The College Admission Landscape, 2012

Prepared for the Symposium on
Admissions in the 21st Century
July 2012 Meeting

CollegeBoard
Advocacy & Policy Center

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Executive Summary

This report first summarizes the current status of topics discussed in two College Board reports of 2008, *Preserving the Dream of America*, the report of the Task Force on Admissions in the 21st Century; and *Coming to Our Senses: Education and the American Future*, the report of the Commission on Access, Admissions, and Success in Higher Education (College Board, 2008a; College Board, 2008b). It then raises new issues not addressed in those reports.

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Topics Discussed in the 2008 Reports

Changing Demographics

Preserving the Dream of America reported data suggesting that the proportion of low-income and minority students in the college admission pools would "grow dramatically in coming decades," with minority groups making up all of the enrollment growth and the population of Hispanic and Latino students "more than doubling."

The latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics (Hussar & Bailey, 2011) project that the total number of white high school graduates will decrease 11 percent and black graduates will decrease 2 percent between 2007-08 (the most recent year with actual figures) and 2020-21, while the number of American Indian/Alaska Native high school graduates is projected to increase 1 percent, Asian/Pacific Islander graduates will increase 46 percent, and Hispanic graduates will increase 27 percent.

Misguided Public Discussion

The *Preserving the Dream* of America report argued that press coverage "tends to overstate costs, misrepresent the reality of the school-to-college transition and even discourage aspiration for college attendance. The truth is that there is a place on a college campus for any high school graduate."

There is no objective measure of the quality of press coverage of college costs and transitions, so no trends can be tracked here. The most recent data show that, in 2011-12, half of all full-time students at public and private nonprofit four-year colleges attended institutions charging tuition and fees of $9,936 or less, and that full-time undergraduates received an average of about $5,750 in grant aid from all sources and federal tax benefits at public four-year institutions and $15,530 at private nonprofit four-year institutions (College Board, 2011). At the same time, it is clear that college is becoming less affordable; see the "College Affordability" section below. In terms of acceptance rates, the average selectivity rate in fall 2010 at four-year colleges and universities was 65.5 percent, a drop of about one percentage point from 2007 to 2009 figures (Clinedinst, Hurley, & Hawkins, 2011).

A Rankings Arms Race

Preserving the Dream of America also argued that "a rankings arms race has developed among some colleges and universities," encouraging the misguided notion that where one goes to college is more important than college attendance itself."

College rankings continue to command headlines, but some healthy developments

are providing more information to prospective college students and in more user-friendly formats; see the discussion in the "College Admission" section below.

The Haves and the Have-Nots

Preserving the Dream of America expressed apprehension about "the prospect of two Americas divided by income, one well educated and affluent, and the other underprepared and poor."

The economic downturn of 2008-09 and subsequent slow growth have made the gap between America's haves and have-nots far more apparent and far more pronounced. From 1980 to 2010, the average family income (in constant 2010 dollars):

- declined by 7 percent for the poorest 20 percent of families;

- rose 14 percent for the middle 20 percent; and

- rose 78 percent for the wealthiest 5 percent of families (College Board, 2011).

From 2000 to 2010, the average family income for the lowest quintile of income-earning families declined 16 percent, compared to a decline of 6 percent for the highest quintile.

Early Childhood

Recommendation 1 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for universally available, high-quality, preschool education for 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reports that the percentage of the nation's 4-year-olds enrolled in early childhood programs increased from 24 percent to 28 percent between 2008 and 2011-12, while the percentage of 3-year-olds remained constant at 4 percent. This is enormous progress since 2002-03, when only 3 percent of 3-year-olds and 14 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled.

But average state spending per enrolled child (in constant 2011 dollars) fell from $4,325 in 2008-09 to $4,151 in 2011-12, many states have reduced preschool funding, and further cuts projected for 2012-2013 threaten to undo much of the progress some states have made. NIEER concludes that state revenue declines in recent years have intensified the problem, "but data from the past decade indicate a longer-term trend of eroding quality and the gradual substitution of inexpensive child care for early education."

In assessing program quality, NIEER could find only 12 states that were providing enough per-child funding to meet all of its benchmarks for quality standards; the organization estimates that over half a million children, or 43 percent of nationwide enrollment, are in programs that meet fewer than half of the benchmarks. States bucking the trend tend to be those where court orders have required gubernatorial and legislative action. These states include Alaska, Preserving the Dream of America,

New Jersey (which NIEER considers a national model), and North Carolina (NIEER, 2012).

