

2

SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## ACTIVITY #1: EVALUATING YOUR SCHOOL EXPERIENCE TO DATE

### *Opening Discussion:*

Remind students that they probably didn't have much choice when it came to selecting the schools that they are currently attending. Additionally, remind students that there may not have been a large number of options regarding their choice for high school. However, the sky's the limit when it comes to the choices students will have for college. This is the perfect time to begin thinking about all of the possibilities that exist!

### *Activity/Handouts:*

None

### *Questions to open up discussion with students:*

- How was it decided which high school you would attend?
- What have you liked about your current school?
- What would you change if you could?
- How well do you anticipate that your high school will help you reach your goals?
- If you could choose your high school now, what would you look for?

### *Instructions:*

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of qualities that they believe would make a school "just right" and list these qualities on blackboard or flip charts.
2. Have students discuss the qualities on the list and how these might apply to their college search.

2

SESSION 2: THERE IS A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE!

## ACTIVITY # 2: GETTING TO KNOW COLLEGE POSSIBILITIES

### *Opening Discussion:*

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (functions, goals). This activity is designed to teach students the different types of higher education opportunities that exist for them after high school.

### *Activity/Handout:*

#### **Charting Your Course for College—Part One**

### *Instructions:*

1. Give every student the handout entitled "Charting Your Course for College—Part One". Allow students a few minutes to read the handout and then review the different types of colleges with the students.
2. Write, as headings, each category of college on the blackboard or flip chart pages.
3. Ask students to suggest names of colleges which they think fit into each category. Help them evaluate each suggested college accurately, and then write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts

AND/OR

4. Ask students to suggest people they know who have attended specific colleges. Evaluate which category of college that institution falls under. Write the name of the college under the correct heading on blackboard or flipcharts.

## CHARTING YOUR COURSE FOR COLLEGE (PART ONE)<sup>3</sup>

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler...  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.”

—Robert Frost

Few decisions that you will make in your life will seem more important than your choice of a college. In fact, the career paths open to you, many of the friends you will maintain for a lifetime, even the area of the country in which you are likely to live and work will be strongly influenced by your college decision. It is important to remember that choosing a college—or even a list of colleges to which to apply—is not an exact science. There is not “one perfect” college for anyone. Instead, there are many colleges that would be a fine match for every college-bound student. The trick is to identify your unique priorities for selecting a college, carefully research the characteristics of a range of colleges and universities and, finally, make a match of several options to which you will make application.

### GETTING STARTED

As you begin planning for college selection, take stock of your priorities. You will be sitting in the classroom at your final choice, not your parents and not your best friend. Although it is a good idea to seek advice, especially from teachers or counselors who know colleges well, in the end, no one can tell you where you'll be satisfied and happy.

A good place to start is by considering what you have and have not found important and rewarding in your high school experience.

#### *Ask questions like:*

- How do I learn best? In large or lecture-style classes, or in small discussion/seminar settings?
- Do I prefer being one of the best in a class, or do I need the competition of equally bright peers in order to challenge myself?
- Do I learn more quickly when structure is clear and uniform, or does freedom to make choices about how I spend my time for a class fit me better?
- What extracurricular activities have been most important to me? Which will I want to continue in college?
- What have I learned about my academic interests and abilities that will influence what I might study in college?
- Who are my friends? Do I want my relationships in college to be similar or different?

Answers to these questions will help you apply what you have learned about yourself during your high school years as you set priorities for your college experience.

<sup>3</sup> Copyright 2004: Mary Lee Hoganson

Before you begin picking college possibilities, it is also a good idea to have a candid conversation with your parents. Are there limits to what they can or will contribute to your college finances? (If your parents are separated or divorced, ask this question of both parents since many colleges will expect a financial contribution from both.) Are there colleges which they hope you will consider? Are they comfortable with allowing you to travel a great distance for college?

If you and your parents are on the same page—great! If not, it is better to negotiate differences of opinion at the beginning of the selection process rather than at the end, when you have selected a college which your parents will not support as a final choice. If you find your parents too narrowly focused, your counselor may be able to educate them about the wide range of quality colleges. If they are worried about paying for college, your counselors can help them understand the financial aid process.

### CONSIDERING COLLEGE TYPES:

Colleges aren't all the same. Different colleges and universities have different missions (or functions, or goals). While no two are exactly alike, most fit into one or more of the following categories:

**Liberal Arts Colleges** focus on the education of undergraduate students. Classes are generally taught by professors who see teaching as their primary responsibility. Because most liberal arts colleges are smaller than universities, classes tend to be smaller and more personal attention is available. As opposed to preparation for a specific career path, students who attend liberal arts colleges are exposed to a broad base of courses in the humanities, social sciences and sciences. In addition, they select at least one area of in-depth study which is their college "major". Many employers look for graduates of liberal arts programs, valuing their well-rounded preparation.

**Universities** are generally larger and include a liberal arts college, as well as some professionally-oriented colleges and graduate programs. Universities offer a greater range of academic choices than do liberal arts colleges. They will likely provide more extensive resources in terms of library, laboratory, fine arts and athletic facilities. At many large universities class size will reflect institutional size, with most introductory classes being taught in a lecture format.

**Technical Institutes and Professional Schools** enroll students who have made clear decisions about what they want to study and emphasize preparation for specific careers, for example in music or fine arts, engineering or technical sciences. You will want to be quite sure of your future direction before selecting one of these options.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities** find their origins in the time when African-American students were systematically denied access to most other colleges and universities. Students at HBCUs have a unique opportunity to experience an educational community in which they are a part of the majority. They find committed faculty mentors who encourage their expectations of success.

Similarly, **Women's Colleges**, with their larger numbers of female faculty and administrators, offer college women confidence-building role models, greater opportunities to serve in a full range of student leadership positions, and a heightened awareness of career possibilities for women.

**Community or junior colleges** generally offer the first two years of a liberal arts education, in addition to specialized occupational preparation. An associate degree is awarded at the end of a two-year program of studies, following which many students continue their education at a four-year institution.

**Proprietary institutions** are considered for-profit companies that operate under the demands of investors and stockholders. They attract adult learners and part-time students in search of narrowly-focused professional training opportunities. These programs usually offer a non-traditional format; many for-profits also have classes solely available online.