Note on Independent Counselors

Applying to college, especially to highly selective schools, can be stressful and overwhelming. Some parents, wanting to give their children the best chance of admission to their dream schools, may consider hiring independent counselors. While certified independent counselors can be helpful for students at schools without dedicated college counseling support, they are not needed by Haverford students. In fact, students who do work with outside independent counselors often fail to fully use our services and can actually disadvantage themselves in the process. Here is what we have noticed:

- The Haverford college counseling team often finds that students working with outside counselors may not appropriately share crucial components of their application, such as supplemental essays and other important information. When students do not share all relevant information, it can limit their counselor's ability to provide the best support and advocacy. For an admission counselor, a college application is like a jigsaw puzzle, with each piece - essays, teacher recommendations, transcripts, activities, school profile, and counselor recommendations - coming together to form a complete picture of the student. To provide the strongest support, the Haverford college counselor needs a full and accurate understanding of the student.

- Possessing an understanding of the Haverford curriculum is essential in advising students as is insight into where the student falls within their particular class. Haverford college counselors possess this knowledge as well as the context of Haverford applicants historically.

- Students who have worked with an outside counselor have often felt confused and frustrated when they have received conflicting advice, especially regarding their essays, college list, and how to approach the supplemental parts of their applications.

- Students who work with outside counselors, especially those with already busy schedules, often meet with their college counselors less frequently and may overlook important tasks assigned to them. Completing these tasks is key for helping Haverford college counselors understand them better and advocate effectively on their behalf.

- The relationship between the Haverford college counselor and student is important to the student because we write their letters of recommendation and represent students personally to the admission officers in phone, face to face and/or email communications. Outside consultants do not write letters of recommendation for submission to the college. The consultants typically are denied direct communication with college admission officers.

Our college counselors at Haverford have strong, direct connections with college admissions professionals, especially those who review our students' applications. These relationships are built through campus visits in the fall and spring, as well as interactions at conferences and during visits to college campuses. Our counselors are experts and should be your primary resource for college planning, offering the most informed guidance and support.

If you choose to work with an independent counselor, it is critical that students remain fully connected with their college counselor and engage in all relevant aspects of the college counseling program. We encourage families who decide to work with an outside writing coach or counselor to share this information with their college counselor to help avoid the challenges we have observed.