College and Career Counseling

Recommendation 2 of *Coming to Our Senses* asked that "states and localities move toward professional norms for staffing middle and high school counseling offices and that colleges and universities collaborate actively to provide college information and planning services to all students (with a special focus on low-income students)."

Regarding staffing levels, the average student-to-counselor ratio in the United States stood at a 10-year low of 457:1 in 2008-09, but rose to 471:1 in 2010-11 (Keaton, 2012). The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250:1 ratio, which is achieved in only a few states.

Counselor quality is more elusive, but one indicator — the percentage of secondary schools that require college counselors to participate in professional development — has dropped sharply in recent years, from 39.9 percent in 2008 to 31.2 percent in 2009 and 24.5 percent in 2010 (Clinedinst et al., 2011). Strained school budgets are likely to produce further erosion in years to come.

Dropout Prevention and Recovery

Recommendation 3 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for implementing "the best research-based dropout prevention programs . . . starting in elementary and middle schools," especially focused on early warning signs.

Definitive information about research-based dropout prevention programs has become widely available since 2008 at the website of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), a component of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), but it is unclear how many districts consult this valuable resource before choosing a program.

Generally speaking, the dropout issue has become a central concern of federal and many state education policymakers, and considerable resources are being employed in programs to increase graduation rates, including the elementary but vital step of requiring all states to calculate and report their rates in a uniform way. Support has also come from such independent organizations as the America's Promise Alliance, which, in 2010, launched its Grad Nation campaign, a nationwide effort to end the dropout crisis.

Early warning indicator systems are "in a phase of dynamic growth," with:

- addition of recent statewide programs in Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Virginia;

- movement toward statewide systems in Tennessee and Texas;

- state pilot projects in California and Washington; and

- a new districtwide program in Philadelphia (Balfanz, Bruce, Bridgeland, & Fox, 2011, p. 20).

Standards and Alignment

Recommendation 4 of *Coming to Our Senses* advocated aligning high school programs with international benchmarks tied to the demands of college and careers.

While it takes many years to effect a change of this magnitude, there has been major progress. In 2009, the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards Initiative to define the K–12 mathematics and English language arts knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing, academic college courses and workforce-training programs. As of April 2012, 45 states had adopted the new standards.

The federal Race to the Top initiative has focused attention on aligning K–12 systems to the new standards and funded the work of two assessment consortia, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, to create common assessment systems aligned to the standards by 2014-15. The NGA and CCSSO are now:

- developing a state policymaker guide to implementation;

- convening organizations to facilitate conversations about implementation;

- planning the future governance structure of the Common Core State Standards Initiative; and

- convening publishers to ensure the availability of high-quality materials aligned with the standards.

The remaining task — and it is a huge one — is to translate the standards into actual curricula and instruction in the classroom.

Educator Quality

Recommendation 5 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for improved teacher quality and a focus on recruitment and retention.

A review of the literature suggests that, in the intervening years, the country has seen an explosion of interest in improving teacher quality. Leading proposals focus on such means as:

- attracting more and better prepared teachers to the field;

- increasing retention rates;

- decreasing the incidence of out-of-field teachers;

- improving professional development; and

- experimenting with compensation systems that reward excellence and/or willingness to teach in less popular environments.

But there is also much controversy about some of the methods proposed, such as the removal of tenure protections, teacher evaluation based on the results of student testing, closing poorly performing schools, and emphasis on firing teachers who are alleged to be the cause of poorly performing systems. It is notable that the recommendations in *Coming to Our Senses* ignore all of the contentious topics and concentrate on the unexceptionable issues of recruitment and retention.

Many economists see current compensation systems as too flat and inefficient to attract and retain high-quality teachers. A recent study suggests that if teacher salaries began at $65,000 (instead of about $39,000) and rose as high as $150,000, the number of high-performing college graduates who would consider the profession would rise from 14 percent to 68 percent. But such a change is almost unimaginable in the present and foreseeable economic climate, and change is more likely to take the form of salary differentiation based on subjects, locations of schools, and performance (Sawchuk, 2012).

College Admission

Recommendation 6 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for clarifying and simplifying the admission process.

