

College Planning
for
High School
Students

A Quick Guide

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M Y C H A L W Y N N



COLLEGE PLANNING FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A QUICK GUIDE

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I would like to thank those parents, educators, counselors, and mentors who have embraced the strategies outlined in the book, *A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams*, upon which this book is based, and who are working diligently to help more students pursue their college-bound dreams.

Dedication

To my wife, for her patience, understanding, and support; our sons, Mychal-David and Jalani; the thousands of students and parents I meet each year who have college-bound hopes and aspirations; and to those who sacrifice each day on behalf of students and their dreams.

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About the Author

Mychal Wynn was an unlikely college-bound student, having been expelled from Chicago's De La Salle Catholic High School and barely earning enough credits to graduate from Chicago's Du Sable High School. Even more miraculous was his being accepted into Northeastern University, at that time, the largest private university in the United States and the only college to which he applied. Without a mentor to advise him or the benefit of the type of college planning outlined in this book, he had not taken the required courses to be admitted directly from high school into college. He received a *conditional acceptance*—conditional upon his taking and passing classes in Physics and Calculus (courses which were not offered at his high school). As a result of his not having the opportunity to take the necessary classes in high school, his college dreams were deferred as he was required to enroll in Chicago's Kennedy-King Junior College for one semester in the fall of 1974. While working the night shift at the U.S. Post Office from 10:30 p.m. until 2:30

a.m., he took classes in Physics and Calculus during the day, receiving an ‘A’ in Physics and a ‘B’ in Calculus.

In January 1975, he boarded his first airplane as he flew from Chicago, Illinois to Boston, Massachusetts, where he entered into the Northeastern University College of Engineering. In June 1979, Mychal Wynn became his family’s first college graduate, receiving his Bachelor of Science degree. This once unlikely college-bound student was a highly recruited college graduate and has worked for such multinational companies as IBM and the Transamerica Corporation. In 1985, he and his wife, Nina, founded Rising Sun Publishing, where his wife serves as the Publisher and Chief Executive Officer and he serves as the principal trainer and Chief Financial Officer.

Mr. Wynn, his wife, Nina, and their two sons, Mychal-David (currently attending Amherst College), and Jalani (currently attending middle school), reside in Georgia.

Introduction

Many students find themselves scrambling as high school juniors or seniors to take the SAT or ACT, identify the colleges that they are interested in applying to or the colleges that they believe that they can get into, while parents scramble to find the money to pay for the high cost of college tuition, room, and board. To avoid finding yourself in such a situation, this book, together with the book, *College Planning for Middle School Students*, is designed to provide you with a commonsense, comprehensive college-bound plan.

This book provides a quick guide to the information contained in the book, *A High School Plan for Students with College-Bound Dreams [Wynn, 2005]*. Due to space limitations, strategies will generally contain brief descriptions and, subsequently, will require more extensive reading or research on the part of the reader. Please refer to the *book* and *workbook* for more extensive reading, activities, worksheets, and college-planning resources.

American higher education offers more colleges than any other system in the world, with more variety in disciplines and professional training, but a student who doesn't like the school she chose for her first year can, assuming she keeps her grades up, easily transfer. High school students who bite their tongues and actually listen to what college counselors say on this matter will learn that being crowned by Ivy has little, if any, bearing on whether they will fulfill their dreams of love, power and wealth. Character traits—such as persistence, optimism and honesty—established long before anyone takes the SAT or the ACT—are far more crucial.

— [Newsweek: How to Get into College, 2001 Edition]

O verview

The three primary areas of focus for a college-bound student are:

1. Meeting your high school graduation requirements.
2. Becoming a strong candidate for admissions to your first-choice colleges and being prepared to succeed academically once you get there.
3. Meeting your EFC (Expected Family Contribution) for college tuition, room, and board.

