



Ashland High School College Connection Newsletter



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MAKING THE MOST OF OPPORTUNITY

According to Dave Weinbaum, conservative talk-show host, “A window of opportunity won’t open itself.” In addition to senior year demands from teachers and rigorous course requirements, the College Admissions Process is in full bloom. You have no doubt glimpsed it outside your window. It will not come to you. The opening of that window requires a shift of priorities and a readjustment of timelines to take care of business. It is time to sharpen the very skills and attitudes required of you to succeed in college. There is also an unspoken subtext of the changing emotional state which accompanies senior year realities. James Taylor sang, “It’s okay to feel afraid, but don’t let that stand in your way.” Entering the unknown world of college admissions with what feels like your life hanging in the balance can be nerve-wracking and inhibiting. The more you know about the process and the more time you give to learning about colleges, the less scary that world will become. If your dream is still college, it’s not too late to get started. Regular application deadlines for many selective schools begin on January 1, 2018. Make use of the websites, scholarship opportunities, college news, helpful suggestions and tips contained in these pages. Your senior year will pass. Will you have enjoyed it by taking control of it?

EFFECTS OF CONGRESSIONAL TAX REFORM BILLS ON HIGHER ED

The current Senate and House tax reform proposals include an excise tax on large private college endowments that has been strongly opposed by higher ed groups. Private college leaders say the tax would effectively punish colleges that have built up endowments that support student aid, research and scholarships. And while the tax would be applied only to the wealthiest colleges, many fear a precedent in which the assets of colleges — traditionally exempt from tax — are taxed. The Senate plan would also eliminate the deduction on state and local taxes, viewed as essential by public higher education. But the

Senate proposal appears to largely leave untouched many education tax credits and tax exemptions eliminated in the House GOP tax bill. The House plan would mean that tuition waived for graduate students is taxed as income. The Senate bill would also treat any licensing of a college or university logo as an unrelated business tax. Many colleges and universities earn significant revenue through licensing of their logos. In addition, the proposed House 2018 budget would roll back to \$20,000 the currently allowed family income of \$25,000 to qualify for a maximum Pell Grant in 2018-19.

DON'T FORGET TO:

+++ Address Past Mistakes. If you’ve have had some trouble in the past (discipline problems, low grades, etc.), it’s better to address these issues head on rather than ignore them, and in the process, explain what you learned from your mistake(s) and how you’ve moved on. Additionally, proof of exemplary behavior since the problem and positive recommendations from teachers, counselors, and mentors will go a long way toward lessening the significance of that mistake.

+++ Check Your Own Social Media. One sometimes overlooked issue you should keep in mind is that in this day and age, many admissions personnel turn to the Internet to check up on applicants—for example: Searching your name or checking your profiles on social networking sites. A good rule to follow: avoid posting any text, images, or video online that you wouldn’t want your parents to read or see.

GOOD APPLICATION ADVICE

<http://www.theadmissiongame.com>)

Answer the “why” question thoughtfully. Colleges that ask you to write about “why you want to attend” are really trying to discern the synergy that exists between your goals, needs and learning style and their respective learning environments. Don’t tell them things they already know about themselves and, for your sake, save the platitudes! (They don’t reflect well on you!) Admission officers don’t want to hear about their highly ranked programs, great faculty, beautiful facilities or small classes. Instead, reveal to them how, where and why you have found meaningful connections. Prove to the reader that you “get it”—that you understand how the learning environment in question makes the most sense for you.

Schools Listed by Student on FAFSA

<https://collegeselectionstrategy.com>)

Each student can send FAFSA results to 10 schools. In the past, all the schools could see the other schools the student listed on their FAFSA. The practice has ended so there is not longer a need to arrange schools in a certain order with one exception. The school list is shared with the student’s state agency. Therefore, if the student is applying for state financial aid they should list state schools first. After filing FAFSA the student can go into the FAFSA, delete schools from the list, and add other schools so they also receive student FAFSA information. It is recommended you wait a few days after your results are available so there is time for the first 10 schools to receive the information.

Staying in Touch with Your Colleges

bestcollegefit.com)

Applicants who reach out to admissions personnel simply to impress with their “interest” run the risk of coming across as insecure. However, a dialogue that involves thoughtful, sincere questions that cannot be answered anywhere in the schools’ literature or websites can help establish meaningful connections. If no questions come to mind, then there is nothing to communicate. Rather than succumbing to the urge to reach out just for the sake of reaching out, try to be mindful of opportunities to respond to communications that come directly from the colleges.

TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME FAFSA APPLICANTS

If you have not yet started your online FAFSA application due to pre-fafsa anxiety, there is no longer a reason to put it off. The pop-ups and clarifications provided for first-time users seem to anticipate every possibility for confusion. Keep in mind that the FAFSA can be completed in pieces. Simply continue until the frustration level hits your red zone, then click “save and exit” and return when ready for more. Here are a few tips:

*1) The FAFSA is not a tax form. The IRS is not part of the FAFSA process. However it does allow use of information from your 2016 tax return form to be automatically transferred to the FAFSA.

*2) Generally speaking, the best opportunities for financial aid are most available for students who submit the online FAFSA as early as possible.

*3) Be sure to print a copy of the Confirmation Page following online submission of the FAFSA. It will contain the Confirmation Number, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which colleges will use in awarding financial aid packages, and the Data Release Number (DRN) which can be given to colleges if, for some reason, they need immediate access to your information.

*4) After submitting an online FAFSA, you’ll get an e-mail when that process is complete. Then you can access the Student Aid Report (SAR) which basically repeats the FAFSA data provided. It is important to check the SAR for any errors.

Waiting for 2018-2019 Pell Grant Maximum Amount

<https://www.nasfaa.org>)

Due to unfinished congressional budget work, federal Pell Grant schedules for 2018-19 have not been released. The mandatory increase equal to the Consumer Price Index expires this year. If Congress level-funds the program, the 2018-19 Pell Schedules would be the same as 2017-18 Pell Schedules: \$5,920. This year the Senate’s version of the 2018 funding bill includes a proposed \$100 CPI increase. The House version does not include this increase. Ultimately the two bills will have to be reconciled. Pell Schedules are not expected until December, but given the unpredictability of Congress and the possibility of budget battles into the new calendar year, a December release is not guaranteed. All other things failing, the master calendar requires that Pell Schedules be published no later than February 1.

COLLEGE NEWS

*** Simpson College (IA) has announced that it will cover tuition for all students from families with annual incomes that don't exceed \$60,000. Many wealthy private institutions have such policies, but they are less common for institutions that have small endowments.

*** The president of Florida State University has banned fraternities and sororities following the death of a fraternity pledge after attending a party. He announced, "For this suspension to end, there will need to be a new normal for Greek Life at the university. There must be a new culture, and our students must be full participants in creating it."

*** Lehigh University (PA) has announced that it would take "no action" about rescinding the honorary degree awarded in 1988 to Donald Trump, rejecting calls from students and alumni. So did the board of Wagner College (NY), which awarded Trump an honorary degree in 2004.

*** Knox College (IL) has canceled a planned production of Bertolt Brecht's "The Good Person of Szechwan", based on student protests that it is racially insensitive, due to its portrayal of Asians and Asian women, with characters of stereotypical-sounding names and the main character as a prostitute.

*** As the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies met in mid-November for its annual convention in Chicago, organizers estimated that about 50 Russian scholars who were unable to get visas because the U.S. embassy in Moscow had reduced nonimmigrant visa processing in response to reduced the numbers of U.S. diplomatic personnel in the country.

*** A Saudi prince who was among a group of royals and current and former government officials arrested in November is a major donor to Western universities, having made gifts of \$20 million each to fund Islamic studies at Harvard and Georgetown Universities.

*** According to George Will, Clemson University's (SC) faculty diversity training suggested that "expecting punctuality might be insensitive because in some cultures time is considered 'fluid'".

SENIOR CHECKLIST FOR DECEMBER

- _____ Apply for college funding through private scholarship sources
- _____ Use your holiday break to put the finishing touches on applications to selective colleges. Don't forget, everyone else is on vacation, so you should have most of the important pieces already completed.
- _____ Make sure your essays and resume are completed before you head back to school.
- _____ Be sure to send official SAT or ACT scores to those colleges not originally listed when you registered for test.
- _____ Students have been able to file a 2018-19 FAFSA at <https://fafsa.ed.gov> since Oct. 1, 2017. The earlier submission date is a permanent change, enabling students to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as Oct. 1 every year. Another change is: You are required to report income information from the earlier tax year of 2016. No need to wait for 2017 income information. Click on the "FSA ID" logo at top of FAFSA Webpage before starting a new FAFSA. Consider using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) to automatically use 2016 tax return info to fill-in the FAFSA. Go to: StudentAid.gov/irsdrt.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL AID CHANGES

++ For 2018-2019, the Income Protection Allowance in calculating the FAFSA Expected Family Contribution (EFC) for the income of a dependent student has been increased to \$6,570. This is the amount of income a dependent student could earn in the 2016 calendar year before about 50% of further income raises the EFC. The EFC formula also calculates 20% of all student savings.

