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**Need Analysis (NA)** - The process of analyzing the household and financial information on the student's financial aid application and calculating the amount the family can be expected to contribute to educational costs. For the federal student assistance programs, the need analysis system is defined by law and results in a number known as the Expected Family Contribution.

**Professional Judgment** - While the method for determining the student's need for federal student aid is defined in the law, it does give the financial aid administrator the flexibility to make individual adjustments based on the administrator's professional judgment. Professional judgment can be used in three areas. The aid administrator can choose to override the student's dependency status to make the student independent, can adjust the components of the student's costs of attendance, and can adjust the data elements used to calculate the student's Expected Family Contribution. These adjustments must be made on a case-by-case basis, and the reasons for the adjustment must be documented in the student's file.

**Renewal FAFSA Application** - An application that simplifies the process of reapplying for financial aid. Some of the information from the student's previous year application is preprinted on the Renewal FAFSA application. Students do not have to enter new information if the preprinted information is still correct.

**Student Aid Report (SAR)** - The federal "output document" printed by a FAFSA processor and mailed to the student. The SAR contains the family's financial and other information reported by the student on the financial aid application. The student's eligibility for aid is indicated by the EFC printed on the front of the SAR. Schools that participate in the Electronic Data Exchange and other services offered by the U.S. Department of Education can receive the information on the SAR through these services.

**Verification** - A procedure whereby the school checks the information the student reported on the financial aid application, usually by requesting a copy of the tax returns filed by the student, and if applicable, the student's spouse and parent(s). Many schools conduct their own form of verification. In addition, schools must verify students selected through the federal central processing system, following the procedures established by regulation. The FAFSA processor will print an asterisk next to the EFC (on the Student Aid Report) to identify students who have been selected for verification

Understanding the Fine Print... Knowledge is Power, NCAS

# NCAS COMMUNIQUE



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## NATIONAL COLLEGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

### College Tours...

From the Parent's Perspective - by Eileen Rose



As a parent of two children who are currently attending college I have to say that the process of visiting colleges can be one of the most exciting or one of the most stressful experiences of your life. After meeting with Attiya and receiving the list of colleges which she had selected for my child, we went home and reviewed the information with my husband. My oldest, now a senior, selected 10 or 11 schools that he felt would be a good fit! My youngest, now a freshman, also felt there were 7-10 schools of interest to him on the list.

We started in the summer of their senior year. Many of my friends went to see schools as early as the Junior year. Organizing your schedule is a key! We sat with a calendar and spaced out the visits. Most of the schools were out-of-state. A few meant traveling by plane. Some of the schools were offering student/parent open houses on a specific date during the summer. Those schools went on the schedule first. I would highly recommend these, if you can attend one. This type of visit is even better than a tour at the college. Most tours are available every weekday as well as some Saturdays. I liked the open houses because we not only had a tour, but many of the administrators at the college were there to give an overview on their department (i.e. the dean, the financial affairs director, department heads, etc.)

If an open-house wasn't available then the next best thing was a visit with a tour, a meeting with an advisor, and a meeting with the head of the academic department. My oldest son is a theater major and it was important to him to meet and see things in the department.

#### Here are a few helpful tips:

Bring a camera on the tours. Your child will say you are an embarrassment. Remind them that they will probably never see these people on the tour again, so "let it go". After the 4th or 5th school that you visit, they all start to blend together. Make sure you take a picture of an important building or statue

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or open area to remind your child of the main feel of the campus. Make sure you take a picture of the dorm room. They all have a bed, dresser, and desk, but they will blend into one if you don't have a visual memory. I made a scrapbook of the photos. It was helpful during the winter when it had been 6 months and my son couldn't remember which school had which dorm rooms, etc. Make a folder for each school you visit. It is so much easier to keep the paperwork like this. I used large colored folders that tie to close. Nothing falls out!

When your child asks you how you like the school, try not to be too specific. I wanted my sons to feel that they were making this decision. I said "I could see you attending and being very happy here" to almost every school they toured. To be honest, because of the work that Attiya had already done and some of the leg work that we did to weed out a few schools, most of the schools we toured were great! I think each student gets a certain feel when they visit their choices. It might be; they like the cafeteria, or maybe the fitness area, or maybe even the dorms.

