



## UNIVERSITY CONSULTANTS OF AMERICA

# THE ROI OF COLLEGE CONSULTING

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Retaining an educational consultant is an investment, in money, time, and opportunity. But is it a wise investment?

Certainly, not everybody needs an expert for every purpose. Although you don't need an accountant to file taxes, for complicated issues, it's a good idea. You don't need a financial planner to make your investments, but often they can do better in the market than we can, especially in uncertain times. You don't need a lawyer to do business deals, but they can help negotiate and memorialize what you need into solid agreements. And you don't necessarily need a doctor all the time, but even when things seem fine, most of us get checkups.

Sometimes, expertise is a really good idea.

As consultants, we are admissions experts, keeping up with – and even predicting – trends that can affect your educational and life opportunities. Is the service really worth it? Here are four factors to be considered in evaluating the “return on investment” of admissions consulting.

The first two factors are easy to understand. College and graduate education should be undertaken after making a wise cost-benefit analysis. On the “cost” side, whether to select a

college with lower tuition can depend not only on your current financial position, but also on whether you intend to expend money later on graduate school. In achieving lower-cost college options, a quality consultant will know which schools are more likely to provide greater tuition discounts in the form of financial aid and merit aid. In truth, achieving the lowest college cost has more to do with developing an intelligent college list than pursuing external scholarships and grants, which are often hard to obtain.

On the “benefit” side, getting admissions offers from schools that are best for the student is the usual reason for hiring an independent educational consultant. High school counselors can be great (or overworked), but outside professionals have different resources in terms of time and usually deeper resources in terms of work quality. High school counselors work hard, but they are seldom available after school, on weekends, or over the summer. An independent consultant is usually available when in-school helpers cannot be accessed. High school counselors also do not have the luxury of multiple sets of eyes to review essays, nor an unknown person to present a realistic mock interview experience, nor the kind of resource depth that UCA has been developing over the past decade.

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Yet there are two other factors that parents do not see: the influence on a student's growth, and the influence on the entire family.

At UCA, although how admissions is our job, a student's long-term success is our goal. A big part is how we mentor our students. We require that each student address every UCA professional by first name so they no longer feel subordinate to parents, teachers, and other adults. We tell our students frankly when they do substandard work, and we make them try again because there's no point editing an essay that doesn't have good content. Of course, we also tell our students when they do world-class work, and with demanding standards they ultimately do author world-class essays. When a student who has not performed well in high school produces a personal statement that makes them proud, it can be a life-changing experience. When a student who has done well realizes how much better they can be, it's a life lesson. With proper mentoring, students succeed not only in admissions, but also in their absorption and processing of college lessons.

Finally, by outsourcing the stress of working on college applications, your last year with your child is more harmonious. Nobody wants conflict in their home, and conflict obviously does not lead to great work or great results. We have even seen marital tensions disappear. When we get everyone to align with what is best for the student, a sense of joint purpose can re-connect spouses who have lost

something special along life's uneven path.

And when a young person succeeds and offers a genuine, heartfelt "thank you" to the parents who helped them succeed, it's a moment to be cherished forever.

No, there is no quantitative method for measuring return on investment for college counseling, and no, it is not required for every situation. However, we believe in what we do, not because a student's admissions results prove our greatness, but because contributing to a young person's lifetime success is an honor and a privilege.

