



Role and tips for parents as they work through the college application process



It is that time of the year when students and parents are frantically researching specializations (majors) or post-secondary institutions. While some may have taken a breather from the strenuous first semester, others utilized their spring break to enroll in programs conducted by different local universities to get a sneak preview of university life.

Surveys in Qatar show that an overwhelming majority of children and their parents want a bachelors as well as advanced degrees. They understand that a college degree provides many opportunities in life. With the modern challenges of the 21st century, one of the first major decisions many young adults face is where to go to college. This life decision involves a change that will impact his or her future greatly. Applying to college is one of the first steps toward adulthood. It involves many of the same worries, doubts and fears that adult life presents. Providing guidance to

your child will help him a lot. As parents, it is imperative to support your child through the process, as you are the one person who knows their interests, abilities, goals and dreams the most, and can therefore provide valuable advice and counsel.

The best way to begin is to simply discuss with your child the kinds of universities they might be interested in attending. This discussion will make the rest of the experience worthwhile for both of you. Here is a good start:

- Encourage your child to read the university brochure. Reading this material is one way for both of you to learn about colleges and what they have to offer. Many universities offer online virtual tours, which will inform your child about what a particular university can provide. Similarly, attending college fairs will help him or her get to know the university directly by talking to admissions officers and asking questions.
- Have your child set a meeting with the high school counselor or with the counselors of the Advising



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& Career Development Center of the Higher Education Institute. These people are experts in college planning and are ready to give your child answers to the many questions he or she might have.

- Brainstorm with your child all the universities he is interested in attending and let them make a match between their abilities and the requirements of each university. This will help find the college that meets their individual needs. Encourage your child to consider the following:

a) The size of the student bodies. This will affect many of your child's opportunities and experiences.

b) Location. Does your child want to be close to home or are they interested in studying abroad to experience a different part of the world?

c) Academics. Let your child look at the emphasis that is given to a particular major - is it part of a faculty, a school or a small department?

d) Diversity. The more diverse a university is, the more your child is provided with opportunities to know more about the world.

e) The extracurricular activities, athletics, and clubs the university provides

f) The admissions requirements of this university. Check to ensure they match your child's needs.

As you and your child prepare the application materials, it can help to know what your targeted schools are looking for in an applicant. In general while evaluating a student, admission officers look carefully at the overall picture, including grades, test scores and the individual qualities your child possesses. Application requirements vary from college to college, but most schools request some or all of the following parts:

- Application Form. Ask your child to complete the online application. They can even apply to more than one university at the same time by completing the common application or applying through the UCAS.

- Application Fee. For every application completed, the student is asked to pay a non-refundable fee that ranges from \$25 to \$100.

- High School Transcripts. Some universities have a special form for this part of the application package and some simply request that your transcripts be completed by your high school. The school counselor will take care of completing this part.

- Test Scores. One of the major requirements of almost all universities are the scores of different required pre-entry tests such as the TOEFL, IELTS, SAT or ACT that help schools gauge a student's level of preparedness.

- Essay. This part of the application package will make your child stand out from the crowd. It provides your child with an opportunity to present his or her unique qualities to the admission officers.

- Recommendation Letters. To get to know your child more, many universities ask your child to submit one or two recommendation letters. These should be prepared by someone who knows your child very well. Ask your child to pick a teacher who teaches a subject that is related to the field of study he is interested in pursuing.

Finally, remember you can do a lot by just being there. Remind your child that there is a university for each student out there. Encourage your child to have confidence in herself and believe that anything is possible.

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