The College Board reports that as of 2009, 82 percent of four-year colleges post their applications forms online, 75 percent allow online application submission, and 23 percent participate in national application systems. As of 2010, 16 states and the District of Columbia have statewide application systems for public four-year institutions that aim to streamline the admission process (College Board, 2011). The National Association for College Admission Counseling reports that four-year institutions received an average of 85 percent of their applications online during the fall 2010 admission cycle, up from 72 percent in fall 2008 (Clinedinst et al., 2011).

A number of web-based resources, developed or improved since 2008, have also helped streamline the process:

- The Common Application membership association (https://www.commonapp.org/), which started with 15 colleges in 1975, now lists 456 institutions that accept the Common Application, up more than 100 since 2008.

- The National Center for Education Statistics' College Navigator (http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/) includes a sophisticated college search mechanism and provides information about tuition and net prices (the price of attendance minus grant and scholarship aid) at all postsecondary institutions that participate in Title IV student aid programs.

- The College Board's new BigFuture™ website (https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/college-search) provides detailed information on almost 4,000 colleges and offers 100 short videos featuring college students and admissions experts sharing their thoughts on a range of topics.

Other websites that help students navigate the process include Sallie Mae College Answer (http://www.collegeanswer.com/), CollegeData (http://www.collegedata.com/), and Peterson's College Search (http://www.petersons.com/college-search.aspx).

Student Financial Aid

Recommendation 7 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for providing "more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent."

National economic disruptions since 2008 have undercut hopes for increased federal aid. Mark Kantrowitz, a leading college financial aid expert, predicts "a funding shortfall of at least $10 billion a year in the Pell Grant program in 2013-14 and subsequent years." He also thinks that Congress will enact additional cuts that will shrink the Pell Grant program and eliminate the federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and work-study programs (Kantrowitz, 2012a).

But there have been major advances with respect to the other half of the Commission's recommendation. The U.S. Department of Education has made understanding and applying for financial aid much simpler and more transparent through its website, Student Aid on the Web (http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/funding.jsp?tab=funding). The department has also required colleges to post a "net price calculator" to inform potential students about estimated total costs of attendance, though there have been complaints about the quality of the calculators and the ways that some colleges manipulate their use (Flegenheimer, 2012; Institute for College Access & Success, 2011).

Other new or expanded websites that facilitate the process include:

- the College Board's new BigFuture (https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/), with a wide array of helpful information;

- FinAid (http://www.finaid.org/), for student aid information;

- Fastweb (http://www.fastweb.com/), for scholarship information; and

- Student Lending Analytics (http://www.studentlendinganalytics.com/ratings.html), for comparisons of private student loan products.

College Affordability

Recommendation 8 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for "restraining growth in college costs and prices, using available aid and resources wisely, and insisting that state governments meet their obligations for funding higher education."

In fact, colleges have become less affordable since 2008, partly because of the Great Recession of 2008-09 and its effects. The College Board reports that from 2001-02 to 2011-12, published tuition and fees for in-state students at public four-year institutions increased at an average 5.6 percent per year beyond the general inflation rate; corresponding increases were 3.8 percent per year at public two-year colleges and 2.6 percent per year at private nonprofit four-year institutions. By contrast, the inflation-adjusted mean family income of American families declined 8 percent from 2000 to 2010, and by 16 percent for the lowest quintile (College Board, 2011).

Far from "meeting their obligations," state governments reduced their appropriations per full-time equivalent (FTE) student by 9 percent in constant dollars in 2008-09, by 6 percent in 2009-10, and by 4 percent in 2010-11. The future also looks bleak. In April 2012, Kantrowitz predicted that "[t]his decade will be marked by severe declines in college affordability." More cuts in federal aid to higher education and continued high unemployment will impact state budgets for the next two or three years, he says, forcing additional increases in public college tuition rates, and provisions of the Budget Control Act of 2011 will mean further cuts in student aid programs through 2020 (Kantrowitz, 2012a).

On the other hand, Kantrowitz believes that President Barack Obama's January 2012 proposal to standardize college cost and financial aid disclosures will help hold down college costs. By providing applicants with accurate and comparable information, he says, the proposed "Financial Aid Shopping Sheet" and "College Scorecard" will enable them to choose high-quality but lower-cost institutions, thus exerting pressures on colleges to cut costs while maintaining quality (Kantrowitz, 2012b).

College Completion

Recommendation 9 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for a dramatic increase in college completion rates "by improving retention, easing transfer among institutions, and implementing data-based strategies to identify retention and dropout challenges."