There will be two additional areas of focus for the recruited college-bound athlete:

4. Registering with the NCAA Clearinghouse and meeting the NCAA qualifications for a student-athlete.
5. Developing an athletic profile/portfolio specific to your sport.

I: develop a four-fold strategy

There are four broad categories that will ultimately determine how successful you are in developing your college-bound plan.

Academics

- Meeting high school graduation requirements
- Meeting college admission standards
- Course work
- Grades
- Class rank
- High School Profile
- SAT I, SAT II, ACT, and AP exam scores
- Awards, honors, noteworthy academic achievements and recognition

Extracurricular Activities

- Sports
- Clubs
- Student organizations
- Community service
- Volunteer hours
- Work experience

Personal Qualities

- Essay
- Interview
- Recommendations
- Contribution to your school community
- Unique talent (e.g., artistic, music, athletic, dance, mathematic, or public speaking)
- Personal achievements (e.g., overcoming adversity, resiliency, integrity, worthy ideals, or innovation)

Intangible and Other Influencing Factors

- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Socioeconomic background
- Geographical area
- Involvement in a club or activity for which the college has a unique need, e.g., genius-level I.Q., classical pianist, point guard, martial arts instructor, swimmer, or 400-meter sprinter

2: identify your dreams

What are your dreams and aspirations—the places you want to go, things you want to experience, changes you want to make in your home, community, or in the world itself? Where do you find your joy? What type of people do you prefer being around? What type of job would you do even if you did not get paid to do it? Or, better yet, what is your

purpose? Are you passionate about music, art, science, math, sports, or social issues? Do you prefer working with people or in isolation? Do you have a passion to coach on the field or run front-office operations? Do you have a passion to teach elementary school children or inspire college students? Would you prefer to write a book, give a lecture, or both? Answering such questions as you enter high school will help you to identify the classes that will expand your knowledge, nurture your passions, and best prepare you for the college experience you are interested in pursuing.

3: identify your dream schools

1. Make a list of things you most enjoy doing, e.g., traveling, shopping, sports, surfing, roller skating, music, dressing up, dressing down, cooking, eating, telling jokes, talking on the phone, socializing, dancing, solving puzzles, writing poetry, drawing cartoons, playing computer games, lifting weights, studying

martial arts, running marathons, sailing, flying an airplane, camping, fishing, golfing, competing, creating, etc.

2. Make a list of the type of people and places you enjoy, e.g., large crowds, small groups, debating/discussing political and social issues, attending concerts or sporting events, bodybuilding, theatrical performances, building businesses, working on an assembly-line, pursuing a spiritual journey, attending social functions, exploring and discovering, creating and developing, living in a penthouse, or living on a farm.
3. Make a list of the types of careers that will allow you to do those things on your first list and work with the type of people or live in the places on your second list.

Rather than choosing Harvard, Yale, or Princeton because they are part of the Ivy League—MIT, Stanford, Cal Tech, or Duke because they are on everyone’s top-ten list—Spelman, Fisk, Howard, or FAMU because they are some of the most renowned HBCUs—choose a college that

will allow you to pursue your passions, surround you with the type of people you enjoy, and nurture your intellectual development, creative capacity, and social consciousness. In essence, carefully choose a place to live, grow, and enjoy life for the four years following high school.

4: know what makes you special

The question for you to ask yourself as you begin the process of developing your high school plan is, “Four years from now, why would a college want to admit me into its freshman class? What will be special about me and what will I be able to contribute to its school community?”

Asking that question as you enter high school will help you to better understand how to take advantage of the many programs and opportunities available at your high school and accessible to aspiring college students over the course of your four-year high school experience. Whether you are passionate about athletics, politics, dance, music,

science, mathematics, journalism, poetry, art, philosophy, social issues, technology, or speech and debate, your high school years will have a significant impact on the scope and depth of the college application packages that you prepare as a high school junior and senior. Entering high school with the passionate desire to pursue something, become something, discover something, change something, or fulfill some purpose will guide your intellectual, spiritual, moral, physical, and creative development in ways, that, four years from now, will enable you to sit in a college interview and say, “I have had a passion to do ... since I entered high school; this is what I have done and why I want to continue my studies at your college.”

