

# Three-Year Independent Strategic Plan

## **Vision:**

Leveraging technology for a perfect college fit.

## **Mission:**

Small towns often do not get visits from college representatives or hold college fairs. Many are not even located near a major college or university. Thankfully, with advances in technology, students anywhere on the planet with internet access can now do virtual walk-throughs of campuses, message students currently enrolled there with questions, take free online courses (MOOCs) from professors at colleges of interest, and generate a personalized list of target and dream schools matching their needs and interests.

Our goal is to leverage that technology to help students find the best college fit for them. A college at which they will thrive and succeed.

## **Objectives:**

We do this by:

- Constantly researching the many tools available to evaluate colleges.
- Attending education conferences annually to see products demonstrated.
- Presenting conference papers annually on learning and technology applications.
- Visiting colleges across the country every month to add to our information database.
- Joining professional societies to share information with other independent college consultants.
- Holding quarterly community workshops to create awareness of information, processes, and resources.
- Making this information accessible to all who need it, both in person and through our website. We particularly welcome first-generation students who are new to the process, while understanding that the college application process today is nothing like what our parents experienced, so the methods today are new for all parents – whether they have graduated from college or not.

# Strategies

How do I propose to accomplish these objectives? Strategies are supposed to determine how I will realize my vision and objectives through the action plan, but these ten components we were given do not entirely align with my vision and objectives. I will do my best!

## 1. Consultation

I am not sure what is meant here by Consultation, so I hope I am guessing correctly that it means setting up the consulting practice.

I have established a domain name ([yourcollegeconsultant.com](http://yourcollegeconsultant.com)) and designed business cards. I still need to design a flyer, finish the website, and order the cards and flyers. The website will be the main repository of information, particularly given that I will have many students working remotely, so there is much work to be done to finish the website.

To extend my professional knowledge, I am applying to HECA and WACAC for full membership; I am already a student member of IECA and NACAC. These are important groups with whom I can network for areas outside my expertise, like student athletics.

Unfortunately, these professional societies do not seem to recognize the Rice certificate as adequate professional preparation, so I have emailed Rice asking you to please look into how Rice's certificate can be better recognized by these groups. I cannot imagine that UCLA or UC Irvine can be that much more in depth than what Rice students have done for this certificate.

## 2. Evaluation: Academics and Non-Academics

One way we evaluate students for academic and non-academic traits is to give them a Mindprint test, which assesses cognitive and non-cognitive skills, which in turn help me understand how to work best with any given student and which kinds of standardized tests they will tend to do better in.

Narrowing it down to college choices, I will be setting up a SCOIR account for each family to use, and working with the student to complete Steve Antonoff's book on college matching to be able to assess academic and non-academic interests.

## 3. Career goals

ASVAB is apparently the world's most widely used career aptitude test. I will set up an account to be able to have our students take this test in the closest town an hour away, or perhaps come to our town to be administered here. I will then invest the time needed to interpret the ASVAB results so I can discuss them with parents.

I will hold a workshop for the community to explain the ASVAB and provide information on what can be learned from the test.

I will also investigate different aptitude and other tests to help students identify career opportunities and goals. These may include Strengthsfinders, Kolbe, and other tests I am not familiar with. YouScience is another, and it is already included in SCOIR for student use.

I will continue to connect with the local community colleges and vo-tech programs to understand what offerings they have that might be of interest to our students.

#### 4. Financial considerations: aid, grants and scholarships

We have a local resource who does a great job specializing in aid, grants, and scholarships as a full-time job. Rather than duplicate her efforts, my effort will be to team up with her to do workshops which will include her as a local resource.

I will also apply for two grants a year to be able to provide college support to students that cannot otherwise afford it. I can and do donate much of my time, but small grants help purchase useful supplies.

#### 5. College search and creation of college list

This is a core strength, based on my personal knowledge of colleges and making an effort to visit several a year. Assessing student interests and creating a great list of solid potential fits is a key to our success.

