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# 50 COLLEGE ADMISSION DIRECTORS SPEAK TO PARENTS

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A Harvest/HBJ Original

50 COLLEGE  
ADMISSION DIRECTORS  
SPEAK TO PARENTS

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*Sandra F. MacGowan*

*Sarah M. McGinty*

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A/Harcourt/HBJ Original

HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVI~~C~~H, PUBLISHERS

San Diego New York London



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

MacGowan, Sandra F.

50 college admission directors speak to parents/Sandra F. MacGowan, Sarah M. McGinty.

p. cm.—(A Harvest/HBJ book)

ISBN 0-15-601595-1 (pbk.)

1. Universities and colleges—United States—Admission.

2. College, Choice of—United States. I. McGinty, Sarah M.

II. Title. III. Title: Fifty college admission directors speak to parents.

LB2351.2.M23 1988

378'.1056'0973—dc19

88-10918

Printed in the United States of America

Designed by G.B.D. Smith

First edition

A B C D E

*To Barbara, John, and Jule*

—S.F.M.

*To my father*

—S.M.M.

### *Acknowledgments*

The field of college admission is a complex network—teachers, counselors, admission staff, alumni, testing services, federal agencies, parents, college administrators—all striving to ease and improve the process of education for young people. The admission professionals—especially the more than fifty here who became our collaborating colleagues—are a special group who impressed us with their concern for students. We acknowledge and thank them for their time, ideas, and writing talent. We also thank Elizabeth DeLaHunt, college counselor at the Latin School of Chicago, for being so very blunt and smart. Nor could we have completed the task without the assistance and tact of John McClintock, Nancy Donehower, Susan Moriarty, Marisa Casari, and Ellen Graham. Special thanks to our editors, Emily Thompson and Diane Sterling. And thanks and love to Linda, John, and Kim.

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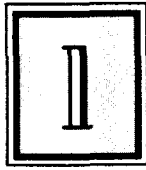
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## Dear Parents of College-Bound Students

*"I was rather literary in college—one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the Yale News—and now I am going to bring back all such things into my life and become again . . . the 'well-rounded' man."*

—F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Twenty years ago, if either of us had been asked why we chose our undergraduate colleges, we might have said, "We didn't get in anywhere else!" Looking back, we both received some poor guidance about choosing colleges. One of us did have the benefit of visiting many colleges. Her father personally drove her to a dozen colleges, and she was given the family car to visit other schools with two friends. After serious investigation, she applied to three schools, without much advice or support from her guidance counselor, and got these results: wait-listed at an all-women's Ivy League college, wait-listed at an Ivy League urban university, accepted at a highly selective liberal arts college. Because her guidance counselor advised her that she would never get off either wait list, she went to the liberal arts college. It

was an excellent school, but years later her choices seem to have been a bit limited. If she was wait-listed at two Ivy League colleges, there probably was another she should have been advised to apply to that would have accepted her strong high school record and combined verbal and math SAT score of 1410. She received a first-class education at the college she attended and went on to graduate school.

The other of us visited no colleges before she applied to the one home state university her parents said she should apply to. Their friends had a daughter who went to the state university, and her parents were intimidated by the prospect of investigating other schools and applying for financial aid. Of course, her A average and combined SAT score of 1304 made her a shoe-in at the state university, where, for more challenge, she found time to complete the requirements for two degrees in the four years it takes others to complete one. Had she been encouraged by her guidance counselor, she might have applied to other schools besides the state university. Nevertheless, she received an innovative education there in a newly formed writing option of the English department, and then she, too, went on to graduate school.

Our futures and careers developed as they did because we took advantage of opportunities presented to us, but both of us could have made more informed college choices had we received better advice. If you're on the brink of beginning the college selection process with your teen, you can recognize your own signs of "advice starvation" when—

- ❑ You plan to spend three hours a night for the next four months reading eighteen college guide books cover to cover—with a yellow highlighter.
- ❑ You skip the salmon mousse at the Reynolds' cocktail party for the chance to discuss the difference between "early decision" and "rolling admission" with a Princeton alumnus.
- ❑ You start wondering if hefty alumni contributions would have improved your child's application chances.
- ❑ You experience a strange queasiness in the pit of your stomach every time you wait at a traffic light behind a car with two college decals.



Sound advice is the key to getting through the college selection process with your teen. When we decided to write this book, we asked ourselves what parents might fantasize about doing to help their teens get into college—talk directly to college admission directors and ask them all the pressing, curious, silly, serious, demanding, even embarrassing questions they dreamt of asking about college selection. Because calling the admission directors of a few dozen colleges on the telephone is impractical, we came up with the next best thing—we asked fifty admission directors of colleges across the country to answer the questions on the minds of many parents we spoke to. Each gives a detailed answer to one of fifty different questions you and other parents have on your minds.

As you read the admission directors' advice, write down the questions that occur to you on the "Parents' Questions Update" at the back of the book. Then forward them to us. We hope to pass these questions on to other admission directors who will answer them in a future edition. If your first teen is college bound this year, these new queries may help your younger children when it's their turn to choose colleges. If you don't have younger college-bound children, the questions may help the people you know who do.

A word of caution: Discussions with your teen during these times can be nerve-racking. If a particular college admission director hits home about a problem you and your teen are having right now, give the director's article as a peace offering to your teen. Then pick up your heated conversation after you both have read the director's advice.

This book is for all parents of college-bound teenagers. We're on your side, and so are the college admission directors.