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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Youth, Education, and Library
Committee
High School Senior Panel on Applying to College
Tuesday, June 4, 2019, 630pm
Ramaz School, 125 East 85th Street**

Minutes

The session was organized by high school seniors, under the leadership of Cecelia King and Dori Newman, for lower grade students and parents, to help them understand and plan for the college application process. This session featured a panel of high school seniors from Riverdale Country School, Bronx Science, Berkeley Carroll, Poly Prep, and LaGuardia High School discussing this year's college application process. They were accepted to several colleges, including Dartmouth, The University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Tufts, Amherst, Pomona, Williams, Bates and other colleges.

Student panelists: Brett Zakheim, Chloe Sun, Ella Gates, Cecelia King, Julia Goldstein

Note: At the outset, the students identified the school they were planning to attend, their extracurricular activities – which were extensive – and in one case, a plan to defer admission for one year based on her plans regarding how to spend next year.

Key points addressed by the panel were the following:

Application Process: How many schools did the students apply to? Range from a handful, around 4 or 5 up, to as many as 14. For the panel members, as many as 6 to 8 or 10 was typical. For each student, the number was a function of how strong their preferences were for particular schools, and how many 'safe schools' they wanted to apply to. One caveat: Follow up and stay on top of application deadlines. Be sure that the guidance counselor is equally aware – to be sure that all submissions – including grade transcripts and recommendations – are submitted on time.

The Common Application: Many schools accept the common college application as the basis for applying to their school. However, many schools also require additional essays that are specific to their school, and carry weight in the assessment process.

Recommendations: The students counsel was to 'Choose your recommendations wisely.' Students should consider who will provide the required recommendations, based on who knows them well, the relevance of the recommender's field in relation to the proposed course of study, and how the school will view the recommendation – whether the school has priorities with regard the field and background of the person providing the recommendation. Within limits, there may be some value in providing an additional recommendation, or a recommendation based on the student's strengths at school or at work. A boss at work can be helpful as a character recommendation. However, it is appropriate to pay attention to the school's guidelines with regard to what recommendations it is looking for.

Interviews: Schools differ with regard to how they view interviews. Some schools give them weight in the application process, while others view the interview as optional. Students generally found the interviews as a positive experience, and provided some insight into the school application process and experience.

Deferrals: One student panelist is deferring for a year, which required explaining to the school her plans and getting approval for her plan. The schools will want to assess whether the time will be spent in a productive way.

Waitlist: In several cases, students are accepted off the waitlist. The message here was ‘don’t give up.’ Many colleges make a significant number of acceptances off the wait list, so the wait list may eventually result in good news.

Financial Aid: The panel suggest that there can be a positive outcome by taking on the financial aid package from the school. One student negotiated, based on financial aid from a different school, to get a comparable package from their preferred school – from two schools, both of which happened to be in the Ivy League. A second student pressed her case with regard to financial need, while expressing strong interest in the school, and succeeded in getting a more attractive financial aid package. One caveat: When the school describes the aid package, be sure to clarify whether the aid is in the form of a grant or a loan. There is also the possibility of ‘merit scholarships,’ which are not based on financial need.

Visiting Schools: The importance of visiting a school depends on part on the school policy: does the school give weight to the visit as an expression of interest. If the school does not consider that important, the visit may be more helpful to experience the climate and ambience of the school than to influence the school selection process.

Debbie Teitelbaum and Peter Patch, Co-Chairs