

# COLLEGE BOUND

Helpful tips for getting into college and the smartest ways to pay for it.

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## The 3 Biggest Trends Unfolding on College Campuses

Last month we reviewed the top 3 higher education stories of 2009. This month let's take a peek at the 3 biggest trends we'll be watching for in 2010.

**1. The President's Plan.** In his State of the Union speech, President Obama proclaimed, "In the United States of America, no one should go broke because they chose to go to college." With that, the President made a pledge to help middle-class families pay for college. The administration has a 3-part plan, two of which are still in the proposal stage, the other is already in place.

The one area given most attention in the President's speech is an income-based repayment program that makes it easier for college graduates in low-paying jobs to pay off their college loans. The proposal would limit student loan payments to 10 percent of the borrower's discretionary income. Discretionary income in this case is the amount by which your adjusted gross income exceeds 150 percent of the poverty line. (The latest figures I could find—2008—put the poverty line for a single person at \$11,201.)

According to the *New York Times*, a borrower with \$40,000 in federal student loans and an adjusted gross income of \$30,000 a year would see their payments drop by \$684 a year, from \$172/month in the current repayment plan to \$115/month in the proposed plan.

The President threw in a kicker as well, announcing that "all of [a graduate's] debt will be forgiven after 20 years — and forgiven after 10 years if they choose a career in public service."

Part 2 of the President's plan is to end federal subsidies to private banks for student loans and divert billions of dollars to need-based aid such as the Pell grant. What will this mean to you and me? It's unlikely that anyone reading this newsletter will qualify for a Pell grant. However, if the administration can overcome the powerful banking lobby and does indeed halt subsidies to private lenders, theoretically that could mean a significant reduction in college loan interest rates. Many parents are excited about this possibility. We'll have to wait and see how it unfolds.

Meanwhile, the third leg of the President's plan — making the FAFSA form easier to complete — has already been enacted. The ultimate dream was to turn it into a simple 10-question document that anyone could fill out in a short time. Well, we're not quite there. But the form is easier to complete than a couple years ago. There are fewer questions . . . if you complete the form online, it will automatically skip the questions you don't have to fill out (based on answers to previous questions) . . . and you can set it up to automatically pull numbers from your tax forms on file with the IRS. I still wouldn't categorize FAFSA completion as simple or easy, but we're moving in the right direction.

**2. Decrease in the importance of the SAT.** A growing number of colleges and universities are no longer considering standardized test scores in their application process. Universities including Bates, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Holy Cross, Denison, Drew, George Mason, Hobart, Middlebury, NYU, Smith, Providence College and over 500 other schools either no longer use or have significantly downplayed SAT or

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# Spotlight On The University of Delaware



Location: Newark, DE

Undergraduates: 16,384

Male/Female: 45/55

Entrance Difficulty: Moderately difficult

Acceptance Rate:

56% of 22,491 applicants

Avg. GPA: 3.6

SAT Math Range: 560-660

SAT CR Range: 540-640

First-year students returning: 91.4%

Grad in 4 Years: 67.1%

Cost of Attendance: \$34,922

Avg. Percent of Need Met: 73%

Strongest Programs:

Engineering, Business Administration, Biological Sciences, Nursing, Education, International Relations

Fun Facts:

- Delaware has seven colleges and offers 125 majors to choose from.
- Delaware's 1,000-acre campus includes a mix of Colonial, Georgian and modern geometric buildings set among one of the nation's oldest Dutch elm groves.
- Its sports teams are known as Blue Hens.
- Delaware's first graduating class included three men who would go on to sign the Declaration of Independence: Thomas McKean, George Read, and James Smith.
- Delaware was the first American university to institute a study abroad program.
- The school boasts a 350-member marching band, and several faculty members hold impressive professional performance credits.
- Every spring different streets around campus host events known as "Fests," huge street parties featuring musical entertainment, food & drink, and even local celebrities.
- Famous alums: Joseph Biden, Joe Flacco, Dallas Green, George Thorogood

ACT scores in their enrollment decision-making.

So, what's replacing the SAT in terms of importance? At many schools, especially those using the common application, it's the essay.

With the growing number of applications flooding top schools, the essay is your chance to personalize your application and leap out of the pack. An essay helps paint a full picture of you; it shows the side of you that can't be measured in numbers or statistics, and demonstrates what special qualities you have to offer the university.

To already-stressed high school students, the essay can seem painful. However when we interview college freshmen and sophomores about what they learned from the college application process and, in retrospect, what they would have done differently, over 90% say they should have spent more time on their application and essays. They also acknowledge that the colleges into whose essays they put the most effort were the ones that sent acceptance letters.

### 3. State universities in financial trouble.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 36 states enacted or proposed education cuts last year. For example, state funding has decreased by 10% in Maryland and by 20% in Virginia. Arizona is cutting \$232 million from the university system in 2009- 2010. Tuition for in-state residents attending California state schools will increase 32% the next two years. The state of Michigan defaulted on its "Promise" Scholarships to in-state high school students choosing to attend a Michigan college. Pittsburgh plans to start taxing every college student studying at the city's seven colleges.

What does all this mean for you? For one thing, state colleges and universities are accepting more out-of-state students to make up for budget cuts. That means your student might have an advantage getting into Virginia, William & Mary, Minnesota, etc., just by being from New Jersey. On the other hand, it may be more difficult to get into schools such as Rutgers or TCNJ. With the increased competition, they may not be "safety" schools in the future.

## Playing the Waiting Game...

Given the state of the economy and the continuing increase in college costs, most observers were predicting a decrease in applications this year.

Not so. Applications are up across the board, and up dramatically at many of the top choice colleges. At Stanford, for example, 32,000 high school students applied (for 1,700 spots), a jump in applications of 5.6% over last year.

