



Report: The Myth of the “Best School”

The largest selling edition of US News and World Report is their report on the top colleges in the country. Year after year, students and parents alike flock to this issue like moths to the flame. It's all very understandable. Everyone wants the best education possible. But does this make sense as a fashion to pick a good school. Absolutely not!

In December of 2002, ABC's Nightline did a story called “Class Action”. It was all about the college admission game. They interviewed students, teachers, parents, guidance counselors, even the Dean of Admissions at Georgetown University. This was a very comprehensive account of the admissions process. It was a very sad account of the pressures of the college admissions process on the students in particular.

Only two of the groups I mentioned above had anything positive to say about searching out the “best” school: the parents, and the students. And the students made it clear that their thoughts were a reflection of what their parents had told them. They had to get into the best school because that was the key to their future.

Now the education professionals were on the exact opposite side. They knew that there was no such thing as the “best” school. As one guidance counselor described it, she didn't know of a school that did not have a good name.

The harshest criticism of the current college admissions process came from the Dean of Admissions at Georgetown, Charles Deacon. He stated unequivocally that the college rating systems utilized by US News and others had turned the college admissions process basically into a needless pressure cooker.

The bottom line is parents and students have to realize that there is no “best school”! There is only the best school for their student and that means dumping the whole idea of choosing a college based upon some arbitrary national list. Besides, choosing schools based upon a US News list will likely mean vastly more expensive college costs. If you squeak your student in by the skin of their teeth, there will be little incentive for the school to provide you a competitive financial package at all. As a side note, USA Today recently did a story highlighting how more and more CEO's and top executives come from schools that are not Ivy Leagues or on the “best” school lists.

Stop looking for the “best” school! There is no “best” school. You will help your student far more if you concentrate on finding schools best for them.