



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

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Resources & ideas for parents & educators of gifted children

Talent

CENTER
for TALENT
DEVELOPMENT®

Getting Ready for College

What students should do before they fill out college admission applications

CTD: As gifted students prepare to go to college, what are the most important things they should consider or be thinking about?

Linda Brody: The competition to get into selective colleges and universities today is causing much anxiety among high school students and encouraging them to work on building impressive resumes. Rather than focusing on their resumes, however, students should work on gaining the skills and attributes they will need to excel in college once they get there. If they do so, it is likely that their applications will be strong as well.

Clearly, academic preparation is critical. To be prepared for the rigor of college courses, students should take a broad spectrum of liberal arts courses in high school, and some of them should be at the college level, i.e., AP, IB, or part-time college courses. In addition to entering college with very strong backgrounds in math, science, language arts, and the social sciences, students should have excellent writing and computer skills, know their way around a library, know how to write a research paper, and have mastered a second language. They should have good note-taking and study skills, and have learned how to budget their time with regard to completing long-term assignments.



In addition to being prepared academically for college, it's important that students have the social skills to be successful—to be able to live with a roommate, to make new friends, and to have the confidence to approach professors for help. They also need to be emotionally and psychologically ready for independent living. They will need to be sure to get enough sleep, to be able to manage money, to do laundry, and to travel alone.

Numerous experiences throughout high school serve to develop the skills and attributes that are important to success in college. Tough courses and research experiences provide the important content knowledge and study and research skills. Residential summer programs provide a taste of independent living. Participation in extracurricular activities can build leadership and social skills and, in general, contribute to helping students mature. By juggling a tough course load and activities, students also learn to budget time effectively, something that is particularly critical for success in college. If social skills are still lacking, students should also seek help from a counselor.

Successful college applicants typically have all of these elements when they apply: They have taken rigorous courses, assumed leadership roles in activities, used summers wisely to gain additional background and experiences, and developed their social skills, which are reflected in accomplishments and recommendations. Admissions officers aren't just looking for a long resume. They realize that these experiences are indicators of preparation

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Director's Message

Going off to college is a heady experience—for both students and parents. I have empirical evidence on this matter: My husband and I just dropped off our oldest daughter to start her freshman year at Northwestern University. Even though I had been anticipating (and preparing myself for) this day for 18 years and, in contrast to many parents my child is just a short walk away from my office, I miss her every night.

As I read Jennifer Bollenbacher's article describing the trepidations she felt walking onto the Tufts campus as a freshman and what she learned during the year that followed, I realized that my daughter was following a path similar to Jenn's. She had also done well in school and excelled in numerous Advanced Placement classes. Yet as the time came to pack, I could see she had reservations. Would she like her roommate? How would she measure up in classes filled with other really smart students?

I reassured her that she had followed the tips that Linda Brody recommends on how, if you're a gifted student, to prepare yourself for college.

Then I remembered back to when I started college. I had just as many reservations as did my daughter. It's a natural reaction to a very big step. Read these three pages and the 13 tips on our Web site, and you'll get the "Cliff Notes" version of an introductory course in preparing-a-student-for and sending-a-student-off-to college—whether you're a parent sending a student to college this year or a decade from now or you're a student preparing to take a really big step toward independence. Enjoy!

Paula Alezuschi-Kubrus

WHO SAID THIS?

“EDUCATION IS NOT THE FILLING OF A PAIL, BUT THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE.”

Answer at <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/newslettersolutions>

Making the Leap (or how I survived the first year of college)

By Jennifer Bollenbacher

As my father and I drove from Chicago to Boston last August, the topic of college and the adventure I was set to embark upon rarely came up. In fact, I believe I kept my iPod on for the entire trip, and he listened to sports radio. Before I knew it, I was standing next to my new roommate and waving goodbye to my family. I had been excited to go off to college all summer, but as I watched my parents drive away, my uncertainties about the upcoming year overwhelmed me. How long will it be until I make friends? Will I get along with my roommate? How do I know what classes to take? What am I going to major in? Who is going to do my laundry?

As I begin my sophomore year at Tufts University in Boston, I find myself looking back at my first year as a college student and reflecting upon those uncertainties I faced.

In high school, I was a pretty typical student. I played soccer, went to all our school dances, volunteered, and had some pretty good friendships. A “gifted kid” since elementary school, I was accustomed to being one of the smartest students in my class. I earned good grades, did well on my ACT and SAT, and took lots of Advanced Placement classes. Tufts was a “reach” school for me, so I was surprised and excited when I got my acceptance e-mail.

Still, I was nervous about measuring up at Tufts. I knew everyone else was going to be intelligent, and I would no longer be the smartest in the class. It was intimidating to think that I was going to be surrounded by some of the best students in the country. To this day I remind myself that I, like the rest of my classmates, was



Jennifer Bollenbacher with her CTD Class (far right) and a CTD friend in 2004 (above).

admitted to Tufts for a reason, and that I earned a spot there just as they did.

