

Resource helps students match learning style with colleges

Sometimes students are so focused on finding a college that has a great dorm, an idyllic setting, good financial aid, a diverse student body, or modern facilities that they lose sight of what their goal is in attending college—to learn. And while many colleges may be an excellent match in terms of these aforementioned traits, their teaching philosophies may not be a good match for a student’s learning style and personality. As a result, students’ innate skills and talents may be weakly interfaced with their achievements and foundational knowledge in the major. Their innate abilities may still be in need of personal recognition and further definition. Matching the students most favored learning environment with the collegiate educational practices is a powerful tool for intellectual growth and enhancement of individual skills. Rosalind P. Marie, a certified school psychologist and a nationally certified education planner, and C. Claire Law, a certified educational planner and an MBTI certified professional, have written *Find the Perfect College for You: 82 Exceptional Schools That Fit Your Personality and Learning Style*. According to the authors, the publication is the “only college book that matches the student’s Personality Type in reference to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator instrument, and therefore their learning style, with the teaching philosophies at a college or university.” The colleges listed “run the gamut from the most selective to more or less open admission.” (Visit www.FindThePerfectCollegeForYou.com for a list of the colleges featured in the book and information on ordering.) The editors of *College Spotlight* discussed the book and college planning in general with Rosalind Marie.

Q. How did you decide which colleges to include in the book?

A. We chose the 82 college campuses in *Find the Perfect College for You* by looking closely at their curriculum and residential life policies as revealed in course catalogs, dormitory programs, and student activities. We visited the campuses and read their mission statements and literature to see if the educational philosophies were cohesive and supported by the residential experience on campus. We looked for colleges with personalities and academic excellence. We think we chose well.

Q. These are difficult financial times. What can counselors and parents do to highlight the important relationship between the educational major that is declared/awarded and the family financial investment of four years tuition, room, and board?

A. Teenagers move into young adulthood at different rates. It is important for parents and teachers to first understand their “audience” and the typical development that occurs in the latter half of high school.

The fast-maturing adolescent is often in touch with those who just graduated high school last year. This teen might relate to conversation with parents and teachers that connect the dots between their older friends attending college classes and the semester’s bill for tuition, room, and board.

At the other end of the extreme, the 16-year-old who is late in maturing and focused on what to do after school today might best relate to short messages that the school year is moving on. This late-maturing teen might productively join the conversations about postsecondary plans after repeated comments that family finances are set aside to support a decision for college, technical school, or community college.

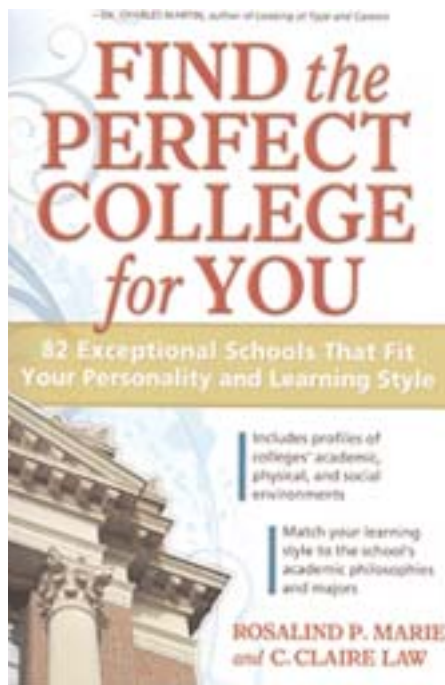
In each case, juniors in high school do not typically appreciate the financial interface with further education. Both innocence and fear cloud their vision in discerning the financial commitments ahead. After all, K-12 was free and the cost of 5th grade, or 12th grade for that matter, never came up. Throughout the high school years, parents and educators can speak with optimism, revealing options for meeting college costs, like co-op, living at home, merit scholarships, college credit for Advanced Placement coursework, and loan forgiveness for high-demand college majors. This sets the stage for the needed discussions about college majors.

During the 12th grade, many teens are OK with calling direct attention to the wonderful selection of majors at our college campuses. They quickly warm to the idea of choice in their class schedules. Conversation about specific educational majors strongly supports the teen as they move from 12th grade to a career choice in the coming years. Talking about college educational majors is a future-oriented perspective and puts real purpose into attending college for the present-day high school scholar. It nicely introduces both the cost of college and the rewards of salary and income upon graduation.

Q. Demand is rising for counseling services on campus. What can counselors and parents do to identify and encourage college campuses that match up with the students’ learning style and social expectations?

A. Teenagers bring their own social strengths and learning style to campus as freshmen. In some cases their resilient social

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armor is a little thin or they are unfamiliar with learning practices that work best for them. Prior to making suggestions about specific colleges, parents and educators do well to pay close attention to the social resilience and learning style of the student.

The freshman well-matched with his or her personality preferences and learning style to the college campus is likely to well negotiate the first-year transition and the sophomore slump. Parents can talk with their child about favored teachers and how they taught. This conversation focuses on teaching practices known to be successful for the student and introduces the subject of learning style in the college classroom. For the student who is at risk socially or academically, this can be a rewarding and comforting discussion. The quiet, unsure student who has a good memory and study ethic may thrive in large lecture settings with multiple-choice tests. The learn-by-doing, talkative, unsure student may thrive in smaller, hands-on exploratory college classes with short-answer test questions.

Teachers can seek to understand the different educational methods and faculty philosophies at the college campuses often selected within their region. They do a tremendous service by calling attention to student learning styles and the differing educational learning environments evident on campuses today. Much of the literature associated with learning styles emanates from Jungian psychology and is available in guidelines for high school students in popular literature and on websites like www.capt.org.

Q. Most college students switch majors and select their career direction in their sophomore or junior year. How can counselors and parents lay the groundwork during the last two years of high school that will aid a young collegian's journey of self knowledge required to secure the bachelor degree compatible with their interests?

A. The student who starts looking into academic subjects of interest to them in the last two years of high school is likely to graduate college with a degree and college major that

suits their personality type and interests. Parents and educators have the ability to jump-start that process.

Parents can encourage their child to identify several, perhaps two or three, areas of academic interest. With that information, the parent can search online college course catalogs and be rewarded with interesting, up-to-date collegiate information. Not to be confused with helicoptering, bringing up a conversation about a major in neuroscience is appropriate for the high school student who likes chemistry. A young student can ponder the potential rewards of learning within a very narrow discipline. The difference between neuroscience and biochemistry, in short snippets over dinner, is quite a different learning experience than high school where all subjects are taught with equal attention.

Educators and counselors can and do speak with enthusiasm about their own fields. However, one lecture does not fit all. Understanding the adolescent "audience" is critical. An individual 16-year-old may not see the tell-tale signs of his or her interest in a subject that the experienced educator recognizes. A simple comment like "you are good at calculations in physics lab" could be long remembered and support a decision to major in geobiology, neuroscience, or even physics some three years later.

Q. What are the three most important things students can do in high school to encourage a successful transition to college?

A. Students must bring balance, confidence, and study ethic to their high school years. When one of these three is wavering, which will definitely happen, students must not give in to depression. Sit back, shut off the cell phone for 24 hours, and realize much change will evolve in the next month or two. Today's D+ is overtaken by election to Key Club leadership next week.

Above all, seek out advice from educators who care about you. If you don't achieve that A in AP physics, talk to the teacher. Ask what happened to students who received a B in AP physics. You might be surprised. Value your high school academic track record and GPA, but bring social balance that helps you survive the down days that always come with real achievement. ●

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