This strategy involves: 1) Attending conferences and reading about new technologies for creating college lists, such as the new SCOIR product this year. 2) Investing the time to learn the pros and cons of the different products by trying each one out. 3) Spending adequate time with families going over the questions in the College Match book to help narrow options and the rationale for each.

#### 6. Personal statement and essay editing

I love helping students find their own voice. I look for times when a student will tell a story about unwrapping a telescope for a Christmas present, or shoveling horse manure in grandma's barn, and I will tell them to add that topic to the list of things they can write about for their college essays, because the way they come alive telling the story will also come across in the way they tell it on paper.

I work with a local English teacher to help students find their voice, which is the only authentic way to write an essay. I will look at the essay if they ask and offer comments, but I don't edit for spelling or grammar or punctuation. The college needs to see the student just as the student wishes to present himself or herself.

My strategy here is more one of helping to find resources to learn to write essays, and to keep the documents organized and submitted on time.

#### 7. College application preparation

Requesting documentation. Reviewing transcripts. Deadlines. Helping students keep on top of this with a tool like SCOIR is key to reducing student stress and keeping parents in the loop. Strategies here include setting up an account for each student and parent, training them how to use the tool well, understanding each person's unique abilities and limitations, and ensuring all the data entered into the system are correct.

#### 8. Interview preparation

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to interview preparation. Most students ask for one of three things according to their learning style: a list of questions they will be asked so they can study it and think about the answers they might give, or a list of videos showing real or mock interviews, or a chance to do practice interviews. My strategy will be to prepare options for all three as outlined in the action plan.

#### 9. College selection

This strategy includes identifying the student's criteria for college selection – financial aid? sports availability? how the college “feels” on a visit? -- and working with him or her to work through that process. It includes one-on-one time with the student to ensure the student chooses the college that's a good fit for him or her, and not one of parent expectations. The ability to listen carefully is a key skill to cultivate. Finally, helping the student create his or her own list of pros and cons – whether with me or independently – will be critical in helping the student articulate what college is of interest to them and why. It will be a document they can refer back to often if they want to remind themselves of why they added or deleted a college from the list, or if they have doubts.

Then I will write an article about how to decide. It will be called something like “You've Been Accepted to Your Top Three College Choices. Now What?”

#### 10. Transition services

This is an area I know less about, so my first step at the community level will be to research local resources for students' stress management and emotional wellbeing and parent encouragement. From there I will compile a list of resources, post it to the website, and update as necessary.

Individually, I meet with parents and students to work through these issues according to their needs. I share good articles with students and their parents on subjects such as how to minimize test anxiety and the importance of sleep. Being competent at your job tends to lessen parent anxiety, so I do my best to keep them apprised of progress so they worry less.

# Action Plan

<b>Consultation</b>					
Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Business identity: purchase domain name, design business cards, flyers	Community	Business branding.	People to help with design.	August 2019	Business cards, letterhead, flyers, etc. printed
Establish website.	Community	Share information about college resources.	Website help	July 2019	Published website
Join professional societies	Community & colleagues	Network with other professionals, increase knowledge	Funding to attend conferences	August 2019	Approved membership
<b>Evaluation: Academics and Non- Academics</b>					
Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Prepare Mindprint flyer	Families	Establish cognitive skills base	Time to create the flyer	August 2019	Printed flyer to give to families
Set up SCOIR account	Families	Enable personalized college research	Time to set up each family's account	August 2019	Accounts set up and introductory emails sent
Buy College Match books	Students	Help articulate interests and preferences for college	None	September 2019	Books ordered and received.
<b>Career Goals</b>					
Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Set up ASVAB test	Students	Aptitude testing	Time to set up the account	August 2019	Account set up and test date set.
Hold workshop on ASVAB	Community	Increase awareness of ASVAB	Time to create the workshop	November 2019	Completed workshop
Maintain connections with local community colleges and vo-tech schools	Community	Increase awareness of new career offerings at local JCs and vo-tech schools	Time to meet regularly with local resources	Annually, by December	
<b>Financial considerations: Aid, grants and scholarships</b>					
Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for	Measure(s) of Success

