good as the next guy (or gal) even if the latter had the advantage of a more academically-challenging high school or intensive (and expensive) preparation for the tests. We recommend that you take the SAT I at least twice. Several RHS students have seen significant improvement by taking it a third time.

The SAT I results that you have to date should be a guideline in determining the colleges that are most appropriate to visit and apply to. The SAT ranges of accepted students at various colleges are available at: http://www.reachhighscholars.org/scores_and_acceptance.html. It is unwise to spend much time over-reaching or under-reaching.

A minimum of two **SAT II** tests are required at many of the colleges to which you will be applying. At other colleges, the submission of SAT II scores is optional. Admission offices look very favorably on

students who take more than the required minimum number of tests, particularly if the scores are in the 680-800 range.

American History was the only **Advanced Placement** test available to you in your junior year (and therefore includable in your college applications). Many college applicants with whom you are competing had the opportunity to take several AP courses in their first three years. A score of 4 or 5 on the American History test is the only way to significantly improve your case at top colleges on this benchmark.

College Visits

College visits by students (and parents) are valuable both to gain an impression of a school's personality and approach to education and to evidence to the admission office that the student has an interest in the school. To accomplish these objectives it is important to do a combination of an organized tour and an admissions office information session (rather than just driving through or walking around the campus or the town).

We recommend that students visit about 12 to 15 colleges that are within their realistic range ("stretch" schools to "safety" schools).

Admissions Office and Alumni Interviews

Interviews play varying roles in the admission process. Some top colleges make them optional with little weight placed on them and others require interviews and treat them as an important component of their decision. Most interviews are done at the admission office and must be scheduled in advance, typically during a visit to the campus. The on-campus interviews are more valuable than the alternative, sometimes offered, of being interviewed by an alumnus who lives or works in NH as they are not present when the acceptance decisions are being made.

For some tips on interviews:

http://www.reachhighscholars.org/college_interview_dressing.html

<http://www.reachhighscholars.org/Articles/Undergraduate%20Interviews.pdf>.

College Applications

Because admission to highly competitive colleges is, one might say, highly competitive, even the top students at the best secondary schools in the country apply to eight to ten colleges including some schools where there is greater likelihood of acceptance. **We recommend that students apply to about that many colleges, with a sensible spread among "reach," "likely" and "safety" schools.** (An exception to this general rule is students who are accepted in an Early Decision round and required to withdraw all of their other applications.) To apply to fewer colleges risks considerable disappointment when acceptances (and rejections) are sent in the spring.