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# COLLEGE INSIGHTS GROUP

## NEWSLETTER

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July/August 2010

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### CHECK YOUR ENGINES

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**Common App**

Available Live **August 1, 2010**  
Available **NOW** for preview  
(pdf link below)

**College Fairs**

Thursday, October 14, 2010  
**Nease IB College Fair**

Saturday, October 16, 2010  
**NACAC College Fair**  
**9:00a.m. - 1:00p.m.** Prime F.  
Osborn III Convention Center  
Jacksonville, FL

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### ***Hello Students and Parents:***

*Now that you have relaxed a bit after the rush of exams and end-of-school activities, it is time to look ahead. For rising seniors, college application season is upon you. Soon you will be writing essays and filling out applications. Before you dive in, take some time to reflect on what you have learned, both in the classroom and from your activities.*

*While many think of college consultants only when the application process is looming, we encourage early use of our expertise. During our Gear Up sessions we help eighth-grade students select the right high school program and plan course scheduling and activities. Then they check in with us at the mid-point of ninth grade for assistance with summer opportunities and suggested alterations to their sophomore classes. We touch base again during the early winter of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, regarding summer programs and standardized test strategies and planning. Early in the junior year we press down on the accelerator and Rev Engines, as we head toward college. Having followed our early guidance, these students face a smooth road ahead.*

*A parent told us that she prints our newsletter and leaves it on her kitchen table. She said her children find it informative and especially enjoy the student perspective in our "College Insights" column.*

*We hope all of you benefit from the information contained on these two pages. So we again encourage you to forward this newsletter to friends. Those desiring to subscribe may send an email to [info@collegeinsightsgroup.com](mailto:info@collegeinsightsgroup.com) with the subject line "newsletter" and we will add your email address to our subscribers list.*

***Keep driving toward the Finish Line,  
Diane, Mary and Aletha***

### **THE COMMON APPLICATION**

Even though the 2010-11 Common Application online will not go live until August 1, many member institutions will finalize their supplements before then. Students who want to get a head start on those essays can contact a college directly and inquire about next year's topics.

You can preview the 2011 Common Application now at:

<https://www.commonapp.org/commonapp/docs/downloadforms/commonapp2011.pdf>

## College Essays

Think of the college application essay as a first date. So says Chad Hemmelgarn, an English teacher at Bexley High School in Columbus, Ohio. He requires his 11<sup>th</sup> grade students to write 25 essays that are based on actual college application essay prompts. Then the student selects the best four or five to review with him and revise for possible use. A lot of work, yes, but think of the treasure trove available to choose from senior year when the student may be overwhelmed by the college application process.

Most college applications require at least one essay. There is a long essay and a brief extra-curricular narrative on the common application. Applicants should expect one to three short essay prompts on each individual college's supplemental application. Keep in mind that short essays are very important – not throwaways. The short essays should be edited and revised to the same extent as the application's main long essay.

### Here are some writing hints:

1. The biggest writing mistake is not starting.
2. Journal about interesting experiences now to provide source material for college essays later.
3. Essays should paint a picture of you, not what you did.
4. Provide the reader with depth not breadth.
5. Show, don't tell.
6. Maintain your voice. Seek assistance from teachers, parents and friends but do not allow over editing by others.
7. Revise, revise revise—but do not lose your point of view.

### Here are some opening lines from successful essays:

1. The spaghetti burbled and slushed around the pan, and as I stirred it, the noises it gave off began to sound increasingly like bodily functions.
2. Good Grief! You never would have guessed that an unassuming meek lovable loser like Charlie Brown would have an influence on anyone; but indeed he has.
3. I change my name each time I order coffee at Starbucks.

**Harvard Dean of Admissions:** “Writing a great essay cannot lead to admission if the rest of the application is not at the same level. What students achieve on a day-to-day basis during high school is far more compelling. But the essay provides an opportunity for students to tell colleges about something that is important to them, perhaps something that will not be found in other parts of the application. Students must understand that there is no “right answer” on an essay and it is only one piece of the application. Then they can get on with the rest of the senior year, making the most of the opportunities it provides for personal and academic growth — and let the college admissions process take care of itself.”

## Post-College Insights

from a University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro Graduate

My college experience was very structured. I did everything pretty much by the book, despite changing my major quite a few times. I started freshman year majoring in English, and I ultimately graduated with my B.A. in English. In between, I declared several other majors. However I did not explore those majors very much. I only took classes that fulfilled my general education requirements. I did not take a single class that did not satisfy a requirement I needed to graduate.

I thought I needed to know what I wanted to do while I was in college. I did not realize that graduating in four years is not the goal of college. The goal of college, at least in my opinion, is to take the time you need to find what you love and explore other subjects and worlds. I wish I had known about all the different classes that I could have taken. I wish I had been encouraged by my advisor or I had taken the initiative to explore a wide array of subjects.

I also wish I had applied for more scholarships, especially departmental ones. I had heard of some of the scholarships in passing, but I did not take the time to apply. I thought I would be competing against hundreds of other students, so it would be a waste of time for me to apply for them. During my final semester, I heard straight from the undergraduate department head that hardly anyone applies for the departmental scholarships.

I do not regret any of the decisions I made in college. I had an amazing four years, and I feel prepared to enter the real world. However I do feel a certain degree of wanderlust, which I think could have been satisfied if I had taken the time to explore other classes while in school. The most important thing I learned in college is that there is no such thing as waste of time, at least in regard to academia.

~Caitlin, UNC-G 2010

*Editor's note: Caitlin is a poet who plans to spend the next year writing before heading back to school for her M.F.A in poetry.*