

# THE COLLEGE ADVISING HANDBOOK

*for Parents and Administrators*

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

**W**e believe that parents are the major decision-makers during the time when a student is choosing, applying, and going to college. That is why we place the accountability on the parent in the college selection and application process.

Having said that, it is necessary to be reminded that going to college is about God's will for the student. As a parent, it is paramount to step back from one's own needs, concerns, anxieties, and hopes in order to look at what is best for a student's calling. Not everyone is a scholar; not everyone ought to go to a highly competitive college; not everyone thrives under pressure and competition. What really is best for your child?

We all want our children to do well, even if we have some trouble explaining exactly what that means. We all want our children to achieve at the top of their abilities. The challenge here is to recognize that it is their needs which should be met, not ours. We can begin to assess their needs by learning how God has equipped them for their distinct calling in life, and then finding a college that prepares them for that calling.

One of the major keys in this process is a list of colleges that parents and students prepare in eleventh grade using the matrix provided on pages 10–11. It is important to understand that this list should not be limiting, or contain the implicit suggestion that the student should go to one of the colleges on the list. It is, rather, a place to start. As students research the colleges on the list, they can begin to refine their interests and choices. There will be a variety of schools on the list. Some will be there because you or your student want them to be there, and some of them will be there to stretch boundaries.

How parents react to the list of colleges is important. Please consider that the suggestions we provide are not made without forethought. Rather, they are made on the basis of years of experience matching students with colleges using the principle that investigating different colleges will make students more aware of their own criteria, and thereby help them make informed decisions. We also keep in mind that colleges continually change and few colleges are the same as they were twenty-five or even ten years ago.

Despite all of our combined efforts, some students will not be admitted to the college of their choice. When a college admits 9% of its applicants and when over 80% of those applicants are in the top 10% of their graduating classes, it is very likely that even some of the very best students will not gain admission. If your student is one of them, that does not represent failure; it represents fierce competition. Even the strongest applicants must use care and spread their risk by applying to colleges with a range of selectivity.

It is also important to remember that students must be seen for who they are and not where they go to college. For most students, the college search and application process is the first time they may be denied in a system they cannot control. This is a difficult reality to deal with and to absorb. We all should strive not to add to the burden by making students feel that they have failed us or themselves.

## 2

# GETTING STARTED

What follows is an exercise which may help a college-bound student focus on what is important to them and to their parents. The best time to complete the exercise is sometime between the end of 10th grade and the winter of 11th grade.

Parents and students should print out the College Matrix on the next two pages and fill out separate copies. Set a time in a week to meet together to discuss your findings; maybe even go for breakfast or lunch and make it a date with your child. Try to relax as a parent and choose to try and enjoy the process. Commit now to love your child by praying with them about these decisions that will greatly influence their future. There isn't any right way or wrong way to use the matrix. It is simply a guide or tool to help you along the way.