++ Parents of a dependent student are also permitted an Income Protection Allowance based on the family size and the number of dependents in college. For example, the asset protection allowance for a 2-parent household in which the older parent is 50 increased to \$22,300, from \$21,200.

++ For worksheets and tables for calculating your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), download the 2018-19 formula used by FAFSA to determine your EFC, go to: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/2017-18-efc-formula.pdf>

Quote of the Month: "Don't mistake encouragement to apply with getting admitted. Those emails and postcards flooding your mailbox inviting you to apply (even ones that waive the application fee) may be nothing more than mass mailings designed to increase a school's application numbers." (*Admissionscheckup.com*)

COLLEGE NEWS

*** Anthony Scaramucci, who had a notoriously short tenure as President Trump's communications director, is also a Tufts University (MA) graduate. Some students, faculty members and alumni at Tufts are now circulating a petition calling for his removal from the advisory board of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts.

*** The Massachusetts Institute of Technology is now offering graduating students tamper-free digital degree diplomas when they graduate. They can download a digital version of their diploma to their smartphones in addition to receiving a paper diploma. It can be shared on social media and verified by employers to ensure its authenticity.

*** Liberty University which struggled to stay afloat for years until its online program started to take off in the mid-2000s has vaulted to new heights, and is now the largest private, nonprofit university in the nation and the largest Christian university in the world.

*** According to a new report from the National Foundation for American Policy, international students make up 81% of full-time graduate students in electrical and petroleum engineering programs at U.S. universities, and 79% in computer science programs.

*** Senator Lamar Alexander, Tennessee Republican who chairs the Senate education committee and a longtime opponent of extending the Perkins Loan program has effectively blocked a Perkins extension bill from Senator Tammy Baldwin, a Wisconsin Democrat.

*** New research from the University of Chicago, which followed 187,335 public school students, suggests that the 9th grade GPA may be much more significant than many previously thought.

*** Ohio State University and Apple have announced a collaboration that will start a digital learning effort at the university that represents the company's most ambitious program in higher education. <https://news.osu.edu/news/2017/10/04/digital-flagship>

MORE ABOUT THE CSS PROFILE FINANCIAL AID FORM

1) This online website contains a list of all colleges which require the CSS Profile Application: <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>. You can use your student SAT login user name and password. For regular admission applicants, each college and university specifies a priority filing date, usually February 1 or 15. You can register during December for the Profile Application if you have not done so. You will get a CSS ID number which will enable you to access your application. You can work on the application and save it. Your application is personalized with specific questions asking for information required by some colleges. The CSS Profile automatically informs the student if she/he qualifies for a fee waiver or not, based on the information entered.

2) CSS/PROFILE Noncustodial Parent (NCP) Requirement

If the student indicates on the Registration PROFILE that her/his biological parents are divorced and not living in the same house, some of the CSS schools will require that the NCP complete the NCP PROFILE before they can determine the student's financial aid eligibility. The schools requiring the NCP financial information are indicated with the list of schools requiring the PROFILE. The NCP will receive an email including the child's CSS ID and an NCP password, and be directed to: <https://ncprofile.collegeboard.com>.

The first time the NCP signs in, enter the child's CSS ID and the NCP password assigned in the initial email. The NCP can then change the assigned password in order to prevent the child and the custodial parent from accessing NCP information. The NCP must also submit a \$25 processing fee. IF THE STUDENT HAS NO CONTACT WITH THE NCP, SHE/HE IS ADVISED TO CONTACT THE COLLEGE(S) THAT REQUIRE IT TO EXPLAIN THE CIRCUMSTANCES

Appealing Early (ED) College Admission Decisions

(National Association of College Admission Counselors

Listserves) Direct advice from College Admissions Counselors to high school counselors:

*** "You can certainly call on behalf of the student to find out the reason for the decision. Usually there is a process for students to submit an appeal which varies from school to school."

*** "I would suggest not using the word "appeal" but instead calling the admission office to ask if you can get some insight into the decision. When I worked in admission (19 years) we would be happy to talk to folks about this, especially with ED situations.

