

HELPING YOUR
STUDENT ACE THE
APPLICATION

College bound

BY CHRISTINA GUERRERO

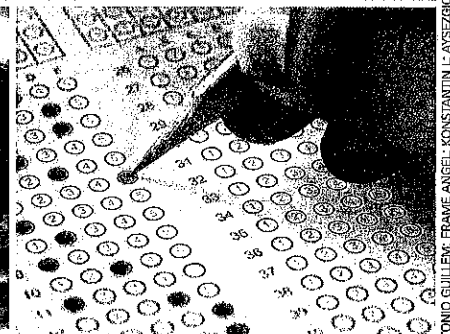
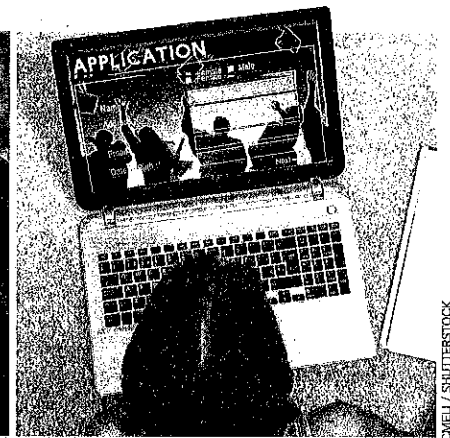
THE COLLEGE APPLICATION process can be complex and confusing at times, but planning ahead can make a difference. It involves starting early in high school, then checking off a list of key steps to get that dream admission, advises Rob Franek, a former college admissions officer who advises parents and students on the college application process.

"It is so empowering to students and parents to feel like they get this process," says Franek, author of several pre-college admissions books. "It's a knowable thing, and it can actually be enjoyable."

Franek, senior vice president-publisher of *The Princeton Review* (princetonreview.com), which provides online and in-person tutoring and test prep, travels extensively to high schools and colleges across the nation to give talks on college admissions to educators, parents and students. Prior to that he spent six years as a college admissions officer for Wagner College in New York City. Franek, a Costco member, shared with *The Connection* five tips to help you and your son or daughter manage the college application process without losing your mind.

1 START PLANNING. The summer after sophomore year of high school is the perfect time to start talking to students about college admissions. However, the earlier you start the conversation with your kid about the college experience, the quicker you can diffuse some of the fear and stress around the college application process. The sooner your child begins to learn about the different types of colleges, the more excited and confident he or she will be making the decision.

2 STAY ON TASK. Make sure your student knows his or her job, which is twofold: Do well in high school and do well on standardized tests, such as the SAT or the ACT. The two most important factors that students are evaluated on from a college admissions standpoint are standardized test scores and high school transcripts. Schools are also looking to see if your student challenged him- or herself throughout high school.



OUR DIGITAL EDITIONS
Click here to watch a video from *The Princeton Review* for tips on a college interview. (See page 13 for details)

3 CONNECT WITH COLLEGES. After you've helped your student do online research to narrow down potential colleges, if possible take a formal tour of each campus with a student tour guide to meet as many students, faculty members and advisers as possible. Your student should have lunch in the dining hall, sit in on a class while it is in session and visit the career center. Ask about career resources that are available, such as internships and study abroad programs. If your student is asked to interview while on campus, always take the opportunity: Very seldom will that interview hinder his or her chances of being accepted; instead, it will generally enhance chances of admission.

4 APPLY FOR ADMISSION. The national average number of colleges each student applies to is six to eight. Your student should apply only to schools where he or she found the right fit, which includes academics, campus culture, financial aid and career services. If you've really done your research, visited enough campuses and gathered enough opinions, your student should be comfortable and happy attending any of those schools.

There's no room for error on the college essay or personal statement, which means there's no room for poor grammar or poor punctuation, so parents and students should



use their network of teachers, counselors and parents as editors to clean up any mistakes.

5 APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID. The average cost of attendance, including tuition, room and board, fees and books, for one year of public university across the U.S. is \$19,400; for one year of private university it is \$42,000. About 40 percent of the scholarship dollars the typical student earns comes directly from the schools they attend, based on high GPA and SAT/ACT scores. The other biggest source of aid comes from the federal government.

To make your student eligible for financial aid from colleges, apply through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA; fafsa.ed.gov; studentaid.ed.gov) program, which is federally sponsored by the Department of Education. Students and families that the government deems too wealthy to receive any direct aid from colleges through this process may be qualified for subsidized Stafford loans, which are generally paid back at a lower interest rate, compared with other loans, after the student has graduated. **C**

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