The latest figures from the College Board show that at the most selective four-year institutions, 83 percent of students who began their studies in 2002 had completed degrees at their first institution by fall 2008. On the other hand, only 27 percent of students who began at open-enrollment institutions and 53 percent of those who began at institutions accepting at least 75 percent of their applicants had earned degrees at their first institution by that date (College Board, 2011).

Improving college completion rates has risen to the top of the national agenda since 2008. The Obama administration has:

- declared a goal of making the U.S. first in the world in college completion by 2020;

- provided state targets and promoted strategies for meeting the goal;

- convened the first White House Summit on Community Colleges;

- improved the efficiency of the student aid system; and

- proposed to link federal higher education aid to college tuition policies.

Moreover, in April 2012, the U.S. Department of Education announced plans to provide more complete information on college persistence and completion, broadening its reporting requirements to include part-time students and those who have previously attended other schools. Many nongovernmental organizations, such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the College Board, the Committee for Economic Development, Complete College America, and the Education Commission of the States, are also playing strong roles.

Adult Education

Recommendation 10 of *Coming to Our Senses* called for "a renewed commitment to adult education opportunities, one that supplements existing basic skills training with a new 'honors GED,' and better coordination of federal and state efforts to provide adult education, veterans benefits, outreach programs, and student aid."

In March 2011, the American Council on Education and Pearson PLC announced plans for a new design and delivery system for the GED, to debut in 2014. The new GED will replace the pen-and-paper test with a computer-based model and offer two levels of testing, one for students interested in high school equivalency and job readiness and the other for those who want to attend college. The hope is that students who pass the higher-level test will then be able to pass college entrance exams at a level sufficient to avoid having to take remedial courses in college.

The Obama administration's "Joining Forces" program has been active in coordinating and improving education services for veterans by:

- helping colleges implement best practices to improve learning outcomes for veterans;

- working with community colleges on ways they can create supportive learning environments for veterans;

- supporting higher education institutions and programs that expand education opportunities and ease transferability for military-connected students; and

- expanding access to financial aid.

New Topics/Developments

For-Profit Colleges

The National Center for Education Statistics reports that, in recent years, for-profit colleges have grown at almost 10 times the rate of higher education institutions as a whole — 311 percent versus 33 percent, respectively. These colleges are characterized by:

- relatively high costs;

- higher proportions of independent and low-income dependent students;

- heavy reliance on federal loan dollars;

- very low graduation rates; and

- high loan default rates (Adams, 2011a).

Students at for-profit colleges represent 12 percent of higher education enrollment, but originate 26 percent of all student loans and represent 46 percent of loan dollars in default; some for-profits rely on federal loan dollars for 90 percent of their revenue (Adams, 2011a).

In 2010, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, reported that some for-profit colleges were engaging in aggressive and misleading sales practices, and a U.S. Senate committee study of 16 for-profit schools estimated that 1.9 million students had withdrawn from the schools over a three-year period. In June 2010, the U.S. Department of Education adopted regulations to curb abuses, but some observers see them as weak and ineffectual (Adams, 2011b).

These circumstances raise questions ranging from "What steps can be taken to improve recruiting practices and completion rates of these colleges?" to "How can high school students be protected from the aggressive recruiting and false promises that some colleges engage in?"

For-Profit Lenders

A 2010 College Board report concluded that a growing minority of college graduates are borrowing too much and taking out loans that are likely to cause them significant repayment difficulties (Baum & Steele, 2010). The students most likely to face such problems are those borrowing from for-profit lenders, because these loans tend to have higher interest rates; federal loans are capped at 6.8 percent, while some private loans have variable rates starting as high as 15 percent. Private loans also lack the repayment protections of federal loans, which protect students from default and allow deferred payments under certain circumstances, like the loss of a job. An April 2012 *New York Times* editorial faulted some lenders for rushing families into taking on "risky, high-priced loans" and some colleges for "packaging high-cost loans with their

student-aid offers, to make the school appear more affordable" (Disclosure to Student Borrowers, 2012).

Related questions for the college admissions community include how to encourage:

- *private lenders to provide full disclosure about their loans;*

- *colleges to do more to inform and protect their students; and*

- *high school counselors to do more to provide vital information to students and their families.*

Rising Numbers and Importance of Foreign Students

The number of international students enrolling in American colleges and universities reached an all-time high of 723,277 in the 2010-11 school year, a 5 percent increase over the previous year, with the number of Chinese students increasing more than 23 percent — the fourth straight year of double-digit increases (McMurtrie, 2011).

