The Path to Top Colleges for High-Achieving Students with Limited Resources

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The Scenario

- Recent Immigrant
- Household Income Less than $40,000/year
- Limited English Skills
- Minority Student
- Large Urban High School
The Expectation

- Apply to two-year colleges and nonselective four-year institutions
- Apply to just one selective institution
- Apply to no school with similar admitted student academic profiles
The Puzzle

Are as likely to be admitted and enroll

Benefit from greater resources

At Selective Colleges, High-Achieving, Low-Income Students:

Often pay less to attend

Graduate at the same rate as high-income peers
Common Beliefs

“I won’t be able to get in”

“Selective institutions are for the rich”

“Selective institutions are for geniuses”

“I can’t afford a top school”
# Lack of Role Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>High-income students</th>
<th>Achievement-typical low-income students</th>
<th>Income-typical low-income students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% teachers who graduated from a peer college</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% teachers who graduated from a safety college</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># in typical previous cohort who applied to top 10 U.S. college</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># in a typical previous cohort who were admitted to a top 10 U.S. college</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># in a typical previous cohort who enrolled at a top 10 U.S. college</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of cohort who are high achievers</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radius to gather 50 high achievers (miles)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Missing “One-Offs”: The Hidden Supply to High-Achieving, Low-Income Students, Caroline Hoxby (Stanford University) and Christopher Avery (Harvard Kennedy School), Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Spring 2013
Ineffective College Recruitment Practices

1. Limited reach of school visits by admissions staff
2. Costly or superficial college preparatory programs
3. Narrow reach of mailing campaigns based on zip codes
4. Focus on minority groups
IT TAKES A COUNSELOR
Developing Awareness

▪ Focus on diversity
  ▪ Socioeconomic
  ▪ Diversity of experiences

▪ Generous financial aid
  ▪ Need-blind admissions
  ▪ Need-based financial aid
  ▪ Meeting student’s full need
  ▪ No loan policy

▪ Lower cost of life
  ▪ Integral financial aid
  ▪ Study abroad
  ▪ Campus jobs and internships
  ▪ Extra perks (laptops, college events)

 Expected financial contribution for parents earning less than $60,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvard</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing Awareness

Alumni  Data  Parents
Providing Guidance

College Application Process

Academic Orientation

Extracurricular Orientation

Financial Aid Applications
Academic Orientation

- High school curriculum
  - 4 years of mathematics
  - 4 years of science (biology, chemistry, physics)
  - 4 years of English
  - 4 years of social sciences
  - 4 years of a foreign language
- Final grades in individual subjects
- Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Class rank
- Performance in standardized testing
# Academic Orientation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FACILITATE STANDARDIZED TESTING</th>
<th>PROMOTE INDEPENDENT LEARNING</th>
<th>ENCOURAGE RIGOR</th>
<th>REACH OUT EARLY</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Promote free preparation resources like Khan Academy, offer testing at school, create tutoring club led by successful students</td>
<td>Spread awareness about alternative and affordable academic opportunities such as virtual school, MOOCs, summer programs and dual enrollment</td>
<td>Motivate students to challenge themselves with advanced courses such as honors, AP and IB in core academic subjects</td>
<td>Tap freshmen and sophomores who exhibit high grades and PSAT scores for early awareness about access to top colleges and academic requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extracurricular Orientation

MYTH #1
Top colleges place greater value on specific extracurricular activities (i.e. sports and music)

- Commitment
- Leadership
- Impact

MYTH #2
Top colleges expect students to participate in exotic service projects or travels abroad

QUALITY > QUANTITY
Extracurricular Orientation

- Remove barriers to participation in school activities
- Enable students to create their own organizations and projects
- Reward quality over quantity in extracurricular participation
- Recognize leadership, civic impact and commitment to others
- Partner with local organizations to help students find part-time jobs
- Promote national grants and crowdfunding platforms
Application Process

▪ Advise on list of target colleges, ensuring mix of reach, peer and safety
▪ Support students’ petition for application fee waivers
▪ Consider hosting a fundraiser towards college application fees
▪ Collect essays from successful alumni and share with new applicants
▪ Write personalized, anecdote-rich letters of recommendation
▪ Conduct mock admissions interviews with the help of teachers and alumni
▪ Connect students with alumni at target institutions
Financial Aid

- Encourage scholarship applications as early as 9th grade
- Maintain scholarship database and annual calendar
- Host parent and student sessions to fill out FAFSA and CSS Profile
- Reach out to universities’ financial aid counselors
Relations with Colleges

- Refer top students to admissions officers early on
- Connect with college access programs for high achieving students
- Encourage students to participate in pre-college and fly-in programs
- Communicate new school honors or programs
- Host meaningful college visits and fairs
Building a Culture of Achievement
Thank You!

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