

Top 12 Ways To Be *Simply the Best* College Candidate...

BY JILL GREENBAUM, COACH TO TEENS AND PARENTS, MAJOR IN YOU!

Where are you in becoming your best? What's your vision of a stellar college candidate? Do specific ideas, descriptions, and practices fill your mind when I ask the question?

When envisioning the superior candidate, I imagine a constellation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The list below cites distinct abilities and yet, you are a whole person. What knowledge and which of these skills and attitudes do you already possess, which need a bit of "buffing up," and which are new to you (giving you an opportunity to grow into them)?

Self awareness expert: Knowing yourself (getting clear about your strengths, challenges, how you learn and work best/the most beneficial academic and social environments for you); conscious of what you know and what you have yet to learn, your own limitations, able to ask for, and receive, support from others (family, school counselor, teachers, friends, a coach); and how to take good care of yourself during the lengthy college search and selection process.

Curious student: Ready to learn about all aspects of the process— timelines, testing, applications, essay writing, visiting campuses, sharpening your interviewing skills, thinking about and talking through finances/aid/scholarships.

Discriminating detective: Sifting through the marketing hype that the colleges, your friends, and family send in your direction; discerning the core values of each institution; and determining which settings are the right fit for you—academically, personally, and socially.

Flexible thinker: Able to shift from seeing the big picture/the entire timeline and all the pieces that need to fall into place along the way to the actual nitty gritty details.

Determined, deft, and persevering project manager: Planning, organizing, and managing all the aspects of the process and your school work, social life, family, and additional commitments.

Bloodhound/voracious networker and Compassionate peer: Discovering who knows what you need to know and how they can help you move forward in achieving the tasks at hand, and sharing what you have learned

Deadline queen/king: Ensuring the timely completion of applications for standardized tests, financial aid, and college applications (early action, early decision).

Thorough (yet not perfectionistic) worker: Figuring out how much work is necessary for each task and knowing when each task is done.

Keen and perceptive observer—zeroing in on—when visiting in person—what the colleges/universities look and feel like, and who they attract.

Thinking through, "Can I see myself being comfortable here—academically, socially, emotionally? Will I be challenged to do my best?"

Open and affable interviewee: Learning to speak with ease about your accomplishments, areas where you might have had difficulty, and conveying who you really are—being your authentic self.

Prepared and focused interviewer: Asking great questions, showing that you have done your "homework" and are curious to learn more about all aspects of the college's environment.

Thoughtful decision maker: Using your head and your heart to determine which schools fit the multiple criteria (financial, academic and social) for making your final choice.

Calm as a clam (usually): Adept at managing your emotions, so that they do not control you, learning to create harmony among:

- The many steps of the search and selection process (completing each and every one of them)
- The highs and lows of studying for, taking, and learning the results of standardized tests
- Your coursework, projects, papers, and tests
- The demands of school personnel (teachers, guidance counselors)
- Your extracurricular activities
- Your family and friends
- Your need to have fun

Wow! Being a college applicant is a huge task and you can do it! You already have many of these skills. When you start feeling overwhelmed, use your habits of finding harmony between your "work" and "fun" selves to support you. It is your show—be sure to surround yourself with a great supporting cast. ■

