

REFORM JUDAISM

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM *online*

Fall 2011 Admissions 100: Getting In: What the Experts Say

A knowledgeable college consultant can help high school students find good school matches, assist in getting admitted, and offer critical advice students and parents may not be able to find elsewhere, such as these insider tips from consultants throughout the States.

RJ: What are your best little known tips for helping me get into the college of my dreams?

Janet Rosier, Janet Rosier's Educational Resources, Woodbridge, Connecticut (HECA, IECA, NACAC): The two most important factors in admissions are high grades in a rigorous curriculum and high test scores—and unless you are number one in your state for an athletic ability or your grandfather donated the library, everything else comes in a distant third.

Beyond academics, colleges want students who demonstrate a passion—an athletic pursuit or musical accomplishment or devotion to a cause that is near and dear to your heart. Colleges are unimpressed with students who are “a mile wide and an inch deep,” belonging to many clubs but only superficially involved with them.

Also, colleges want to hear your voice in the essay. They don't want to hear your English teacher's voice or your mother's voice—they want the real you to come through.

Is getting into a prestigious school my best route to success?

Janet Rosier: Being in the bottom of your class at a prestigious university is not going to be as helpful as being in the top of your class at another institution where you have excelled academically, shown leadership, and participated in internships or research. Nowadays, college graduates seeking employment or applying to graduate school are expected to have an impressive résumé. Internships in your field are crucial, and colleges should be able to help you secure them; check out the career counseling center when you tour a school. If you're planning on certain graduate programs, you'll need to show that you've conducted research; find out whether the college offers research to undergrads and if there are qualifications. Also explore the clubs on campus that interest you and might present you with a leadership opportunity. Then choose a college that is a good fit, enabling you to challenge yourself and to excel.

In your opinion, what schools offer the greatest quality of Jewish life?

Janet Rosier: What constitutes “quality of Jewish life” will vary from student to student: Shabbat services, kosher food, an engaged and vibrant Hillel, a large Jewish population, Jewish courses, Jewish fraternities and sororities, etc. You need to articulate what kind of Jewish experience you want at college and find the school where it can best be actualized.

What is your prescription for “de-stressing” the admissions process?

Janet Rosier: Understand how the admissions system works and be aware of what’s in and out of your control. By and large you are in control of your grades, your curriculum, and your test scores. You are not in control of who else from your school or your region is applying to the same college, who is a legacy, who is a recruited athlete, who is an underrepresented minority, or if more females or males are needed this year. Once you let go of what is out of your control and concentrate on what you can control, you can relax, knowing that you have done your job.