*** "Submit an appeal only if there is compelling NEW information about the student. For example, a parent/student who did not disclose a significant dyslexic diagnosis for a 3.5 GPA student

*** "The actual request for insight has to come from the student, not the parent."

"If deferred to the 'spring pool', a useful question might be what the student can do at this point to become a better candidate for admission to the institution in question."

IMPORTANT WEBSITES

NCAA Eligibility Center: <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3> - To make official visits to Division I and II schools or sign a National Letter of Intent, you need to register and create a Certification Account. Being certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center allows you to compete at an NCAA Division I or II school. You can also create a Profile Page if you plan to compete at a Division III school or are not yet sure where you want to compete. You'll get an NCAA ID and will be sent important reminders as you complete high school. The website also provides a checklist to make sure you have all required information ready to enter, and you can search their Frequently Asked Questions to learn more about becoming an NCAA student-athlete.

https://princetonreview.blog/2017/11/03/can-you-self-report-sat-and-act-scores - Practices are changing rapidly when it comes to self-reporting test scores. Here is a growing list of schools accepting self-reported scores from either the student or counselor. Schools will be added as they are identified. The Princeton Review strongly advises that students double-check a school's policy on self-reporting scores, and that counselors get in contact with admissions offices to confirm they will accept scores from

counselors. **http://www.cyberdegrees.org/listings/top-schools** - Lists top 20 schools. The growing frequency of security breaches has created strong demand for cybersecurity specialists—particularly with the federal government in the wake of ongoing computer espionage. Demand is also strong in the private sector. The U.S. Department of Labor reports that employment for information security analysts is expected to grow by 28%. Cybersecurity professionals earned salaries that ranged from \$53,760 to \$147,900 in 2016. Also see: **https://www.sans.org/cybertalent/immersion-academy/20coolestcareers**

http://www.ucan-network.org - Still looking for private, non-public colleges or universities? This website is especially for seniors still trying to decide about colleges to apply to. It ISN'T too late. The fastest way to find the school you are looking for is to choose a state (under "Profile Locator" on lower left) and click "find." U-CAN is absolutely free.

LOOKING FOR SCHOLARSHIPS? **https://www.cappex.com/scholarships** - Here you can uncover millions of dollars in scholarships from colleges, universities, private companies, foundations — and more. Simply fill out a free profile to discover which ones match you best. It has a very comprehensive database of merit scholarships that recognize individual academic, artistic and athletic achievements. Merit scholarships do not need to be paid back **http://www.mycollegescholarship.org** – Get the facts about college scholarships as well as the best advice about how to succeed in winning scholarships. Explains how college funding works, the types of college scholarships available, how to find a scholarship, and how to apply for one. Describes the many types of scholarships which are available.

COLLEGE NEWS

*** Washington University in St. Louis has announced that its law school will accept the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) for admissions, not just the traditionally required Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

***In one of the worst academic scandals in college sports history, the University of North Carolina sponsored fake classes for nearly two decades, giving students, many of them athletes, credit for courses never taught by instructors. But the university will escape all punishment by the NCAA after spending roughly \$18 million on legal and other fees.

National Portfolio Days

National Portfolio Days help further the artistic development of young artists. Students will be able to have their portfolios reviewed and evaluated by experienced representatives from 50 leading colleges of art and design. It is an opportunity for students to learn more about these colleges, their admissions criteria and to obtain professional advice on how to expand and edit their portfolios. For December and January dates when Phoenix, Albuquerque, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and San Diego are visited, go to: **http://www.portfolioday.net**. Click on "Undergraduate 2017-18".

University of California Reminder

For all **University of California** campuses, official SAT, ACT and SAT Subject Tests scores need to **ONLY** be sent to **ONE** campus - UC will share scores with all campuses to which a student applies. UC does not require letters of recommendation. Official transcripts should not be submitted unless a UC campus directly contacts a student to request it.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS AND CONTESTS

NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM ESSAY CONTEST - Write a 1000 essay on “What the United States’ role as the ‘Arsenal of Democracy’ should be today.” 1st place: \$1,000; 2nd place: \$750; 3rd place: \$500. **Submissions must be emailed by December 29, 2017.** Museum will accept the first 500 entries only. The website will indicate when 500 essays have been submitted. Click on “School Programs” under “Teachers & Students”, then “Essay Contest”. <http://www.nationalww2museum.org>.