Along that same note, I also worried that since my peers were all incredibly smart, they would want to study all the time and would not share some of my same interests. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my new best friends included a fencer, a tennis player, and a shopping fanatic. And during finals week, my roommate and I napped more than we studied. I am certain that there are students who spend all their time in the library, just as I am sure there are students who have never been in the library. For me, it was about finding the proper balance between work and play, and finding friends who had a similar balance.

Once I overcame my concerns about making friends, I had more time to worry about classes. I am the first to admit that I coasted a bit during high school, relying on natural ability to do well on exams instead of hard work and studying. I knew this would not work once I started college, but I feared that my poor study habits would lead to my demise and I would surely flunk out of school within the first semester.

Luckily, I did not flunk out; in fact, I managed to do fairly well. The classes were not as difficult as I had anticipated. Most of my fellow freshmen, myself included, signed up for mostly introductory courses, trying to get a feel for what we wanted to study. In contrast to high school, where there are classes you are required to take, I was able to choose classes that interested me. My interest in the material motivated me to do the assigned readings and take more pride in my performance on papers and exams.

Looking back, I wonder how I survived the high school schedule for four years –

up at 6 am, at school by 7:30, and seven hours of class. At Tufts, my earliest class began at 9:30 am, and it took me less than two minutes to get from my residence hall room to the classroom. Going to class only two or three times a week took a bit of getting used to, but it was definitely a welcome adjustment.

Despite a heavy course load and lots of homework (yes, there is still homework in college), the majority of my time was dedicated to out-of-classroom activities. I started getting involved in “outside” activities almost as soon as I arrived on campus. In my Child Development lecture, for instance, a representative from Jumpstart spoke to our class about the benefits of working with underprivileged preschool kids to help them catch up to their peers before entering kindergarten. I applied to be a member of their volunteer corp (Corps Member), and during second semester, all my afternoons were dedicated to working in a preschool classroom. Some of my best friends were four-year-olds!

Witnessing their daily epiphanies when they discovered something new inspired me to continue my learning in that area of study. Revelations that seem so obvious to me, like color mixing with primary colors, were completely foreign to my kids. One Wednesday in April was Instant Pudding Day. The kids used spoons to measure enough milk to put in the pudding mix. They stirred it until it was creamy, and then came the excitement. Adding drops of food coloring to the vanilla pudding instantly turned it blue, green, red, or yellow, something that I knew was going to happen, but something that surprised them and made them curious.

FUN & GAMES

Answer is at <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/newslettersolutions>

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Getting ready for college

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Jumpstart took up a lot of my time, and I loved it, but after a great deal of thought, I also realized that Child Development was not the direction I want to go with my career. I wanted to pursue a path I'd started down a couple of years earlier when I was 16 and had signed up for the Civic Leadership Institute, a three-week summer program run by the Center for Talent Development's Civic Education Project. For those three weeks, my classmates and I studied issues like hunger, homelessness, education reform, and healthcare. We looked at root causes and policy initiatives, as well as reform efforts and trade-offs to proposed solutions. My eyes were opened and my world was broadened with each reading I read, video I watched, or discussion I had. After that program, I could not imagine studying anything else. I wanted to study public policy, and I wanted to get involved in social change work more than I wanted to teach PreK kids.

During my first month at Tufts, I had seen flyers advertising the Education for Active Citizenship (E4AC) program. Even when I was hanging out with my preschoolers, I investigated the program further. And the more I learned about E4AC, the more I knew that this was exactly what I was looking for. I applied, and in October 2006 I was officially accepted into the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service Scholars Program at Tufts. Now as a sophomore and a Scholar, I partner with a community organization and work with it to promote its mission, organize events, and raise awareness. This program fits me perfectly, and I have incredibly unique opportunities to work with really talented people.

In all, I survived my freshman year of college. I realized I had the skills and experiences to be successful: I made friends by reaching out, earned good grades by working hard and finding the right balance, and found my perfect niche. I was worried how everything would turn out, but I was determined to succeed.

Now I'm just worried about what I can do this year to measure up to last year! ●

Note: In addition to the experiences that Bollenbacher describes above, she was a program assistant for CTD's Civic Education Project this past summer.

for the academic, social, and emotional challenges that lie ahead for first-year college students. By focusing on getting the preparation they need to be successful in a top college, high school students are likely to excel once they get there and are also more likely to be admitted to the college of their choice.

CTD: What are the biggest obstacles first-year college students will face?

Brody: I think the biggest obstacle is budgeting time. Compared to the structure of high school where students spend much of their day in school, with the rest regulated around activities, homework, family time, and sleeping, college students spend relatively little time in class and most assignments are long-term. It can be easy to stay up late, sleep in, miss class, procrastinate on assignments, and be caught unprepared at final exam time. Many college students actually find that they do better when they are busier, when part-time jobs or activities force them to structure their time in a more predictable fashion. In any case, students need to be careful to use their time wisely and not

13 Tips for Success

Linda E. Brody tells students how to make the process of applying to college and preparing credentials a little bit easier with 13 tips to prepare for the college admissions process. These were adapted, with permission, from various "Imagine" articles, published by the Center for Talented Youth at Johns Hopkins. Please go to the CTD Web site to access these tips: <http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/newslettersolutions>

postpone assignments to the end of the semester.