				<b>Completion</b>	
Apply for 2 grants/year	1 <sup>st</sup> -gen families	Provide support to low-SES families	Time to write grant applications	Annually by December	80% grant award rate.
Meet with Karen Hunt	Local professional	Identify what I can offer her that will help her	None	Early August 2019	Meeting notes outlining steps forward
Hold workshop with K. Hunt	Community	Increase awareness of local services	Time to create the workshop	Late August 2019	Completed workshop

### **College Search and Creation of College List**

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Attend software exhibits	Students	Familiarize myself with college search products	Adequate funding to attend conference exhibits	Annually	Attend at least one conference annually with large software exhibits.
Test software	Students	Learn pros and cons of each resource compared to student needs	Time to set up and work with each product in enough depth to understand it well.	Annually	At least ten new products evaluated and three extensively tested annually.
Extended family meetings	Families	Use tools to effectively search colleges/create lists	Time to meet with families	Ongoing	College lists that students are happy with, confident in, and reflect their needs and interests

### **Personal Statement and Essay Editing**

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Organize essay drafts and deadlines	Students	Ensure essays are not written at the last minute, and are submitted on time.	SCOIR	According to college deadlines	Students happy with their essays and no deadlines missed.
Compile resources for writing essays	Students	Give students additional resources to help them write essays	Time to add to my current list of articles and resources on writing essays well.	September 2019	Updated list posted to the website.
Hold an essay workshop	Students	Let students know about additional resources to help with writing essays.	Time to create handouts for a workshop.	October 2019	Completed workshop.

### **College Application Preparation**

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
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Set up student and parent accounts in SCOIR; training	Families	Ensure students and parents are comfortable with how to organize the college app process	SCOIR accounts; time for in-depth training	Within two weeks of each student enrollment	Calm, confident students and parents who understand how to organize and stay on top of the application process
Data entry	Families	Ensure all data/deadlines/documents are accurate	Time to gather/review documents and post them to accounts.	Ongoing	All deadlines met with accurate and complete documentation.
Create a flyer	Families	Create a written resource for SCOIR use	Time to create a detailed flyer	September 2019	Flyer completed and distributed.

### Interview Preparation

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Create a YouTube channel of mock interviews.	Students	See what college interviews are like to help them prepare.	Time to watch videos and select good examples.	December 2019	A YouTube channel created.
Create a list of interview questions students may be asked.	Students	Give students a chance to prepare answers to questions they can think about in advance.	Time to compile a list from various references.	January 2020	A list of interview questions posted to our website.
Create a mock interview	Students	Give students a chance to do a practice interview with feedback.	Time to script an interview, do the interview, and debrief afterwards.	February 2020	Interview scripted and ready for students requesting it.

### College Selection

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Meet with student to understand priorities, interests, pros, cons, of each college opportunity	Students	Gather information to help student feel confident in choosing among competing colleges	Time to spend with students, and the ability to listen carefully.	As needed	A student happy and confident with his or her college choice, and why it's on their list.
Help students go through the exercise of creating a detailed list of pros and cons,	Students	Help students prioritize	Time to meet with students	As needed	Create a detailed document they can refer back to when they have doubts.
Write an article on college selection	Families	List some ideas to help student choose college (and for parents to step back)	Time to write an article	January 2020	Published article. "You've Been Accepted to Your Top Three College Choices. Now What?"

### Transition Services: Students stress management and emotional wellbeing and parent encouragement

Activities/ Task	Target Audience	Purpose	Support Needs (Resources, materials, etc.)	Timeline for Completion	Measure(s) of Success
Research available resources	Families	Identify local resources	Time to research local resources	June 2020	An initial list of resources compiled
Create a new website page	Families	Increase awareness of local and other resources	Time to organize and create a new website page in an area outside my expertise	July 2020	Completed web page published