

# Telling Their Stories, Amplifying Their Voices

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— AND —  
**C**  **NNECT**

# Goals of this session

- ❖ provide an overview of how the different parts of the college application can work together (focusing on Common Application)
- ❖ provide some concrete and actionable suggestions for supporting your students and maximizing the impact of their application



# Things we hear (or say) repeatedly

“Colleges want to see what I have accomplished, so I should list everything I have ever done in every space possible.”

“I need to establish myself as authoritative and set the stage before I can explain why I recommend this student.”

“I unfortunately do not know this student well enough to write a helpful recommendation.”

“Nothing sad enough has happened to me to write about.”

“Something traumatic happened to me so I should focus on that.”



# Some Context

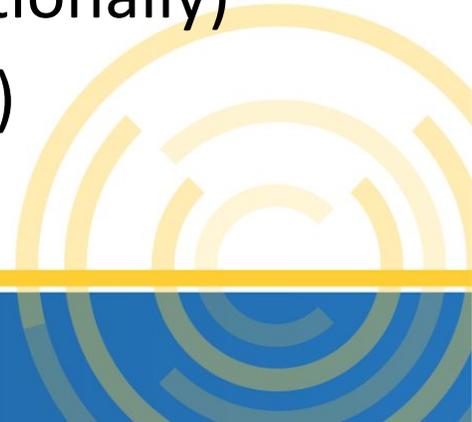
## ~100 hours

- avg # hours invested in the college application process

## 5-7 minutes

- avg # minutes spent reading each college application

- **192:1** student to counselor ratio for private high schools (nationally)
- **274:1** student to counselor ratio for public high schools (nationally)
- **663:1** student to counselor ratio for public high schools (CA)



# Anatomy of an Application

## Student

- Transcript/GPA
- Test Scores (if applicable)
- Extracurriculars & Activities
- Community Service
- Personal Statement/Essay/PIQ
- Supplements (if applicable)
- Additional Information

## Counselor/Teacher

- School Profile
- Letter(s) of Recommendation
- Additional Information

These sections should breathe life into the application; they are meant to amplify or elevate the student's story and give depth

# Harmony of an Application

## What The Student Has Done

- Transcript/GPA
- Test Scores (if applicable)
- Extracurriculars & Activities
- Community Service

## Why/How The Student Has Done It

- Personal Statement/Essay/PIQ
- Supplements (if applicable)
- Additional Information

## Impact & Context

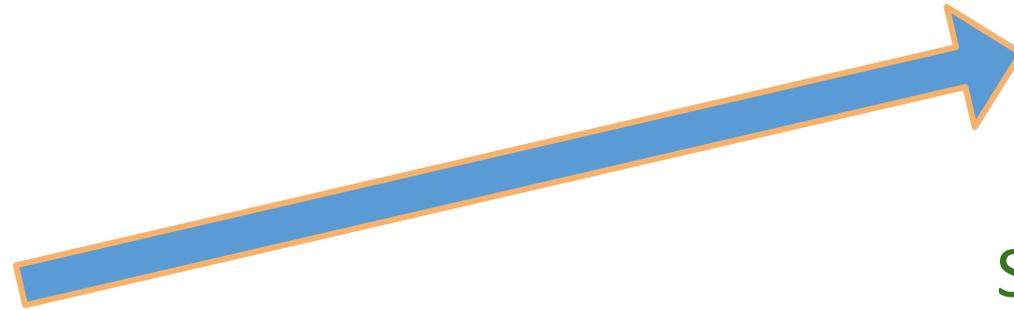
- School Profile
- Letter(s) of Recommendation
- Additional Information



# Telling Their Stories, Amplifying Their Voices



Activities, Classes,  
Data Points



Further Description in  
Personal Statement,  
Additional Information

Supporting Evidence  
in Letters of  
Recommendation



# Filling in the Picture

**AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP  
Physics, dual enrollment courses**

**Plays clarinet in school band  
7 hrs/week, 40 wks/yr**

**Girl Scouts  
3 hrs/week, 35 wks/yr**



# Filling in the Picture

AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Physics, dual enrollment courses  
I am fascinated by STEM fields and love learning about how things work in the world around me.

Plays clarinet in school band  
7 hrs/week, 40 wks/yr

I am first chair and a leader within my band. This does not come easy to me and I have to practice significantly on my own at home.

Girl Scouts

3 hrs/week, 35 wks/yr

This has been my community since I was six years old. I am most proud of developing skills in public speaking and fundraising.

# Filling in the Picture

AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Physics, dual enrollment courses  
I am fascinated by STEM fields and love learning about how things work in the world around me.

Karina has taken the most rigorous course load offered at our school, and she even sought additional classes at our local community college to further her studies in the sciences.

Plays clarinet in school band  
7 hrs/week, 40 wks/yr

I am first chair and a leader within my band. This does not come easy to me and I have to practice significantly on my own at home.

Our school band is a cherished part of the community that performs during all three athletic seasons as well as puts on a big holiday fundraising show every year. This year, Karina is organizing the holiday show.

Girl Scouts

3 hrs/week, 35 wks/yr

This has been my community since I was six years old. I am most proud of developing skills in public speaking and fundraising.

Karina has been a Girl Scout for most of her life and has won awards for her service. She has gone well beyond our graduation requirement service hours and is very invested in her projects.

# If...

- The counselor and/or the teacher working mostly from a standard brag sheet to write the letter of recommendation

# ...Try

- Focus on the impact, not the activity
- Have the student identify specific things on the brag sheet they want illuminated by each LOR or better yet, have them give teacher(s) specific prompts



# If...

- A student only focuses on their trauma or what has happened to them in their personal statement/essay

# ...Try

- Encourage them to focus on their passions, interests, growth, etc. in their essay and share important or relevant context in their additional information section



# If...

- There is simply not enough time to write specialized letters of recommendation for all my students

# ...Try

- Craft a statement that highlights the challenges or key contextual descriptors of your high school environment that all students can add to their application



# Quick Tips to Maximize Impact

- Advise students to maximize their words in the application instead of just dumping or duplicating information
- Consider adding some helpful stats to your school profile
  - average # advanced courses taken, what designates a “rigorous course load”
- Students don’t always want to share their struggles, if appropriate it can be helpful information for counselors to share
- Encourage students to prompt their recommender so the rec letters do not all look identical



# Making Additional Information Useful

- Craft a statement for the additional information section that all students can use at a minimum
  - Do you frequently have subs or long-term subs?
  - Are there scheduling conflicts with any courses?
  - Are there tracks that may prevent students from advancing coursework based on their placement in 9th grade (or even middle school)?
  - Are there any limiting factors to participating in extracurriculars? (example: remote campus in which students have to stick to the bus schedule)



# Prompts for Letters of Recommendation

- What assignment or paper that I completed is most memorable?
- I am really proud of “x” that I accomplished in your class, could you please discuss this?
- I focused on developing “x” skill in your class, could you please discuss this?
- How did I contribute to the learning environment and classroom community?
- You were not only my teacher but my club advisor, could you please talk about what I am like outside of the classroom, too?



# Questions?

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