



### Lessons from our 2007 College Essay Contest

We at Get in 2 College expected to have fun with our 2007 Essay Contest. What we didn't expect was that we would experience the indecision, disagreement, pressure, and emotion that must plague actual college admission committees. Fortunately, no student's college dreams hinged on our decision. No one's fate was in the balance with us holding the key to their acceptance or rejection. No, we were simply judging an essay contest—nothing more. But we couldn't help feeling like a microcosm of what must go on behind the closed doors where an admission committee is making final decisions about their border-line candidates. Surely we'd all agree on the best essay, right? Wrong. Out of hundreds of essays there was, in fact, widespread disagreement even among our relatively small staff. What about a sensational essay that didn't adhere to the length limit? What about an essay that took a chance instead of following our recommended, safe essay format? Above all, we wanted to be fair to the students that sent us such wonderful essays. We wanted a clear sense that we had, in fact, found the right winner. But instead, we were confronted with a grim reality: This process, much like college admissions, is highly subjective. We are no better equipped to select one essay as the best than an admission committee is to take one student over another who seems equally qualified. Some of the essays made us laugh out loud—some made us cry. Many provoked thought and almost all demonstrated strong writing skill. Which is more compelling - an essay that depicts triumph over a hardship or one that provides a glimpse into a moment of epiphany in a student's life? A complex analysis or a simple event beautifully described? We received all of these and much more. We were somewhat awed and definitely encouraged that our students are so articulate and have such a wonderful sense of who they are or who they want to become. So what did we do? We agonized, we tried point systems, we debated, we discussed... and finally, we decided on two winners. One wrote an essay using the standard format recommended in our handbook. The other took a chance on a unique approach and pulled it off. Both were outstanding!

So without further ado, congratulations to our two winners:

**Jessie Date-Ampofo** from **Norwalk High School** and a student (prefers to remain anonymous) from **Westhill High School**.



We also selected some runners up, and have contacted them for permission to post their essays. To the rest of you, take heart—this process was not perfect and your essays were wonderful. Thanks to all of you. Special note: We'd like to recognize Westhill High School for the most essays submitted and for the high quality thereof! ▲

### In This Issue

- *Essay Contest Results*
- *The AP Audit*
- *Evaluating Aid Offers*
- *Waitlist Tips*
- *Use Your Summers*
- *Upcoming SATs & ACTs*
- *Spring Checklists*
- *Vocab-a-Thon!*
- *Featured Website:*  
[www.collegeanswer.com](http://www.collegeanswer.com)

### The AP Audit

The College Board is auditing AP classes worldwide to ensure that they meet the standard of "university level." 130,000 teachers are being asked to provide written proof that their class is worthy by June 1, 2007. Starting with the 2007-8 school year, only teachers who have gotten approval will be able to call their class an AP. The plan is to post qualifying AP classes on a website at some point. The audit is in response to the explosive growth in the number of students taking AP classes. AP classes are believed to be a strong predictor of college success, as they give students a feel for the rigor of college level academics. Admissions committees are known to favor students who tackle this sort of challenging curriculum, hence the growth in AP enrollment.▲

### Evaluating Financial Aid Offers



The letters of acceptance should all be received by now. Along with them may come some welcome relief in the form of financial aid. It may be a scholarship or grant (lucky you), or maybe a work-study opportunity or loan offer. In any case, the most aid does not necessarily equal the least expensive school to attend. Be sure to consider whether the aid is gift aid (not repaid) or aid which must be repaid or earned. In addition, be sure to evaluate the offers by taking the TCA (Total Cost of Attendance including extras such as travel) minus the TA (Total Aid offered) to get your NG (Net Gap) at each school. Then compare Net Gaps looking for the smallest number. ▲

