2026 College Symposium Workshop Descriptions

The College Search: Finding Your Fit

Kickstart your college search by focusing on what truly matters to you! This workshop will help you learn how to discover schools that align with your unique personal values, learning style, and academic goals while prioritizing overall personal fit over rankings. Learn practical strategies to evaluate campus culture, ask meaningful questions during visits, and build a balanced college list where you can thrive academically and personally.

Presenter: *Nick Bowman, Undergraduate Admissions Counselor, University of Vermont*

Behind the Scenes: Reviewing College Applications

Ever wonder what actually happens after you click "submit" on your college application? Get a behind the scenes peek into how admissions committees evaluate applications and make their final decisions. We'll break down all the key pieces of the application and demystify the difference between holistic and non-holistic reviews.

Presenter: *Erica Padilla, Regional Associate Director of Admissions, University of Rochester*

Tips for Writing a Standout Personal Essay

The college essay is a unique opportunity for students to showcase their passions, values, and personal narrative. This workshop will guide students in writing essays that are engaging, authentic, and memorable focusing on how you can craft your narrative on simple personal stories and experiences. Examples of exemplary work will be shared.

Presenter: *Sue Willard, Senior Associate Director of Admissions, Hobart & William Smith College*

Authentic Applications: Showcasing Who You Are With What You Do

This workshop will focus on the different ways colleges look at the individual student beyond the transcript and main essay. Discussions will focus on ways to build a strong activities list/resume highlighting student's interests and the role supplemental essays can play in highlighting passions and student's interest for specific colleges.

Presenter: *Cara Cirino, CHHS Alum, Assistant Director of Admissions, New York University*

Declared or Undeclared: Navigating College Majors Before Your Apply

Deciding on a college major can feel overwhelming, but how much do high school students *really* need to know before applying? This workshop breaks down the application landscape to help students make informed, strategic choices about their majors. Topics will include:

- **Understanding Application Options:** Direct-entry majors, exploratory tracks, and undecided pathways.
- **Flexibility & Transferability:** How easy (or difficult) it is to change majors at different types of institutions.
- **Evaluating College Programs:** Key questions to ask to assess curriculum flexibility and academic support.

Presenter*: Craig Broccoli, Associate Director of Admissions & NYC Based Regional Rep, SUNY Binghamton*

Making the Most of Big Opportunities: Navigating State Flagships & R1 Research Universities

Explore what makes state flagship and R1 research universities unique, from academic strengths to hands-on research opportunities. Learn how to evaluate fit, find community, and make the most of these large, resource-rich campuses.

Presenter: *Laurie Wax, Director of New York Metro Recruitment, Penn State University*

College Admissions Testing & Preparation

Bespoke Education has been preparing students for the SAT and ACT exams for over 20 years. Bespoke's CEO will provide parents and students with the knowledge to make an informed choice between the ACT and the SAT, at a time when most selective colleges are requiring these exams

once again. Bespoke will discuss test preparation and will highlight differences between the two admissions exams..
Presenter: *Tim Levin, Founder & CEO, Bespoke Education, Inc.*

A representative from the American Exchange Project will be available in our main hall throughout the evening. The American Exchange Project (AEP) aims to connect American high school students from different backgrounds and regions to bridge differences and increase civic engagement.