

College admissions more brutal than ever

BY ANITA MODI
STAFF WRITER

No pressure, but the seniors of 2009 will face the most competitive year for college admissions that America has ever seen. Indeed, with an estimated 3.4 million students applying, according to a USA Today report, the applicant pool is larger than ever before.

But what does it take to distinguish oneself from the thousands competing for the same spot?

The average college application consists of five parts, which include the student's official transcript, standardized test scores, extracurricular activities, essay(s) and letters of recommendation.

Often, schools add their own supplements to the standard package, asking for candidates to send in portfolios of their written or artwork (i.e. New York University), or to answer additional short answer questions (i.e. Columbia University).

"There are two sides to every student's application - the academic side, and the personal side," NYU Assistant Admissions Director Jibril H. Younes said.

With regards to the academic side, he explained, "We want to know if you've taken advantage of the most challenging program offered in your high school."

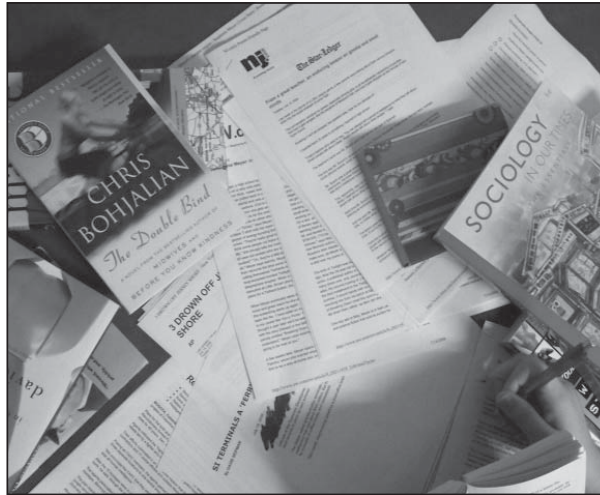
Though GPAs do include grades from elective classes, colleges primarily look at grades from five "core classes" to determine the strength of the applicant's academic record: English, math, science, history and foreign language.

Because not every school offers elective classes such as "How to be a Lady," Younes said, "We try to level the playing ground amongst all the applicants we receive."

The "academic side" also includes scores for standardized tests, like the SAT, SAT subject, ACT and AP exams.

"There is certainly a lot of pressure [to perform well on such tests]," said Hunt Heffner, an admissions officer at Princeton University. "Take the ones you feel best prepared for."

Often, Ivy League schools, such as



Stacie Fanelli/Staff Photographer

Princeton, will publish how many applicants with perfect standardized test scores were rejected not to send the message that being perfect isn't enough, but to ensure that standardized test scores "are not the deciding factor by any stretch of the imagination," Heffner explained.

Factors from the personal side of the student's application (particularly the essay) offer much insight into the admissions process, as well, according to Columbia Admissions Officer Rachel Fried.

At both Princeton and Columbia, students' essays "The most feared part of the college application process," as Fried put it are read and reviewed in a committee-style setting.

"There is no 'what-we-want-to-hear,'" she assured, "but keep in mind that this is an example of your writing skills.

Be creative; don't give us a plot outline. Give us form, style and voice."

Students should give rough drafts of their essays to "adults that don't know [them] very well and ask for their first

impressions," Fried suggested. By understanding teachers' or counselors' perceptions of themselves after reading the drafts, students can objectively judge how accurately the essays reflect their true characters.

Among other tips, Younes advised students to proofread their essays for such seemingly-trivial aspects as grammar, spelling and punctuation.

"More than half of us [at NYU's admissions office] are English majors, so it is imperative that you look the essay over before you send it to us," he said.

In addition to the application, all three admissions officers similarly stressed the importance of strong academic performance throughout an applicant's senior year.

Depending on the college, admissions offices may change their decisions for certain applicants based on mid-year and year-end reports.

"If your grades are falling off the face of the earth, we'll know. And that will be an awkward conversation," Heffner warned.

New Jersey going green with HelpLight

BY STACIE FANELLI
STAFF WRITER

The "green," or environmentally-friendly, fad has caught on quick in a world that will not only never see its results, but whose population is two-thirds below the poverty line.