As a result, we're seeing delays this year in acceptance notices. Here are a few things to keep in mind while you wait.

It is important to make sure that your application has been delivered successfully. If you applied online, you should receive a confirmation e-mail within 1-2 business days. When the confirmation arrives take a moment to check your information to ensure that all is correct. If you spot a mistake, don't panic; simply call the admissions office with the correction. It is better to call with the correction rather than risk a delay. Also check in to make sure the colleges received your other vital information such as transcripts and references.

# Student of the Month



**Joseph Jean-Mary**

*Student: Joseph Jean-Mary*

*High School:*

*Columbia H.S. (Maplewood)*

*Class: 2010*

*GPA: 3.8*

*SAT: 1800*

*Favorite Activities:*

*tennis, cross-country, slam poetry,  
camp counselor*

*College: Accepted to and attending George  
Washington Univ.*

**Q: Tell me about your summer project – didn't you study at Harvard.**

**A:** Yes, I was lucky to be one of a handful of students selected to work in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at Harvard. I got to rebuild and remodel some old engineering experiments, and work with the Dean.

**Q: That's pretty impressive.**

**A:** The fun part is that all these Harvard students are now doing the experiments, based on our work. They've been made part of the Harvard curriculum.

**Q: What made you pick the schools you applied to?**

**A:** In the end, I only applied to 3 schools: George Washington, BU and the

University of New Hampshire. Location was important to me. For example, there's so much in Washington to dive into. I love it. Same with Boston. I was also looking to find professors who talk *with* you instead of *at* you.

**Q: What's the hardest part about applying to colleges?**

**A:** I actually had a really good time. I have lots of friends who are nervous, anxious, and overall pretty stressed. I had none of that. My family prepared me years ahead, so I took it on piece by piece. I never experienced that frantic phase.

**Q: Did anything about the process surprise you?**

**A:** I thought I would apply to more schools. I did not think I would get into my first choice college. In all my research it seemed that I came close to but I did not meet GW's requirements 100%. So being accepted—and getting in early—was a pleasant surprise. If I didn't get in, I had a backup plan; I had everything prepared and ready to go.

**Q: What are your goals?**

**A:** I like science and English, so I'm thinking of combining forensics/ anthropology and law. I've done some research and lawyers with forensics expertise are in high demand.

**Q: What are you looking forward to the most about college?**

**A:** It's a clean slate – a chance to make a new person out of yourself. For the first time in your life you're on your own. You're not who your parents or friends say you are. You get to find out who you really are. I'm looking forward to that.

## News You Can Use

### New Scholarship Finder Service Can Mean 'Found Money' for You

At a time when college costs continue to go through the roof, private scholarships represent 'found money' — and can be a huge help in paying the college bill.

By parent demand, we're now offering a new Scholarship Finder Service to help parents find the most relevant scholarships for their child from among the thousands of scholarships available today.

This year there are 500,000 private scholarships worth over \$1 billion dollars, but most families don't have the time or the inclination to do the research – or even know where to look. That explains why millions of dollars in private scholarship money goes unclaimed every year.

According to a 2007-8 Student Aid Study by the Dept. of Education, the average private scholarship amount was \$2,815 for students enrolled full time at four-year colleges. This figure is for private scholarships that are not college controlled.

Our new scholarship specialist has 23 years of experience, and has helped thousands of NJ families get private scholarships. There's no extra charge for this service for families who sign up for our comprehensive student services package.

### Savings Update

Here's where we've conducted workshops lately and how much money we're saving families from those towns.

Summit - \$9,879 per student per year  
Clark - \$18,741 per student per year

### Upcoming FREE Workshops

Feb. 23 – 7:30 pm Bernardsville Library  
March 4 – 7:30 pm Woodbridge Library  
March 18 – 7:30 pm Piscataway Library

**There are 2 ways to reserve a seat:**  
**Online: [www.myacfa.com](http://www.myacfa.com)**  
**Call: 1-908-857-4200**



## Ask the Professor

Q: I'm a divorced mother of two. How does this affect my chances of getting college financial aid?

A: The parent with whom the student lives for the greater part of the year should complete the financial aid forms. For example, if a child lives with his mother for 8 months out of the year and with his father for 4 months, the income and asset information should be based on the mother **only**. If the parent with whom the child resides is remarried, you **must** include the financial information of the stepparent as if he or she was the biological parent. This may not be fair, but those are the rules.

## Did You Know?



✓ *15 seconds: the average time a high school student spends on those glossy brochures colleges send before deciding whether to keep them or throw them away*

✓ *Unsure where to attend? You can ask for a decision extension beyond May 1. Colleges don't publicize this but many will grant it if requested*

## College Match Game



Sonia Sotomayor attended which of the following colleges for her undergraduate degree?

- A.) Brown University
- B.) Cornell University
- C.) Dartmouth College
- D.) Princeton University
- E.) None of the above

## Win a \$500 to \$5,000 Scholarship



Refer a friend or family member to join our College Dream Builder™ program. Your friend or family member gets an instant \$300 discount by knowing you. And when they enroll, your student receives \$500.00 per referral. Refer 2 families, earn \$1,000.00. Refer 10 families, earn \$5,000.00!

College Dream Builder™ provides students the personal attention and help they need to find the perfect-fit school and make college the wonderful experience it should be.

For details, call 908.857.4200 or email [info@CompleteCollegePlanningSolutions.com](mailto:info@CompleteCollegePlanningSolutions.com)



**THE JOURNEY OF LIFE OFFERS MANY CHOICES!**

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Answer: D.) The Supreme Court Justice graduated with an A.B. summa cum laude, from Princeton in 1976

