

COLLEGE BOUND

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

Volume 1, Issue 2

January 2010



Looking Back, Looking Forward

The college landscape changed dramatically in 2009. What's in store for 2010?

There's no doubt. We crammed quite a lot into 2009. Will 2010 be just as eventful? Only time will tell. As we wait in anticipation, let's review the top 3 higher education stories of 2009, and take a peek at the 3 biggest trends we'll be watching for in 2010.

The 3 Most Significant Events of 2009

1. The cost of college continues to increase. Despite the economy, despite rising unemployment, despite pundits proclaiming that college tuition can't continue to increase unabated, it still cost parents more to send their children to colleges in 2009 than in 2008.

In announcing their tuition increases, many private schools claimed to be in touch with the times by raising their fees by "only 5%." Often this was accompanied by a proud modifier such as "our lowest increase in the last 15 years." Given the fact that the cost of college has doubled in the last 10 years, these august universities

will have to forgive us parents if we're not dancing in the streets over their 5% price increase.

A 5% increase at a \$50,000 college translates to \$2,500. Times 5.3 years (the amount of time the avg. student spends in college these days) is \$13,250. And that assumes the cost of attendance will not increase next year (and the next and the next), which history tells us it will.

At many state schools, the increases were much more onerous—over 15% at some big name universities (we'll get to that in more detail below).

Two other trends emerged from the continuing escalation of college costs. First, there was a dramatic increase in financial aid applications. In 2009, the number of families applying for financial aid rose by 23%. Yikes. Second, the number of foreign students being admitted to American colleges and universities rose substantially in 2009. For

example, the number of students from China enrolling in U.S. colleges increased 60% last year. The reason why colleges are so keen to accept foreign students is because most don't ask for or receive financial aid – they pay sticker price.

2. Graduation rates continue to decrease. One would think that the more we parents pay, the better the outcome for our students. Not so. This inconvenient truth was brought home in a new book by former Princeton University president William Bowen, entitled *Crossing the Finish Line—Completing College at America's Public Universities*, and was confirmed by an American Enterprise Institute report. Bowen's book is a detailed study of 21 top state universities and what is euphemistically called an "under emphasis on degree completion."

Did you know that four-year colleges graduate an average of just 53% of entering freshmen within six years? (P.S. You don't get your tuition money back if

Continued ...

Spotlight On Rutgers University



Location: Piscataway, NJ

Undergraduates: 28,031

Male/Female: 45/55

Entrance Difficulty: Moderately difficult

Acceptance Rate:

56% of 29,547 applicants

Enrolled: 26%

Avg. GPA: 3.25

Avg. SAT Math: 630

Avg. SAT CR: 601

Grad in 4 Years: 47.6%

Cost of Attendance: \$26,338

Avg. Percent of Need Met: 51%

Strongest Programs:

Accounting, Pharmacy, Biological Sciences, Political Science, Engineering, Chemistry

Fun Facts:

- Rutgers offers almost 100 majors to choose from.
- Rutgers is the birthplace of college football. The first football game between two colleges was played there in 1869, when Rutgers defeated Princeton.
- Velveeta was created by mistake at Rutgers.
- Selman Waksman discovered streptomycin, which was first used to cure tuberculosis. Waksman won the Nobel Prize for this discovery in 1956.
- Traditions at Rutgers include the Dance Marathon, in which hundreds of dancers stay standing up for 32 hours straight for charity, and Rutgersfest, a year-end concert/carnival that attracts top bands. One day every April, students organize themselves to walk out of class at 1:23 and rally together.
- Famous alums: James Gandolfini, Calista Flockhart, Milton Friedman, Mario Batali, Governor James Florio, Ray Rice

your kid doesn't graduate.)

Not surprisingly, colleges such as Princeton, Notre Dame and Stanford are at the top of the totem pole, with graduation rates of 90% or greater. However, it is shocking to see how common 40% and 50% graduation rates are. The state average for New Jersey colleges and universities is 57.3%.

3. Some good news for middle class families (finally!)

What used to be called the Hope education credit is now the American opportunity credit. The American opportunity credit expands the Hope education credit. It both increases the tax credit and the number of families who qualify, as well as how it can be used. Here is a summary of the details:

1. The maximum amount of the credit has jumped from \$1,800 to \$2,500 per year, per student.
2. The AOC is available for four years

of college, not just the first two years like with the Hope Credit.

