



Katie Smith, Jocelyn Piedra, and Devin Bingham are gearing up for college

COLLEGE PREP 101

Cy-Fair Students Strive for University Acceptance

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AP English essays, an AP Biology II test, an AP Calculus BC quiz, two club meetings, and a tennis match. Facing another busy day, Cypress Creek High School senior Genevieve Lim has her sights set on working hard to get into the college of her choice.

“I want an education,” she says. “I want to get a great job. I want to depend on myself for things. I just want to be successful.” Preparing for college has become a top priority for many students, as they focus on their dreams. Long gone are the days when students could apply to just one school and expect an acceptance letter three weeks later. College admissions have become increasingly competitive and entrance requirements entail more than just academic excellence.

Balance Priorities

With universities looking for applicants who fit the “total package,” students must consider having more than just high test scores or good grades. “If you’re super smart, but don’t have volunteer activities or extracurricular activities, I don’t think you’re very prepared for college,” she says. Along with making straight A’s throughout high school, Lim is also a top player on the varsity tennis team, president of the children’s book club, and secretary of two other school clubs. “It’s about time management and knowing when you can procrastinate and when you can’t,” she says.

She feels that learning to balance extracurricular activities and schoolwork will not only prepare her for college, but also for her future career as a chemical engineer. “It teaches me to focus on one thing at a time,” she says. “Right now I’m focusing on college.”

Aim for Strong Academics

Even if a student has a long list of activities on their resume, they still need to have high test scores, says CCHS senior Kevin Chin. Chin took Test Masters, an exam preparation course, and said he thinks standardized testing plays a large role in admissions. “Most colleges like the well-rounded student with extracurricular activities, community service, etc., but I’m pretty sure all that goes out the window if you pull a 2400,” he says.

Unlike Chin, Cypress Woods High School senior Samir Lakdawala places more importance on his grade point average than on his SAT scores. He reasons that GPA directly affects how well one has done in the course of four years, instead of one afternoon. “Standardized tests do not prove how good of a student you are,” he says. “The only thing it proves is how good of a test taker you are.”

Consider Outside Help

To help navigate through the admissions process, CCHS senior Statmatia Toumanidis hired a college counselor. “I got one because I was really unsure about where to begin and how to go about filling out applications for all the extra things I needed to have,” she says. College counselors assist with the entire college application process, including deadlines and scholarships.

Kitty Dillon-Day began her own college counseling business last January. The college admissions process is the part of counseling she likes the most. “I liked having students reach their dreams and seeing them get there.” Because of the stress of just applying to college, she says deciding on which colleges to attend is no easy task. “It is not just, ‘I want to go to this school.’ Trying to balance filling out applications with school, work, and chores is too tough.”

Well-Rounded Resumes

Dillon-Day also says colleges now look at their applicants holistically. Instead of only accepting students who are exceptional in one particular area, they also want students who are strong in many different areas. “If you are more of a well-rounded person and not so ‘woo-hoo’ in one area, then that is going to be better than being just truly outstanding in one.”

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- Samir Lakdawala, Cypress Woods HS Senior

Lim also encourages other students to maintain a well-rounded transcript throughout their high school careers. “Your GPA and your extracurricular activities are the most important things, because they show that you can balance activities other than school activities.”

Get A Head Start

Nan Barcelona, head senior counselor at Cy-Fair High School, tells students to start thinking about college early. “Take as many accelerated classes as you can and make sure you’re on the recommended plan,” Barcelona advises. “So many seniors tell me, ‘I wish someone would’ve told me that as a freshman.’”

Even though she has four more years until she applies to college, CFHS freshman Jordan Rains says she already has college in mind. “Most people don’t think they have to worry about it yet, but I do,” she says. “I want to be ready when it comes.”

Lim suggests that students who want to get into the school of their choice should work hard and study hard. “I know it’s all cliché, but there’s no other way to get into the college you really want to go to.”

CFM

MELANIE GUZMAN is the features editor of the CCHS Cougar Connection. She plans to attend a private university next fall.



TEN TIPS

for Turning in College Applications

- 1 Request or download college application forms
- 2 Write and proofread essays, asking two other people to check them
- 3 Request high school transcript at the registrar's office
- 4 Send SAT and AP scores via collegeboard.com
- 5 Send ACT scores via actstudent.org
- 6 Request letters of recommendation
- 7 Send thank-you notes for recommendations
- 8 Pay application fee
- 9 Meet application deadline
- 10 Confirm receipt of application



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