

The North Shore Weekend

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NEWS

GIVING IT THE OLD COLLEGE TRY TO AID APPLICANTS



Julie Hanna Goodman

BY SIMON MURRAY

Julie Hanna Goodman sits down at Café Aroma in Winnetka and orders an iced tea — very much not decaf. She's just returned from visiting a handful of colleges in Boston — but the owner of Lakeside College Advisers is just getting started on her 2015 travels.

Last year she visited more

than 100 colleges, traveling around the country in what can best be described as following the lyrics to "God Bless America"—"from the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans."

This year she plans on doing more of the same.

Says Hanna Goodman, "I'm always impressed. I always come away with something great from every school."

A Winnetka mom with two college students of her own, Hanna Goodman is part of a growing trend of college admissions consultants unaffiliated with high schools.

Consider: Public high school counselors in the United States face an average caseload of 471 students, according to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 to one (Illinois' ratio: 672 to one). But even without

personal counseling, with the competition increasing each year for entrance into the top universities — not to mention more and more students using the common application to apply, scattershot, to hundreds of colleges — navigating the road to admission can be tricky.

And daunting.

The scene is high drama. High school counselors pulling their hair out. High school students pushed by their parents to apply early and often. Universities such as Stanford letting in only five out of every 100 applicants. Possibly because of the malaise that hangs over the whole application process, a staggering one out of three college students will transfer at some point in their college career, says Hanna Goodman.

That statistic includes her son, a theater major at Columbia College in Chicago

who transferred last year from Chapman University in Orange, Calif. (Her daughter is a senior at Tufts University, and both graduated from New Trier High School.)

"It's nice to feel like you got it right the first time," she notes.

What prompted her to start the business? Hanna Goodman always wanted to work with this age group. After shepherding her own children through the college process with the help of an independent educational consultant, she investigated how to best enter the field.

"I think guiding high school seniors to the right place in higher education is crucial," says Hanna Goodman, who is armed with a college counseling certificate from UCLA.

Hanna Goodman — who charges various fees depending on what clients desire (the

hourly charge is \$175) boasts close to two dozen students she is helping. Of eight seniors this year, one is going to SMU, another to Colgate, one has been accepted to Georgetown and a fourth is heading to Trinity College.

Lakeside College Advisers' mission is "advising students to find the college or university that is the best match for them." Hanna Goodman meets with high school students, beginning freshman year, to give direction and offer personal guidance, tailoring classes and clubs to best fit the student's interests.

With both a bachelor of arts degree and a masters of science in journalism degree from Northwestern University — and experience working with the Chicago Tribune and with Sports Illustrated magazine — Hanna Goodman is also in a unique position to lend a hand editing and drafting the college application essay. Years of experience in journalism also give her an edge when it comes to researching schools.

"Nobody asks more questions than I do," she says.

More information is available at lakesidecollegeadvisers.com.

Julie Hanna Goodman's Key Tips for College Visits

Procure an Interview

Some schools don't offer interviews, but many encourage them — Bowdoin, Wake Forest and Lehigh are just a few that are happy to interview prospects. Send a thank-you note after the interview.

Take a class

Larger state schools often offer a selection of classes that visitors can attend. Aside from seeing academics first-hand, it also gives you something to write about in your supplemental essay for that school.

Eat in the Cafeteria

Obviously, you'll see how the food is. But keep your eyes open and observe human interaction. How lively is it? Are students meeting with professors over a meal?

Make Notes

You will forget, so write down your impressions as soon as you hit the car. First impressions are the best. Even if you're eliminating the school — it'll be important to remember why you didn't like it.