

January 4, 2024

IBPA Meeting Topic: College Night

First speaker:

Sue Tirukonda, Financial Advisor at Cordell Wealth Management. Sue has 2 children who are East IB alum.

- College planning - cost is high and continues to rise well above the inflation rate while the amount of aid remains fairly constant
 - Tuition increase of 11% from 2022/23 school year to 2023/24 school year
 - Scholarships/grants were used by 76% of the families and covered 29% of costs
 - 41% of families borrowed money to cover around 19% of cost
 - Sue shared that the gateway to aid is via FAFSA. This past year, 71% of families filed. FAFSA allows access to aid money through federal, state, and local agencies/schools.
 - There is a misconception that FAFSA only addresses need-based aid, however, merit accounts for a lot of the money that is given out to families.
 - Deadline for this year (current Seniors applying) is April 1, 2024 since the reformatted FAFSA was only recently released via a soft launch.
 - Sue suggests that families file as soon as you can - early bird gets the worm in some cases.
 - Changes to “new” FAFSA:
 - Previously only allowed listing 10 schools for report to be sent, but now it allows up to 20
 - There are fewer questions
 - Income info will come directly from the IRS - this will be required to file the FAFSA. In the past you could import from the IRS or manually input the data.
 - Definition of “Contributor” - student, student spouse, parent who provides the most financial assets in cases of blended families - each contributor needs their own FAFSA ID
 - EFC (Expected Family Contribution) is now referred to as the SAI (Student Aid Index)
 - Separate eligibility for Pell grants to help address unclaimed dollars. The criteria have been expanded to allow for more students access to the money.
 - Small business/farm owners - that income used to be excluded from the income/assets information, but will now be included.
 - College Navigator (website) - great tool for comparison of schools
 - Sue is not certain how the weighting will be for the new formula. FAFSA is relying on schools to come up with a cost of attendance which will include things like tuition, room and board, transportation, etc. The formula would

- then be: COA (Cost of Attendance) - the SAI (Student Aid Index) = financial need for that student
- Old FAFSA - If you have multiple college kids, EFC was divided. With the new FAFSA, the SAI no longer splits the amount.
 - Youtube videos - type in “federal student aid” to view various videos to help with guide you through the process
 - Sue recommends that you get your FAFSA ID ASAP, consent for IRS data retrieval, and complete the application soon
 - **Question:** If I am a victim of identity fraud and require the IRS to send me a code for tax purposes, will that interfere with filing?
 - *Answer (Sue):* not sure. Try it to see what happens and if you run into trouble, contact the IRS
 - **Question:** Do both parents have to have a separate ID?
 - *Answer (Sue):* Yes - both have to provide consent for the IRS portion of the application.
 - **Question:** If I have a FAFSA ID via for a current child/student, do I need a new one?
 - *Answer (Sue):* not sure
 - **Question:** Is this information mainly for current Seniors?
 - *Answer (Sue):* yes. As far as the FAFSA application, there is nothing for younger students to do except maybe utilize the FAFSA estimator to help determine what schools might be within budget based on the amount of aid a student might receive. This is helpful as it can open up honest communication in families for what financial abilities and expectations are.
 - **Question:** Are some resources internationally focused?
 - *Answer (Sue):* FAFSA is purely USA oriented, but can be for any higher-ed school (trade, tech, etc). FAFSA can help with aid if the International school participates in the US federal student loan program.
 - **Question:** Is this something that has to be done every year?
 - *Answer (Sue):* yes

Second Speaker:

Jenny Fry, Former East IB Teacher and College Advisor, Owner of College Matters

- First exposure to IB in 1990 - Arizona
- 1997 - came to East, retired in 2015, IB Junior english teacher, CAS coordinator, College coordinator among other roles at East High
- College Matters - college coaching - applying, essay writing, scholarships, becoming a more competitive applicant
- “IB kids are the best, bar none, to succeed in college”
- Jenny shared that many colleges/universities are aware of the intense rigor that IB students face and that makes them good candidates for a variety of reasons.

