

College

-Matt Lieberson

There are approximately 4,700 colleges and universities in the world. Consequently, it is a tad stressful and complicated to choose the right one. Ask any senior and they would say that “a tad” doesn’t do the process justice. College talk has infested everything for the Class of 2012. With early decision/action deadlines looming on November 1st for many schools, and the January regular decision dates still fast approaching, applying to college feels like the only thing that many seniors are doing.

What many applicants and their parents are quick to realize is that the process has evolved over the past 20-30 years. It isn’t just checking boxes anymore. Now there are essays to write, and not just one. Many colleges require a supplemental application in addition to the Common App (if the school even uses the Common App); often with a specialized essay or specialized short answer questions. Some students end up writing around 15 essays for their applications. Another lovely feature about college applications are the fees. Each school has a fee to send the application. On top of this fee, which usually ends up around \$60, there’s the \$5 cost to send a transcript and the \$10 cost to send test scores. So before you even get into college, you’re out \$75. One benefit about the evolution of applications is that everything is digitized. Now, everything is done online, allowing for easier file sharing and document sending. The Marblehead High School guidance department is hooked up with Naviance, an online program that controls the files for each student.

Speaking of the guidance department, the MHS guidance office becomes a war zone once deadlines begin to approach. The appointment book is always packed, and you’re lucky to squeeze in an appointment during a study 2 weeks out based on the jammed schedule. The guidance counselors are bombarded with recommendations and paperwork for various

students and applications. This isn't without hounding, either. I can only speak for myself, but I know that I am in Ms. Chaykowski's office at least twice a day with various small tasks that either she has asked me to do or I have for her. This past Friday, I walked into an empty guidance office and was disturbed. Why was it empty? Ms. Chaykowski's door was open, and she was leaning back in a chair typing. When I went in, I heard the faint guitar riffs of "All Along the Watchtower" (my all-time favorite song, I might add) in the background. I asked Ms. Chaykowski about the music, as I was surprised to know that she was a Hendrix fan. She said that "the guidance office hasn't been empty in 3 days, and the fact that I can listen to music without being bugged is startling to me. This is a rarity for me. It's so peaceful."

For being under such fire by the student body, the guidance department does a great job to work with students and get done everything they need. Senior Aron Roytenberg is very pleased with the help he's received. "The guidance department, as well as everyone at the high school, is very helpful with this process." The teachers are usually understanding of the process itself. However, it does take some adjusting to find the right balance between schoolwork and applications. "It's tough at first to do both," Roytenberg said, "but with good organization and time management it isn't such a daunting task. You just have to stay focused. If you can get the college stuff done as soon as possible, the pressure really comes off there." The teachers don't necessarily back off, but they know the pressure Roytenberg refers to. Teachers in the English department are always willing to help out with editing any writing for applications. Teachers also write a lot of student recommendations; an act which guidance counselor Mr. Gauthier always makes sure to remind students "is completely voluntary." Teachers want the students to succeed (as much as many students may disagree at times), and they will do anything they can to help out.

Applying to college is an event. It is a marathon, not a sprint. It's a thorough, in-depth process that has many moving parts to take care of, and if you don't stay on top of it, it will begin to mount. But the light at the end of the tunnel is there. "Soon enough this will be over, I'll be into school, and think to myself that I conquered the process," Roytenberg said with a laugh. "Soon enough. It can't be soon enough." In the meantime, seniors are inundated with essays to write and boxes to check.

© 2011-2012 Headlight
You may not copy use or
distribute without
permission from the
author of this piece and
from the Headlight
newspaper editor.