3. The adjusted gross income limit to qualify for the credit has been raised by 60% — to \$160,000 for couples filing jointly (\$80,000 for single taxpayers).

The credit actually applies to households earning up to \$180,000 (jointly) or \$90,000 (single filers). But the eligible credit starts to decrease on a sliding scale once you cross the \$160,000/\$80,000 income threshold.

The Obama administration made education funding a top priority of their campaign. In 2009, the most significant change for middle class families was the American opportunity credit. Major promises have been made for 2010 (including significantly lower student loans), and we'll examine those, as well as the 3 biggest trends for 2010, in the next issue of COLLEGE BOUND.

Important Dates This Month

Seniors – Your applications should be completed and submitted by now. Congratulations. But that doesn't mean you can coast through the rest of the year. Your senior year grades still matter. Try to avoid Senioritis.

Juniors – Now's the time to transition from "passive" college planning mode to "active." You should have a list of 15-20 possible colleges from which you are going to narrow down to 7-10 top picks. Important: Get a presentable e-mail address. More and more communication from colleges is done by e-mail these days (make sure to check yours regularly). You don't want to give college admissions officers the wrong idea with an e-mail address such as shakemybooty@anywhere.com. They won't think it's funny. They'll think it's juvenile and will question your judgment.

Sophomores & Younger – Sign up for summer programs. Unless you're a counselor-in-training, it's time to pursue a summertime activity that's a little more substantial and meaty than going to camp. Here are some ideas: volunteering, internship, advocacy, entrepreneurial endeavor. If you're willing to pay for a unique experience, you can find dozens of companies on the web.

Student of the Month

News You Can Use



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.

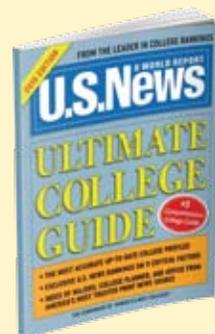
It's Not Your Imagination – Colleges Are More Selective Today

At highly selective state universities UCLA, Univ. of North Carolina and Univ. of Virginia, the number of entering freshmen with A or A+ high school grades has increased from 55% to 90% in the last 35 years.

At somewhat less selective schools Ohio State, Virginia Tech and Iowa State, the percentage of entering students with A or A+ grades has jumped at least as significantly – from just over 20% to 60%.

Source: *Crossing the Finish Line*, by William Bowen, Matthew Chingos & Michael McPherson

The New Guide Books are Here



It used to be that college guidebooks such as *U.S. News & World Report Ultimate College Guide*, and the *Fiske Guide to Colleges* were released annually. But to meet the insatiable appetite of parents

and students for “up to the minute” information, some of the more popular guides have taken to publishing an “updated” guide during the school year.

More popular than ever, there is heated debate as to the categories included in the rankings, as well as the methods used to measure them. Colleges pay rapt attention to their rankings. And for good measure. It's not uncommon for applications to increase 20% or more in years when their rankings increase.

Upcoming FREE Seminars

January 21 – 7 pm Clark Library
Feb. 2 – 7:30 pm Edison Library

There are 2 ways to reserve a seat:
Online: www.myacfa.com
Call: 1-908-857-4200

Most Regrettable Majors

CollegeHumor.com recently did a survey to uncover the “most regrettable” majors. The top three vote getters:

- communications (29%)
- psychology (27%)
- political science (25%)

Did You Know?



- ✓ 41% of college-bound seniors have A+, A or A- grade averages compared to 31% ten years ago.
- ✓ Over 65% of incoming freshmen applied to six or more colleges
- ✓ The number of high school seniors hiring educational consultants to assist in their college search and application process has climbed to more than 160,000 (26% of all high-achieving seniors) Source: Lipman Hearne study

College Match Game



Derek Jeter attended which of the following colleges?

- A.) Univ. of Miami
- B.) Rutgers
- C.) Seton Hall
- D.) Michigan
- E.) None of the above

Answer: D.) The Yankee Captain entered Michigan in 1992.

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



"JUST REMEMBER - IN 2010, YOU CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING... IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE!"

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