Ask a lot of questions. Your child may say you're embarrassing them with your questions, but you will feel a lot better having your concerns addressed. You will realize that all the parents that are there have the same concerns as you. Many of them will ask your questions before you have a chance.

"Most tours are available every weekday as well as some Saturdays."

As I counted the number of schools that we saw I was surprised at that number. Between the two boys, I saw over 15 schools from Syracuse to Miami. So here's the bottom line! Stay as organized as you can and enjoy these visits. These may be the last trips that you take with your child for a long time!

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## FYI: For Your Information...

### Timetable for Test Prep Classes

#### Prep for the March & May 2005 SATI Tests

Classes begin:  
Jan 28th - May 1, 2005

Review Week:  
April 25th - 28th

TEST DATE:  
SATI- May 7th, 2005

Registration Deadline:  
March 25th, 2005

Other Test Dates:  
June 4th, 2005

#### Prep for the June SATII Subject Tests: For Math IC, Math IIC & Physics Classes will be held in: May

TEST DATE:  
SATII - June 4th, 2005  
Registration Deadline:  
April 29th, 2005

#### Classes for Students who want to take the SATI in October

Classes begin: July 2005

Call for a detailed timetable.

Please check College Board web site for any updates or changes. [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com)

### Choosing the Right Loan to Help Finance A College Education...



Choosing the right loan to help finance a college education can be a challenging process. There are many options for Federal, State and Private loans. Some of these educational loan programs are:

#### FEDERAL PERKINS LOAN

This is a low-interest (5%) fixed rate loan for students with exceptional need as determined by the FAFSA. Federal Perkins Loans are made through the college's financial aid office with the college acting as the lender. No interest is charged until the loan enters repayment and, then, the interest rate is fixed at 5%. There are also ways to cancel a portion or your entire loan by serving in certain careers. Eligible students may borrow a maximum of \$4000 per year for up to five years of undergraduate study. The aggregate loan limits for Perkins is \$20,000. To apply for the Perkins Loan, complete the FAFSA.

**What happens when the loan enters repayment?** Students may take up to 10 years to repay the loan, beginning nine months after they graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time status. The minimum monthly payment is \$40. No interest accrues while the student is in school, and, under certain conditions, some or the entire loan may be canceled. Cancellation options include: teaching in low-income areas, working in law enforcement or as full-time nurses or medical technicians, or serving as Peace Corps or VISTA volunteers.

#### STAFFORD LOAN PROGRAMS

Both Stafford and Direct Stafford Loans have the same interest rates, loan maximums, deferments, and cancellation benefits. The difference is the source of funds for the loans. A Stafford Loan may be borrowed from a commercial lender, such as a bank or credit union. A Direct Loan is borrowed directly from the U.S. Department of Education. The college determines which funding source they will use for the loan program.

#### Subsidized Versus Unsubsidized Stafford Loan

The Stafford Loan is a variable interest rate loan and changes every year on July 1. The interest rate

is capped at 8.25% so the borrower will never be charged more than 8.25% interest. The federal government pays the interest while the student is enrolled in college, during the grace period, and during deferment periods. Interest is not paid until the loan enters repayment. There is also an Unsubsidized Stafford Loan that is not based on financial need. A student may be eligible, regardless of family income. The student is responsible for paying the interest that accrues while he/she is in college, during the grace period, and during deferment periods.

#### PLUS Loans

The PLUS (Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students) Loan is a credit-based loan for parents of dependent students. This is a non-need based loan, although some colleges may require that the FAFSA be completed to receive a PLUS loan. PLUS loans may be processed under either the Direct or Stafford Loan system, depending on the type of loan program for which the college has contracted. The PLUS loan is a variable interest rate loan that is capped at 9%. There is no yearly limit; you may borrow up to the cost of education, less other financial aid received.

**This article is shared for information purpose only. Please check with specific colleges for exact details.**

#### UNDERSTANDING THE FINANCIAL AID LANGUAGE...COMMON FINANCIAL TERMS

**Expected Family Contribution (EFC)** - Using Federal Methodology and individual family size and finances, this figure is established to set an available income that can be used by a family for the student's education.