### Waitlisted? What You Can Do

Waitlisted at your first choice school? While your odds of being accepted off a waitlist aren't good, it's not impossible. If you are heartbroken, it might be worth a last effort. Within 1-2 weeks, write a one page, properly formatted letter letting the college know it was your first choice and, if taken, you will attend. Provide an update on your academics featuring any honors, awards etc. Update any extracurricular achievements as well, and include your contact information. Meanwhile, remember to commit to a school where you are already accepted by May 1. These days, even being waitlisted is a compliment so don't be too hard on yourself. ▲



## Summer - Can You Afford to be Lazy?

Remember the Nat King Cole song that heralded the “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer”? Well, perhaps your parents do. In any case, for high school students a lazy summer carries a stiff price. Summer is a wonderful time to gain experience that will bolster your college applications and there are a number of ways to do this. It could be community service, a job, travel, a class, an internship, an adventure or the acquisition of a new skill. But, above all, try to make something of your summer. Resist the temptation to waste it. Take a look at your resume and see where your weaknesses are. Can summer provide a boost? Get in 2 College has recently revamped its **Summer Programs** section at [www.getin2college.com/private.htm](http://www.getin2college.com/private.htm) (scroll down to the Summer section) Take a look at the incredible variety of summer opportunities for students—there is something there for everyone. Be sure to research these opportunities carefully and check references before signing up for any summer program. Enjoy your summer but, in addition, try to make it pay off.▲



## Upcoming SAT and ACT Test Dates

Date	Test	Register By	Late With Fee By
June 2, 2007	SAT and Subjects	April 27, 2007	May 9, 2007
June 9, 2007	ACT	May 4, 2007	May 18, 2007
Sept 15, 2007	ACT	August 10, 2007	August 24, 2007
October 6, 2007	SAT and Subjects	Sept 10, 2007	Sept 14, 2007
October 27, 2007	ACT	Sept 21, 2007	October 5, 2007
November 3, 2007	SAT and Subjects	October 2, 2007	October 11, 2007

## Family Vocab-a-Thon!

Here's a fun idea that gets the whole family involved and enhances your college prep efforts as well. Find some lists of vocabulary words that are often found on the SATs or other standardized tests. These are easily found in prep books or on the internet. You can even purchase flash cards or make them yourself. Every week, try to master 20 new words. Get family members to quiz you and maybe they'll even agree to a reward system to encourage your efforts! Each week, also go back and refresh at least some of your previous weeks' words and you'll be amazed how fast your vocabulary builds up. Parents, you'll probably learn something too! ▲

## Spring Checklist for Junior and Seniors

### Juniors

- Prep and register for upcoming SAT, ACT and AP tests.
- Research interesting and challenging summer opportunities.
- Keep up your grades—junior year is extremely important.
- Plan for and accomplish college visits.
- Select the most challenging senior year curriculum that you can. This is noticed by the admissions committees—no senioritis!
- Prepare for your final exams—don't get sidetracked.
- Work on your vocabulary and read as much as you can.
- Continue refining your list of target colleges; Use the internet for additional research; look at profiles of admitted students.
- Athletes, register with the NCAA Clearinghouse if applicable.



### Seniors

- Make final visits if necessary to help you decide.
- Be sure to select a college by May 1.
- Inform the schools you will NOT be attending as well.
- Send transcripts or any other required information.
- Prepare for AP tests and finals—you're on the home stretch!
- Plan summer employment or other activities.
- Pay attention to housing forms and other information sent by your college. There may be summer orientations as well.
- If needed, research loans to make up your financial need gap.
- Attend all meetings and/or orientation sessions.
- Think about what you'll need to take to college and what activities you might like to pursue there. Congratulations—you made it!

## Featured Website: [www.collegeanswer.com](http://www.collegeanswer.com)

This excellent site is sponsored by SallieMae, the nations' leader in providing education loans. They fund federally guaranteed student loans to over 7 million borrowers, mostly under the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP). The CollegeAnswer site provides a wealth of free college prep information, from searches to financing. There are also interactive tools that enable you to analyze the affordability of different schools, compare aid offers and search for scholarships. You can register for free, which provides you with access to downloadable checklists and tip sheets. Be sure to check out this website—we found the information to be well organized and current. ▲