The uniqueness of your school performance, extracurricular activities, standardized test scores, hobbies, interests, leadership abilities, personal achievements, race, gender, culture, family background, and life experiences not only define who you are, but make a statement as to why you are different.

5: build relationships

Developing and executing an effective high school plan will require that you build relationships with several groups of people. Colleges will evaluate your application in part based on recommendations from your teachers and counselor; your meaningful involvement in clubs, organizations, school and community service projects; and your involvement in sports, band, cheerleading, or other special-interest activities. The relationships you develop with tutors and study groups will also greatly contribute to your academic success throughout high school. Some of the people whom would make excellent sources of recommendations are:

- Teachers
- Faculty Advisors
- Clergy
- Law Enforcement
- Coaches
- Administrators
- Local Politicians
- An Alumnus

6: get organized

Preparing for the work ahead requires that you establish a place to store all of your high school information as well as all of the college and financial-aid information you gather over the next four years.

- Set up a 3-inch binder and label it “College Plan.”
- Set up four file folders or boxes and label them:
 - Academics
 - Programs & Camps
 - Scholarships
 - Awards, Competitions, & Internships
- Set up two boxes and label them:
 - College Information
 - Financial-Aid Information

7: identify your team

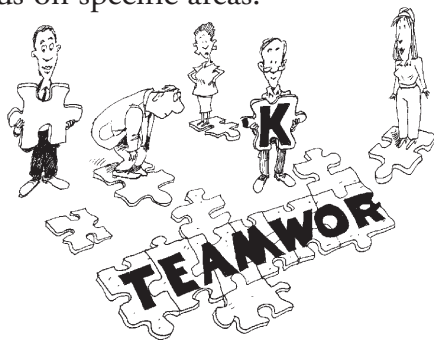
If you are planning on going to college, then you need to affirm that you are going to college. This means that you have to begin talking about college to your family, friends, teachers, counselors, coaches, mentors, and tutors. The more you talk about college, the more information people will share with you. The more they will confirm or challenge what you think about college, what you are thinking about doing with your life, and whether or not what you are doing now is consistent with where you say you are planning to go.

Your high school counselor (or in some cases a mentor or private counselor) is going to be one of the most important people with whom to share your college dreams. Along with this book, he or she should become an invaluable source of information. It is your counselor's job to provide you with, or direct you to, the information you need to fulfill your

college aspirations. Your counselor may be able to make your work a lot easier by identifying where to get the information you need, assisting in completing the necessary financial-aid forms, and ensuring you fulfill your high school graduation requirements. Eventually, you will have to turn your college application packages in to your counselor, who will have to order and enclose your high school transcript prior to mailing your materials to the colleges to which you apply.

Working with friends, booster clubs, mentoring programs, organizations, churches, and other families will allow you to accomplish much more than by working alone. Develop teams or committees to focus on specific areas:

- College Admissions
- College Fairs
- Scholarships
- Summer Camps
- Internships
- Recruited-athletes
- College Programs for Juniors and Seniors



- Special Interest Programs (e.g., athletics, arts, music, math, science, literary, leadership, etc.)
- Local, National, and International Competitions
- Tutors
- SAT I, SAT II, PSAT, and ACT Prep Programs
- Putting together the Application Packages

8: follow your stats

As you begin high school, imagine beginning an NBA or WNBA career. Every pass, steal, free throw, three-pointer, blocked shot, and playoff game—every statistic is going to become part of your permanent NBA/WNBA stat sheet. Your college application package will represent your high school stat sheet—SAT/ACT scores, class rank, GPA, course work, extracurricular activities, recommendation letters, job history, summer camps, special programs, the offices that you hold in clubs and organizations, and awards.