IMAGINE AMERICA FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP These \$1,000scholarships can be used at more than 550 career colleges in the United States. Open to 2017 high school graduates. Must demonstrate financial need, have a 2.5+GPA and have participated in voluntary community service during your senior year. Talk to your counselor about free enrollment of your high school in *Imagine America* before scholarship applications can be submitted. All info at: <https://www.imagine-america.org>. **App deadline: 12/31/17.**

TEENDRIVE365 VIDEO CONTEST - Create a 30-60 second video for your fellow teen drivers that highlights the importance of safe teen driving and you could win \$15,000, or one of 14 other prizes! <http://teendrive365inschool.com/teens/video-challenge> - **Contest ends February 28, 2018.**

JACKIE ROBINSON FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS - 40-60 “JRF Scholars” are chosen to receive grants of up to \$30,000 over four-years to attend an accredited college or university of their choice. Open to minority high school seniors showing leadership potential and demonstrating financial need. **Online Application must be received by February 1, 2018.** <http://www.jackierobinson.org/apply>

NATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY ESSAY CONTEST - 19 non-renewable scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 available for NEHS member graduating seniors. The book *On Canaan’s Side* by Sebastian Barry will be the basis for the required essay, responding to one of five prompts. The submission link will be open **December 8, 2017 through January 16, 2018, Noon CST.** http://nehs.us/nehs/student_awards/

13th Annual DNA DAY ESSAY CONTEST - Open to high school students, gr. 9-12. Must submit online 750 word essay on “Should consumers have direct access to predictive genetic testing?” Prizes of \$1000, \$600, \$400 and 10 @ \$100 to be awarded. <http://www.ashg.org/education/dnaday.shtml> The submission website will open on January 4, 2018 with essays due by **March 9, 2018.**

11th ANNUAL CREATE-A-GREETING-CARD
scholarships/index.shtm
!

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SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST - Submit photo, artwork or computer graphic for the front of a greeting card to earn the top \$10,000 prize. **Entry Deadline: March 1, 2018.** Details at: <http://www.gallerycollection.com/greeting-cards-scholarship.htm>

C-SPAN NATIONAL VIDEO DOCUMENTARY CONTEST - Students in grades 6-12 are asked to create a short (5-7 minute) video documentary on the theme: “Choose a provision of the U.S. Constitution and create a video illustrating why it’s important to you.” Cash prizes totaling \$100,000, will be awarded to 150 student documentaries. **Submission Deadline: Tuesday, January 18, 2018.** <http://www.studentcam.org>

VEGETARIAN RESOURCE GROUP SCHOLARSHIPS - Awards one \$10,000 & two \$5,000 college scholarships to 2018 graduating U.S. high school students who have promoted vegetarianism in their schools and/or communities. **Postmark deadline is February 20, 2018.** You must also provide any documentation related to your promotion of vegetarianism in high school and/or community including photographs, newspaper stories, etc. Details available at: <http://www.vrg.org/student/scholar.htm>

BBB STUDENTS OF INTEGRITY SCHOLARSHIP - Open to HS seniors in Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington. Must create a 90-second video explaining how Better Business Bureau helps people become smart consumers. **Online Submission Deadline: February 13, 2018.** At: <https://www.bbb.org/northwest> – Click on “Apply for the 2018 Students of Integrity Scholarship” under “News”.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS AND CONTESTS

FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - More than 1800 scholarships, ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 and totaling \$2.2 million are available to FFA members and non-members, using only one common application. Click on “2018 Scholarship Catalogue” on the right to peruse the many opportunities. **Application Deadline: February 1, 2018.** Required signature page must be postmarked by **February 8, 2018.** <https://www.ffa.org/scholarships>

UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS - Non-renewable awards range from \$500 - \$4,000 for students of union families. Requires a 500 max word essay on “Career goals, aspirations, community service and how the labor movement has personally affected your life.” **Application deadline: January 31, 2018.** <http://www.unionplus.org/college-education-financing/scholarships>

NATIONAL CO-OP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
For graduating high school seniors planning to apply to at least one of the 10 partner “co-op” universities (Click on “Scholarship Partners” for list and deadlines). Co-operative education integrates classroom studies with productive work experiences. Offers renewable \$6,000 scholarships available at each school. **Regular Application Deadlines vary for each school, from Jan. 15 to March 1, 2018.** <http://www.co-op.edu>.