While the total number of foreign students is only 3.5 percent of the total higher education enrollment, these students are much more prevalent in certain states and institutions, where their economic impact can be substantial. The University of Washington, for example, has elected to enroll fewer low-paying state residents and more foreign students — 18 percent of 2010-11 freshmen — who pay three times as much. The result is that there is money available for more low-income Washingtonians to get financial assistance, but some parents and politicians are unhappy about residents who are denied admission (Lewin, 2012b).

Further growth in foreign enrollments is likely throughout the country because the market is vast, the United States remains the most desirable destination, and American institutions are marketing more aggressively (McMurtrie, 2011).

These developments raise questions about:

- *the impact of foreign student recruitment on domestic admissions;*

- *possible benefits of high foreign enrollments on financial assistance levels for American students;*

- *new opportunities to promote diversity on campuses; and*

- *additional burdens on admissions officers and college counselors, who must now develop greater familiarity with foreign cultures.*

Reform Agenda of the Business Community

An April 2012 report from the Committee for Economic Development (CED) laments that America's colleges and universities no longer lead the world in producing an educated workforce and that business leaders cannot find workers with the necessary training and skills. The CED argues that the business community must:

- help develop and support state-level reform strategies for existing "broad-access" institutions;

- help create new kinds of institutions utilizing new instructional technologies and

- business models;

- direct its tuition assistance programs to the most productive and effective institutions; and

- provide training and educational opportunities to workers who have some postsecondary experience in order to help them gain a degree or credential.

The CED says it is recruiting and developing "a cadre of educated business champions" to lead this effort (CED, 2012).

The college admissions community may wish to engage these business leaders to help shape and direct its efforts, particularly in the areas of tuition assistance and degree or credential programs for today's workers.

College Remedial Courses

A recent report by Complete College America (2012) suggests that college remedial courses are a failure:

- More than half of students entering two-year colleges and 20 percent of those entering four-year universities — a total of 1.7 million beginning students each year — are placed in these courses, but nearly 40 percent of the students never complete them.

- Less than a quarter of remedial students in community colleges and only a little more than a third of those in four-year schools ever complete college-level English and math courses.

- Ultimately, less than a tenth of remedial students graduate from community colleges within three years and a little more than a third complete bachelor's degrees in six years.

- States and students spent an estimated $3 billion on remedial courses in a recent year.

Instead of continuing this system, the report advocates scrapping remedial courses altogether and assigning remedial students to augmented gateway courses with

embedded tutoring and other supports. Other reports suggest that summer bridge courses, before college entry, are promising substitutes for remedial courses (Adams, 2012).

Related issues for the college admissions community include weighing the evidence that either of these proposed changes — or other remedies — can improve graduation rates and/or reduce college costs and, if so, deciding how colleges or states can be persuaded to implement the changes.

Enrollment Diversity and Access

Fisher v. University of Texas, a case challenging any use of race or ethnicity in college admission, is expected to be argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in October 2012. Observers on both sides of the question see indications that the Court may ban the practice. Such a decision would overturn the Court's 5-to-4 decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003; in that ruling, the Court directed that public colleges and universities could not use a point system to increase minority enrollment, but could take race or ethnicity into account in attempting to promote diversity in less direct ways.

Experts believe that a ban on the consideration of race or ethnicity in public institutions would bar it in most private institutions as well. The experience of several states, including California and Michigan, suggests that banning such admission practices would produce a steep drop in minority admission. Such a decision, said Columbia University President Lee Bollinger, would "undo several decades of effort within higher education to build a more integrated and just and educationally enriched environment" (Liptak, 2012).

While the Supreme Court's ruling will not be known until late 2012 or early 2013, it is not too early for the admissions community to discuss how members could deal with the consequences of a decision banning the use of holistic admission policies and practices that employ the limited consideration of race or ethnicity in support of overall enrollment diversity goals.

Online College Courses and Credentials

Stanford and MIT are leading the way in developing a new generation of online college offerings, called Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These courses mirror on-campus classes — they post and auto-grade lectures and assignments each week and set strict deadlines for midterms and finals — but they are free and available to anyone who registers for them. Not surprisingly, they have proved hugely popular; a Stanford course on artificial intelligence, offered in fall 2011, attracted 160,000 students in 190 countries; 23,000 of them completed the course (Lewin, 2012a).