There is also the challenge of living independently, if you are residing on campus, and adjusting to being part of a new community. Some new college students experience homesickness, even students who eagerly looked forward to the residential aspects of college life. All residential college students need to be able to budget their money and take care of their personal needs without the assistance of their parents. Living on campus can mean sharing very little personal space with one or more roommates, something that can be a challenge for those who grew up with more space in their homes or who are naturally introverted.

Students can minimize these issues by

choosing a college carefully, thinking about the distance from home and investigating living arrangements before making a final choice. Prior experience in a residential setting such as in a summer program can be helpful preparation for living on campus. Finally, students who do experience adjustment problems should know that help exists at college. Students should talk to their resident advisors, faculty advisor, and/or counselors at the counseling center for advice before any difficulties become big problems. ●

Linda E. Brody directs the Study of Exceptional Talent and co-directs the Diagnostic and Counseling Center at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth (CTY). She has over 25 years' experience counseling gifted students and their families and conducting research on this population. Having earned her doctorate in the Education of the Gifted from Johns Hopkins, she has taught graduate courses in gifted education there for many years. Her research interests focus on special populations,

especially highly gifted students, gifted females, and gifted students with learning disabilities. She is also interested in identifying strategies and programs that facilitate talent development and supervises the publication of "Imagine," a magazine for academically talented students. Linda has published numerous articles in professional journals and co-edited two books: Women and the Mathematical Mystique and Learning Disabled Gifted Students: Identification and Programming. She presents papers on a regular basis at national and international conferences and reviews articles for numerous journals in the field including "Gifted Child Quarterly," "Journal of Secondary Gifted Education," and "Roeper Review."

Resources

College Planning for Gifted Students: Choosing And Getting into the Right College, by Sandra Berger, Prufrock Press, 2006

Cool Colleges: For the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late Blooming, and Just Plain Different, by Donald Asher, Ted Speed Press, 2000

Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think About Colleges, by Loren Pope, Penguin (Non-Classics); 2006

NEWS, DATES & OTHER IMPORTANT CTD INFORMATION

MATS DVD Available!

Need a visual aid for a parent meeting? Just want to know more about Midwest Academic Talent Search (MATS)? CTD has a DVD that explains the entire MATS process and its benefits. All your questions will be answered in 15 minutes via interviews with parents, students, gifted coordinators and program administrators. They're so popular that we're into our second printing. Want a copy?

Send your contact information to ctd@northwestern.edu, write MATS DVD in the subject line and we'll put one in the mail to you – free of charge.

What's Happening at CTD

Sign up for Midwest Academic Talent Search (MATS). Above-grade-level-testing program for students in grades 3 to 9. Online registration now available. Sign up early to make sure you get the testing site of your choice.

Gifted LearningLinks online distance-learning winter session starts on *January 15, 2008*.

Saturday Enrichment Program Winter session starts on *January 12, 2008*.



Great Opportunity

Create a challenging learning environment for a wide range of student abilities by completing a Gifted Master's Degree OR Advanced Teaching Certificate program at Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy. Check out www.sesp.northwestern.edu/msed for more information or call 847-467-1458.

Terrific Summer at CTD

More than 3,200 students attended our summer programs in Evanston, Glen Ellyn and on the Case Western Reserve University campus in Cleveland. 257 students attended the Civic Leadership Institute (Jenn Bollenbacher, an alum, authored the article "Making the Leap [or how I survived the first year of college]," in this issue!). New Summer Program materials will be available online starting in January 2008. We hope to see you next year!

For more information on any of these programs or offerings, go to the CTD Web site, www.ctd.northwestern.edu, write us an email at ctd@northwestern.edu or call us at 847-491-3782.

CENTER for TALENT DEVELOPMENT®

Northwestern University
617 Dartmouth Place
Evanston, IL 60208
phone: 847-491-3782
fax: 847-467-4283
email: ctd@northwestern.edu
web site: www.ctd.northwestern.edu

Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University is an accredited learning center and research facility serving the gifted community. Through the Midwest Academic Talent Search and other programs, CTD has assisted more than 350,000 families. Offering a variety of learning alternatives for the gifted student, CTD provides school-year programs such as Saturday Enrichment Program, Gifted LearningLinks distance learning, Civic Education Project, and Project EXCITE, as well as summer academic programs (Leapfrog, Apogee, Spectrum, and Equinox), informational conferences for families and educators, scholarships, and graduate courses on gifted education. Led by nationally recognized scholar Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Ph.D., the Center also conducts and publishes academic research on gifted students, particularly in the areas of accelerated learning and special populations of gifted learners. CTD is accredited as a special function school for the gifted by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.



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Evanston, Illinois 60208