Low mileage "hybrid" vehicles, which are generally smaller than the gas guzzlers, run motorists an average of \$6,000 more than the basic models. That's not taking into consideration the people who have the ability to "do their part," but are limited by the financial obligation. Only some social environmentalism organizations have anticipated these needs and have begun incentive programs for helping those people help their world. They don't start out with cars, but their impact on financing a life that is healthy for the world and for posterity have been noted by the community.

An Energy Star-sponsored program that is unconventional in its environmental goals is HelpLight New Jersey, which was started by global warming-conscious high school juniors Matthew Erickson and John Caddock in Nov. 2007. Its mission is "to inspire teens to take action in the fight against global warming...and helping the less fortunate in hopes of creating a better earth."

"[People] don't believe that they can make a difference, but we're trying to show them that with this light bulb, you can solve so many problems," said Caddock in an interview on CN8 News in January 2008.

HelpLight NJ is one of many organizations that get a new generation involved in the business side of helping people. Its volunteers have distributed compact fluorescent light bulbs to church, mission, shelter and school attendees throughout New Jersey with the help of government grants and donations from the NJ Clean Energy program.

"We have solicited local businesses, individuals and have participated in shows and events to raise awareness of our fundraising," Erickson wrote in an e-mail. The two teenagers are also concerned with a lack of knowledge in the community, as the same people who can't afford compact fluorescent light bulbs likely don't know how they work or why they're necessary. They travel to schools to explain to children, who may actually get to reap the benefits or the detriments to their surroundings, exactly why these more expensive bulbs are worth it.

"We have had a tremendous response wherever we go. Our concept is simple," Erickson said.

He is pleased with the environmentalism trend, but he believes that HelpLight NJ is unique.

"We are glad to be a part of the youth movement interested in helping the environment. Where I think we differ is that we have a dual purpose to both help the environment and needy families at the same time," Erickson said.

While that is not to say that the "green" trend is entirely conceptual, HelpLight NJ does center around reality more than idealism.

"It is not so much any individual product, as it is about a mindset. Being green should become a lifestyle. Then, change becomes automatic," said Erickson.

Designers lead trend in environmentally-friendly clothes

BY ALLEEA HILL
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Is green really becoming the new black? From the way things are playing out, it seems as if being eco-friendly is the new hot topic.

Walking down the streets confident as ever, many "fashionistas" are seen with reusable grocery bags from different supermarkets and graphic tees labeled "Go Green."

Going green is obviously the thing to do!

Fortunately, big designers are getting the memo that eco-friendly items sell.

Leslie Hoffman, the Executive Director of Earth Pledge, believes that if fashion companies got on the same boat, there would be a great impact on the environment.

According to the Earth Pledge website, their goal is "to demonstrate economic viability today and make a real difference tomorrow.

We work closely with public and private organizations to help them understand and implement new operating techniques that cost effectively reduce their environmental impact."

Many fashion designers have proudly announced their going-green movement, and Earth Pledge is gladly available to hold their hands along the way.

When asked about how Earth Pledge could actually assist fashion designers, Hoffman explained, "We have done fashion shows where we have given fashion designers materials out of our library to create designs or outfits that can be just as fabulous

with sustainable materials."

This seems like a great way to start going towards a safer world.

It is amazing to see so many designers publicizing their new attitude towards the betterment of the environment.

Many people love fashion, and when they see famous, trendsetting designers the trend of the green life becomes more and more famous.

The fashion industry has the amazing ability to change the world. So who would be better fit to make a tremendous change for the environment but the influential fashion industry?

Many different designers are trying to make a green change through fashion.

"I think it is a good thing that big designers are going green because a lot of people respect those big corporations and go to them because of the brand name. This is just bringing out the environmental message," says Abhishék Seth, author of *Save My World*.

Seth, 18 said "I saw pictures of the affects of global warming on the earth and that made it real for me, ever since then I decided to start promoting the environment because I started doing my part and realized no one else was doing anything so I took charge and wrote my book."

This is the attitude that is truly needed from many more people around the world.

Organizations, companies and authors, are helping mold the world into a better place.



Photo Courtesy of H&M