MENSA EDUCATION & RESEARCH FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS - Applicants need not be Mensa members. Various non-renewable scholarships ranging from \$600 to \$2500 and totaling \$130,000 are awarded, based solely on a 550-word essay explaining career, academic and/or vocational goals. Must enter your zip code to access application and identify Local Group scholarship opportunities. **Online Submission Deadline: January 15, 2018.** <http://www.mensafoundation.org>.

Best Videogame Design Programs

The Princeton Review and PC Gamer magazine recently surveyed administrators at 150 institutions that offered game design coursework and/or degrees to determine the top 50 undergraduate game design programs. Criteria included the quality of the faculty, curriculum, and facilities. Here are the top 10 schools: 1) University of Utah (Salt Lake City); 2) University of Southern California (Los Angeles); 3) Rochester Institute of Technology (Rochester, New York); 4) DigiPen Institute of Technology (Redmond, Washington); 5) Becker College (Worcester, Massachusetts); 6) The Art Institute of Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada); 7) Hampshire College (Amherst, Massachusetts); 8) Michigan State University (East Lansing); 9) Drexel University (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); 10) New York University (New York).

CAN EARLY DECISION STUDENTS SEEK ONE YEAR DEFERRAL?

According to many statements by private college admission counselors on the NACAC ListServe, even students who are accepted Early Decision are being allowed to defer their acceptance for one year if they are not attending college, but plan on spending time traveling, etc. Whether you are an early decision student or not, if you are a top student considering taking a year off after high school graduation, you are highly advised to gain admission to a quality school, then request a year deferment. It is advisable to check with specific schools. Most large public universities require a student who is deferring for a year to reapply for the following year, although re-admission is generally guaranteed.

DOES BEING A “LEGACY” MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS?

(“Chronicle of Higher Education”)

While some colleges and universities try to play down the impact of legacy preferences, research suggests that their weight is significant, on the order of adding 160 SAT points to a candidate’s record (on a scale of 400-1600). William Bowen, of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and colleagues have found that, within a given SAT-score range, being a legacy increased one’s chances of admission to a selective institution by 19.7%. The children of alumni generally make up 10-25% of the student body at selective institutions. By contrast, at the California Institute of Technology, which does not use legacy preferences, only 1.5% of students are children of alumni. The irony, of course, is that while legacies are uniquely American, they are also deeply un-American. Thomas Jefferson famously sought to promote in America a “natural aristocracy” based on “virtue and talent,” rather than an “artificial aristocracy” based on wealth.

The Slow, Steady Erosion of SAT Subject Tests

(“Inside Higher Ed”, by Scott Jaschik, 10/23/17)

A generation ago, the testing norm for elite colleges was to require applicants to have taken three of the SAT subject tests. The tests, previously called the SAT II or the achievement tests, are subject specific and test knowledge of mathematics, sciences, literature, history and languages. The few colleges that still require the tests tend to be math and science oriented. The numbers of high school students taking the subject tests has fallen dramatically. About 1.8 million high school students took the SAT in 2017, but only 219,000 took a subject test. So how critical are Subject Test scores for acceptance to highly competitive schools? Those admissions leaders who continue to rely on the tests say they still provide valuable information. The **Caltech** executive director of admissions said that the results provide “a more granular perspective” on applicants’ math and science abilities, which are “critical,” given Caltech’s emphasis and rigor. **Georgetown University** senior associate director of undergraduate admissions has said that the institution shifted from required to recommended out of concern for students who may have difficulty getting access to or completing the subject tests. He said that the scores still have real value, however, in part based on the idea that “having more information at hand is almost always better.” He said that committees find scores helpful in weighing applications. This may be especially important, he said, for students who study languages but don’t participate in Advanced Placement programs, or for homeschooled students. More broadly, subject-test scores are helpful in light of grade inflation, and the growing number of high schools that don’t report on class rank or that have “otherwise obscured distinctions and differences in student academic performance.” Admissions leaders at colleges that have shifted away from requiring the tests are not critical of the tests, but several said they worry about the fees scaring off low-income students, even though the College Board has a system that allows them to seek fee waivers. The basic fees are \$26 to register for a test date at which someone can take one, two or three exams; \$21 for each test; and \$26 for language tests. The dean of admissions at **Dartmouth College** (NH) has said that a shift there from required to recommended was intended to encourage more applicants from high schools with many low-income students who may not learn about or prepare for subject tests.

THE COLLEGE CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

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