- What do colleges want? Jenny had us draw a circle and divide it in half. One half was labeled “Transcript”. Colleges put a great deal of weight on this and will look for an upward trend if there was a rocky start. This shows the student was able to figure out the problem, and take steps to improve on their grades. The other half was divided into 6 areas: ACT/SAT score, Essay, Resume (non school related activities, Teacher recommendations, Demonstrated Interest, and a hook (something that makes that person stand out above the other applicants).
- Jenny recommends:
 - **ACT/SAT** - take ACT/SAT sophomore year for baseline. This will help determine where you need to focus your studies.
 - **PSAT** - to see if you qualify for National Merit status.
 - **Essay** - work on summer before Senior year so it is ready to submit
 - **Resume (Passion project) for activities & interests.** This refers to enrichment outside of the classroom. CAS can come in to play here - should span all 4 years if possible.
 - **Teacher Recommendations** - encourage students to become acquainted with teachers. Recommendation can make a big difference for admission and/or scholarships. Give teachers the courtesy of asking for a recommendation well in advance - teachers are asked to write many and they take time.
 - **Demonstrated Interests** - Colleges want students who want them. Engage in official visits at schools. Tour locally to get an idea about school sizes and what is offered. More selective schools keep track of any communication that comes through - some tabulate every student contact/encounter.
 - **Hook** - anything that sets your students apart from other. Examples; extreme talent in an area (sports, musician) or could be where they are from if a low percentage of applicants are not from your area...
 - Keep the pie in mind throughout the 4 year HS career. Begin to build relationships, research schools, reach out to schools, plan to take ACT/SAT, continue academic progress, etc
- <https://www.ibo.org/university-admission/find-countries-and-universities-that-recognize-the-ib/> - provides information about what universities recognize the IB program
- Fiske Guide to College (updated yearly) - great resource to learn details about a variety of colleges/universities
- Colleges that Change Lives by Loren Pope and Hilary Masell Oswald; ctcl.org
- There is Life After College by Jeffrey Selinger
- ** MUST read** College Admission Essentials by Ethan Sawyer
- To help narrow down a short list of schools to explore, ask what is most important to your student - proximity, programs offered, size of school, specific course of study, financial picture, etc
- Be open minded - many schools will offer more in merit aid from endowments

- **Question:** Where can I find info on specific scholarships offered by different schools?
 - *Answer (Jenny):* Look on websites to begin your research
- **Question:** If a student does IB certificate vs diploma, are they still considered an IB student?
 - *Answer (Mr. Boykins):* yes, certificate and diploma students are recognized as IB students. They have the same opportunities in terms of earning credit for coursework based on how they test, and they all receive the IB stole to wear at graduation.
- **Question:** Is teacher recommendation the same as counselor recommendation?
 - *Answer (Mr. Boykins):* No, they are separate. Usually 2 teacher, 1 counselor and sometimes an additional personal reference is required
- Final thought: It's not where you go but what you do with the opportunities wherever you go

Third speaker:

Ms. Cammie Kennedy, East HS College and Career Coordinator (Ms. Kennedy works closely with Ms. Ewy, IB counselor, and was speaking on her behalf at the meeting)

- 5 tips for preparing for college experience
 1. Set up a professional email - not a student email. Colleges will look at it from a next step, "professional" standpoint. Avoid offensive email addresses.
 2. Set up a Common App account before Senior year
 3. Set up a deadline before the deadline to ensure you have enough time
 - a. Dec. 1 is typically the national deadline for merit scholarships (If Dec. 1 is listed, aim for 2 weeks before)
 4. Read emails, financial aid documents, etc for content with no distractions. Read them through multiple times to be sure you understand what is being presented.
 5. Use Xello as a tracker. This is a program used by USD 259 that ALL students have access through via their student portal. It can show the calendar of deadlines for each school you are applying for. You can also research schools via Xello. In the future there will hopefully be a feature where students can talk to admissions reps via Xello. Another useful website is Niche.com. On niche.com, a student can enter their GPA and/or test scores to see their potential of admittance.
 - Life after HS is a significant life transition. Teens sharing their plans can help them process their decisions.
 - Remember that the student needs to make contact with the schools - not the parent.
 - Class of 2028 - FAFSA will be a requirement for graduation.
- **Question:** When does the window open for submission of application?

- *Answer (Ms. Kennedy):* You should be ready to submit your essay and application by June 1 (summer just before your Senior year)
- **Question:** What is the difference between Xello and Common App?
 - *Answer (Ms. Kennedy):* Common App is a college application tool accessed via Xello. A student can fill out 1 application, then it will be sent to the 10 schools you pick. There may be secondary applications depending on the schools.
- **Question:** What is a good timeframe for requesting letters of recommendations?
 - *Answer (Ms. Kennedy):* Ms. Ewy says at least 3 weeks, but Cammie suggests the earlier the better. A student can even discuss with the teacher during Junior year that they will be asking for a letter so the teacher will be expecting the request via Common App.
- Mr. Boykins suggests that by the time they leave Junior year, they have things lined up for Senior year (requests for letters, meetings with CCC Coordinator to go over personal statements, etc)
- **Question:** Will students receive the information that was provided this evening?
 - *Answer (Mr. Boykins):* Students will receive this information via their Junior English class. Ms Kennedy also shared that she and Ms. Ewy are also available to help students/parents navigate the college journey.

Financial Aid Resources (courtesy of Sue Tirukonda)

To complete the FAFSA: <https://studentaid.gov/>

YouTube.com and search 'Federal Student Aid' for a video series on the 2024 FAFSA

To estimate the aid you may be eligible for: <https://studentaid.gov/aid-estimator/>

Learn more about the SAI: <https://thecollegeinvestor.com/43805/student-aid-index-sai-chart/>

Another aid calculator: <https://mycollegecorner.com/calculator/financial-aid-calculator>

Researching colleges: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>