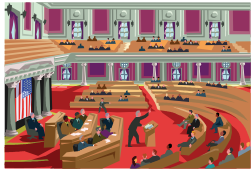


Congress Approves Overhaul of Loan Programs



September marked a significant victory for students interested in federal student loans. Both the House and the Senate approved changes intended to ease the strain of rising tuition and other college costs. The new legislation, The College Cost Reduction and Access Act, raises the maximum Pell grant from \$4,310 to \$5,400 over the next five years (by 2012). It also forgives loans to graduates who work for ten years or more in public service professions such as teaching, police, and firefighting. The bill halves the interest rate (from 6.8 to 3.4) over the next four years and limits monthly payments on federal loans to 15% of the borrower's discretionary income if they earn under 1.5 times the poverty line. There is also new flexibility on loan payments for military personnel on active duty. To fund the cost of these changes, the bill cuts federal subsidies to lenders by some \$20 billion. This last step may be viewed as fallout from earlier investigations that found conflicts of interest as lenders used gifts to colleges and college officials to steer borrowers their way. Education loans to parents should benefit also, as the government will now auction off the rights to make federally-backed loans in each state instead of setting the rate in Washington. The two lowest bidders will win the rights to make these subsidized loans in their state. Lenders, not surprisingly, oppose the bill claiming that it is irresponsible and punishes the very industry that is trying to help students pay for college. Other opponents believe it will ultimately drive up taxes in order to pay for some of the provisions. Be that as it may, it certainly appears to be a win for students, at least in the short term. Remember, however, that access to these federal programs requires the completion of the FAFSA form annually. ▲

Admission Trends 2007

NACAC has released its fifth annual State of College Admission Report last month, and it reports the following trends:

- Grades in college prep classes, strength of high school curriculum, test scores and GPA remain the top factors.
- Next in importance are the college essay, class rank, recommendations, demonstrated interest, and extracurricular activities.
- Estimates of the importance of the college essay topped that of class rank for the first time.

(cont'd on page 2)



In This Issue

- New legislation revamps federal loan programs
- Admission Trends 2007
- What is "Admissions Creep"?
- Demonstrating Your Interest
- Upcoming SAT and ACT tests
- Fall checklists - juniors and seniors
- Thank-You Notes Impress

Technology & Admission

- The average percent of college applications received on-line has reached 58%.
- One third of admission inquiries to 4-year colleges were received via email or web.
- New technologies colleges are introducing on their websites include email newsletters, chat rooms and blogs.
- 27% of colleges notified applicants of decisions via email; 25% let students check for decisions on-line.
- 49% of high schools have a computer station and/or resource center exclusively designated for college searches.
- The average ratio of applications to admission officers was 393:1 ▲

Source: NACAC

What is "Admissions Creep"?

High school students report that pressure about the admissions process is hitting them earlier and earlier in high school. Simultaneously, some colleges are admitting students before September 15 of their senior year. It is no longer unusual to see application deadlines as early as October 15. These trends, taken together, are termed "admissions creep" and NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling) is addressing it with a special panel. Should offers be permitted as early as summer after junior year? How should early decision affect financial aid awards? Not everyone agrees on the answers, but the issue has captured the attention of admission officers and high school counselors. No doubt we will be hearing more about this in 2008.▲

Demonstrate Your Interest

As colleges become increasingly inundated with applications, they are paying more attention to who is likely to attend if accepted. Their admissions strategies are being modified to try to identify genuine student interest. As such, we are likely to see more personalized modes of communication and more efforts to assess students' intentions. Keep an eye open for any and all opportunities to tell a college you are interested, either directly or indirectly. Take advantage of every chance they provide for you to "connect" with the college: mailing lists, visits, interviews, and even early decision if offered and you are SURE you will attend if accepted. If they are your first choice school, tell them so and prove it with demonstrated interest.▲

Admission Trends 2007 (cont'd)

- The percent of colleges rating “demonstrated interest” as “considerably important” increased from 7% to 21% over the past four years.
- The average selectivity rate percentage of applicants who are offered admission at 4-year colleges and universities has remained 69% for many years.
- Colleges are offering new technologies via their websites, such as email newsletters (47%), online chat rooms (35%), and blogs (29%). These are intended to increase the potential for personalized communications with prospective students.
- A student’s chance of being admitted off a waitlist are less than 1 in 3.
- Institutions offering early decision or early action options reported the second straight year of increased applications to those programs.
- Scandals in the student loan and financial aid communities have reduced counselors’ confidence in advising students about financing their secondary education. Counselors are increasingly concerned about student debt and the risks posed by loans and providing loan advice. ▲



Upcoming SAT and ACT Test Dates

Date	Test	Register By	Late With Fee
December 1, 2007	SAT & Subjects	October 30, 2007	Oct 31 - Nov 8, 2007
December 8, 2007	ACT	November 2, 2007	November 3 - 15, 2007
January 26, 2008	SAT & Subjects	December 26, 2007	Dec 27 - Jan 4, 2008
February 9, 2008	ACT except NY	January 4, 2008	January 5 - 18, 2008
March 1, 2008	SAT only	January 29, 2008	Jan 30 - Feb 7, 2008
April 12, 2008	ACT	March 7, 2008	March 8 - 21, 2008

Fall Checklist for Junior and Seniors

Juniors

- Take the PSAT in October.
- Work on your list of target schools.
- Visit websites of colleges that pique your interest and look at their application. Check the grades and test scores of admitted students.
- Work on your resume.
- Plan college visits for the upcoming year.
- Read! Work on your vocabulary.
- Think about your SAT/ACT testing schedule.
- Get to know your teachers.
- Keep up your grades—this is a critical year.



Seniors

- Attend all school meetings and meet with your counselor(s).
- Get a file bin and organize your materials.
- Finalize your resume and list of target schools.
- Take SAT/ACT again if you need to.
- Ask for letters of recommendation.
- Begin work on applications and essays.
- Set up visits and interviews if offered.
- If not already, get organized with a bin and folders.
- Watch deadlines and follow all instructions.
- Keep up your grades—they still count.

Thank You Notes Make an Impression

We thought we’d seen it all with regard to the college admission “courtship”. But the “thank you” craze has reached new heights with candy and stationery matching the college colors. Some admission officers report receiving as many as 50 in a single day and thousands each year, and many are genuine and appreciated. It’s true that in this day and age, every contact with your potential college is significant in some way, as it represents an impression of you. It probably won’t actually affect your admission chances; it’s more about etiquette than a leg-up on your application.

Our advice - send them to anyone who spent significant time with you at the college, such as an interviewer and/or financial aid representative. And when you do, keep them short and heartfelt. Don’t try to be clever, don’t send candy, don’t put them on eccentric stationery. And one more thing... don’t forget thank-you’s to the high school teachers and counselors who helped you with advice and recommendations. If anything, those are even more important. ▲

