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活動清單的藝術與科學

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF THE ACTIVITIES LIST

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All college applications ask students to list the activities they performed in high school. Sometimes, the electronic application provides specific space for the list, while other colleges allow students to upload a short resume. Regardless, the manner in which an activities list is presented can make a significant difference in the understanding and grading of the applicant by admissions offices. It's amazing how often brilliant students with brilliant essays write their activities lists as thoughtless scribbles!

Although there are no perfect rules to follow, there are sound principles to be used in completing the activities list. Consider the following guidelines:

Time of participation. As a general rule, place activities of the senior and junior years at the top of the list, followed by those done in the sophomore and freshman years.

Depth of achievement. Colleges want to see performance, not just participation. Consider placing activities that show achievement or leadership at the top of the list. Initiative shown by founding an organization is also extremely compelling to admissions representatives. Being a "member" or "participant" is better left unsaid; leave words out that suggest that an applicant is indistinguishable from the herd.

Region of performance. Colleges want to know whether a student "competes" in a larger arena or a smaller one. International and professional caliber performance is the highest, followed by regional, state, local and school-based activities. Consider placing activities that are performed on a larger stage above those from smaller venues.

Time devoted. An activity requiring a significant amount of time should usually precede one that requires only insignificant effort. However, if the student will not continue to pursue a time-consuming activity such as sports, do not lead with that activity. Ceasing to perform something is not impressive.

Group similar activities together. A longer list is not a better list. A reader's evaluation occurs at the front of the list, not towards the bottom, so make the list stronger, not longer. Students may group similar activities, such as multiple honor societies, or research, or service, as one activity, making each listing appear more robust.

Place activities in intelligent order. Don't confuse admissions representatives by making the activities list jump around from leadership to sports to community service to sports to service. Try to place the activities in a logical order so the reader can understand the applicant's strengths even with a quick skim. If an applicant will not continue to play a sport in college, but will pursue service after high school, lead the activities list with community service, not with athletics. Also consider using your list to foreshadow the remainder of the application.

Don't forget hobbies and informal activities. Not all activities are school-sponsored or well-organized. Not all activities have to be "provable" with awards or established clubs. Anything that an applicant does that is unrelated to academics may be included. Sometimes the most unusual activities help distinguish an applicant from the pack. One of our students indicated her #8 activity as "Fish Caretaker." Apparently, that made admissions reps smile; she got huge scholarships to both USC and Case Western.

Try to show some form of physical fitness. Colleges value people who are physically active, not only because "a healthy body leads to a healthy mind," but also because their statistics show that active students give MUCH larger donations to the college as alumni. The activity can be

anything from competitive sports to jogging or dog walking. Just be sure to mention something physical so they sense some form of concern for personal health.

Remember the details! Most electronic college applications allow students to include explanations for each activity. These explanations are limited to perhaps 40 words, but they can be powerful opportunities to show the depth and breadth of an applicant's performance. For example, explain that a high rating is given by an international organization, or that sports performance occurred outside your state or country. The details need not be written in sentences, so put the most important words first.

With today's technology, it is easy to make adjustments to the activities list. Using these concepts as guidelines can make a significant difference in the caliber of the activities list and of the college application as a whole.