**Federal Family Education Loan Programs (FFELP)**- The Federal Family Education Loan Program was formerly known as the Guaranteed Student Loan (GSL) Program. The FFELP program includes the Federal Stafford Loans (subsidized and unsubsidized), Federal PLUS Loans, and Federal Consolidation Loans. Funds for these programs are provided by private lenders and the loans are guaranteed by the federal government. **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** - The official document used by every college and university to determine eligibility for Federal Student Aid. A copy of this document is often required by a scholarship program.

Continued on Page 4...

## INTERVIEW STYLE Student Success Story...



While at a co-op through RPI, Heather had a chance to observe an orthopedic surgery.

**Name:** Heather Scoffone  
**High School Attended:** Mount St. Charles Academy, Class of 2002  
**Currently:** Junior Biomedical Engineering Major, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI).  
**Reason for College Choice:** Entering my junior year of high school, I was essentially undecided about my major. Attiya's career counseling really helped me develop a career focus. I had never even heard of biomedical engineering, or RPI for that matter, until Attiya mentioned them! Out of six college acceptances, I chose RPI because I was impressed by the caliber of their engineering program - and was awarded a substantial scholarship and a free lap-top!

**College Experience:** I have never doubted my choice to attend RPI. At the suggestion of an RPI career counselor and backed by the strong reputation of RPI students, I applied for and was accepted into a competitive co-op program at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. Currently, I am working on a 6-month assignment in their world-renowned biomedical engineering research laboratory, studying the occurrence of foot ulcers in diabetic patients.  
**Comments on NCAS's COLLEGE BOUND PROGRAM:** My parents and I considered enrolling me in other college bound programs, but were impressed by the individual attention and the comprehensive assessments the NCAS program offered. Enrollment in the Chaudary's program was one of the best decisions my parents and I made during high school. I was amazed at how much more prepared I was for the SATs than my friends who had taken similar courses elsewhere. The NCAS college bound program helped me to achieve strong SAT scores, which in turn enabled me to receive a larger scholarship from RPI than I had ever dreamed! In addition, the program increased my self-confidence, sharpened my interview skills, and provided me with encouragement throughout every step of the college application process. As a junior in high school, my younger brother is currently enrolled in the same program, and I know that with the help of the Chaudarys, he too will make an informed college decision and have opportunities that otherwise would not have been possible without participation in the NCAS College Bound Program.



Heather and colleague dissecting a cadaver foot while working on a Biomechanics research project on "Diabetic foot ulcers" at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.

## WAITLISTED... What Should You Do?

Two years ago, a Rhode-Island student wait-listed at the College of William & Mary, hitchhiked to the college and spent a week walking up and down the campus wearing a placard begging the college to accept her. Although creative, there are other ways you can make yourself stand out if you are waitlisted at your top choice college.

#### What Is A Waitlist?

Colleges have worked out formulas to calculate how many accepted students will actually accept their offer to matriculate. The waitlist is a way for the college to have a choice of admitting students who are equally qualified but who did not make the first cut. According to a 2002 study by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC), there is a one in five chance that a student may be accepted off a waitlist at most colleges, other than the super-selective colleges. The wait-list letter will indicate the number of students that were admitted off the wait-list in the past and will also provide information on the likelihood of admission.

#### What Can You Do?

- Call the college to find out if they rank waitlists. Then ask where you are on the list. The higher you rank the better your chance of getting accepted. However, also realize that typically the college will give you only a few days or sometimes only 24 hours to decide to enroll once they take you off the waitlist. This late in the game you may not get the best housing or the best financial package so be sure you can afford to attend the college before you accept the admission offer.
- Follow up by writing a letter to the admission office providing them with additional information to supplement your application. Let them know about any new achievements or awards, send a strong recommendation and reflect a strong desire to attend the college. Ask your high school counselor to call on your behalf and provide the school with new details on your GPA.
- You can also ask for another interview with the admissions office. It is important to make your senior year count. This way if you are waitlisted and you want to make a strong effort to gain admission then a rigorous senior curriculum with strong grades will highlight your academics.

Remember if you have been waitlisted or deferred, it is not the end of the world. Use your time wisely and make alternate plans with another school. Many students have found that their second choice college was indeed a perfect fit for them. You will wind up at the perfect college for you - and by September you will not be able to imagine yourself anywhere else so count your blessings and move on.

- Attiya Chaudary