Stanford is offering 13 MOOCs in spring 2012, and MIT has created MITx (http://mitx.mit.edu/), a MOOC platform that it has just folded into edX (www.edxonline.org/), a joint venture with Harvard, to offer a full range of such courses. Both

universities plan to offer certificates for course completion, but not credit toward graduation. Entrepreneurial websites Coursera (http://www.cs101-class.org/hub.php) and Udacity (http://www.udacity.com/) offer additional free courses, many of them in conjunction with leading universities.

The threat to conventional postsecondary programs is clear. In the words of Samuel Allen, chair of the MIT faculty, "If students can master course materials online for free (or for a modest 'credentialing' fee), what incentives would there be for anyone to invest in an expensive residential college education?" (Allen, 2012).

Allen's question, though rhetorical, suggests that the admissions community has a vital role to play in defining and promulgating those incentives. At the same time, the community needs to prepare itself for new concerns, such as:

- *the effects of widespread availability of MOOCs on college costs;*

- *the likelihood that some high school students will want to take MOOC courses before they apply to college; and*

- *the need to help students choose among courses offered by rival MOOC platforms, before and after they graduate from high school.*

YouTube Instructional Videos and the Khan Academy

YouTube has long included instructional videos on how to insulate a basement, learn basic phrases in Italian, or perform a statistical test, but they have tended to be idiosyncratic, of uneven quality, and sometimes little more than advertisements for commercial products and services. The nonprofit Khan Academy (http://www.khanacademy.org/) operates on an entirely different level, with over 3,100 linked videos providing a full range of K–12 math lessons, plus lessons in biology, chemistry, physics, finance, and history.

Founder Salman Khan is clear that he doesn't want to supplant teachers, but to complement them in "flipped classrooms," where lectures are the homework and class time is devoted to small-group or individual work with intense teacher–student interaction. The Khan Academy model has been widely acclaimed — Bill Gates has called it "the future of education" (Khan, 2011).

Possible concerns for the admissions community include how Khan Academy or other videos might be used:

- *in — or in lieu of — college remedial courses;*

- *in formal or informal remediation of high school students; and*

- *in provision of high school courses that students are not otherwise able to schedule, like advanced mathematics or foreign languages.*

The Influence of Social Media

The increasing popularity of Facebook and other social media websites raises issues that may not have been prominent in 2008, though a National Association for College Admission Counseling report raised some key issues in 2009 (Barnes, 2009). For example, it is now common for colleges to use social media to attract prospective students; a recent Kaplan Test Prep survey (2011) found that 85 percent of colleges use Facebook and 66 percent use YouTube for this purpose.

Goals of this outreach, where they are stated, vary widely. Some colleges merely aim to inform, with YouTube videos, blogs, virtual campus tours, and Q&As, while others seek more involvement, such as student responses to blogs or dialogue between applicants and current students. Such involvement is particularly effective for international students who have limited access to informal information about the schools they are considering.

The Kaplan survey also found that increasing numbers of admissions professionals, who make up 24 percent of respondents, are consulting Facebook or other social networking sites for information on prospective students; only 10 percent reported doing so in 2008. Moreover, 12 percent of respondents said that they had found material that hurt the applicant's admission chances, such as plagiarism, vulgarities, photos featuring alcohol consumption, and activities the respondents identified as illegal.

There are also new opportunities for unofficial communication between prospective students and college staff, such as admissions staff "friending" students, high school students using social media to contact college students for "inside information" about the school, and high school students establishing online relationships with professors or coaches, who may then contact the admissions office in support of their candidacy.

Concerns for the admissions community include:

- *what policies should guide the use of social media as part of the admission process or as a medium for unofficial contact between candidates and college faculty or staff;*

- *how to advise college applicants about what content to remove from their social media sites and what they might add to improve their chances; and*

- *how to counsel high school students about "friending" or otherwise contacting college faculty or staff.*

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About the College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of more than 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT® and the Advanced Placement Program®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org.

The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center

The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center was established to help transform education in America. Guided by the College Board's principles of excellence and equity in education, we work to ensure that students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to succeed in college and beyond. We make critical connections between policy, research and real-world practice to develop innovative solutions to the most pressing challenges in education today.

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