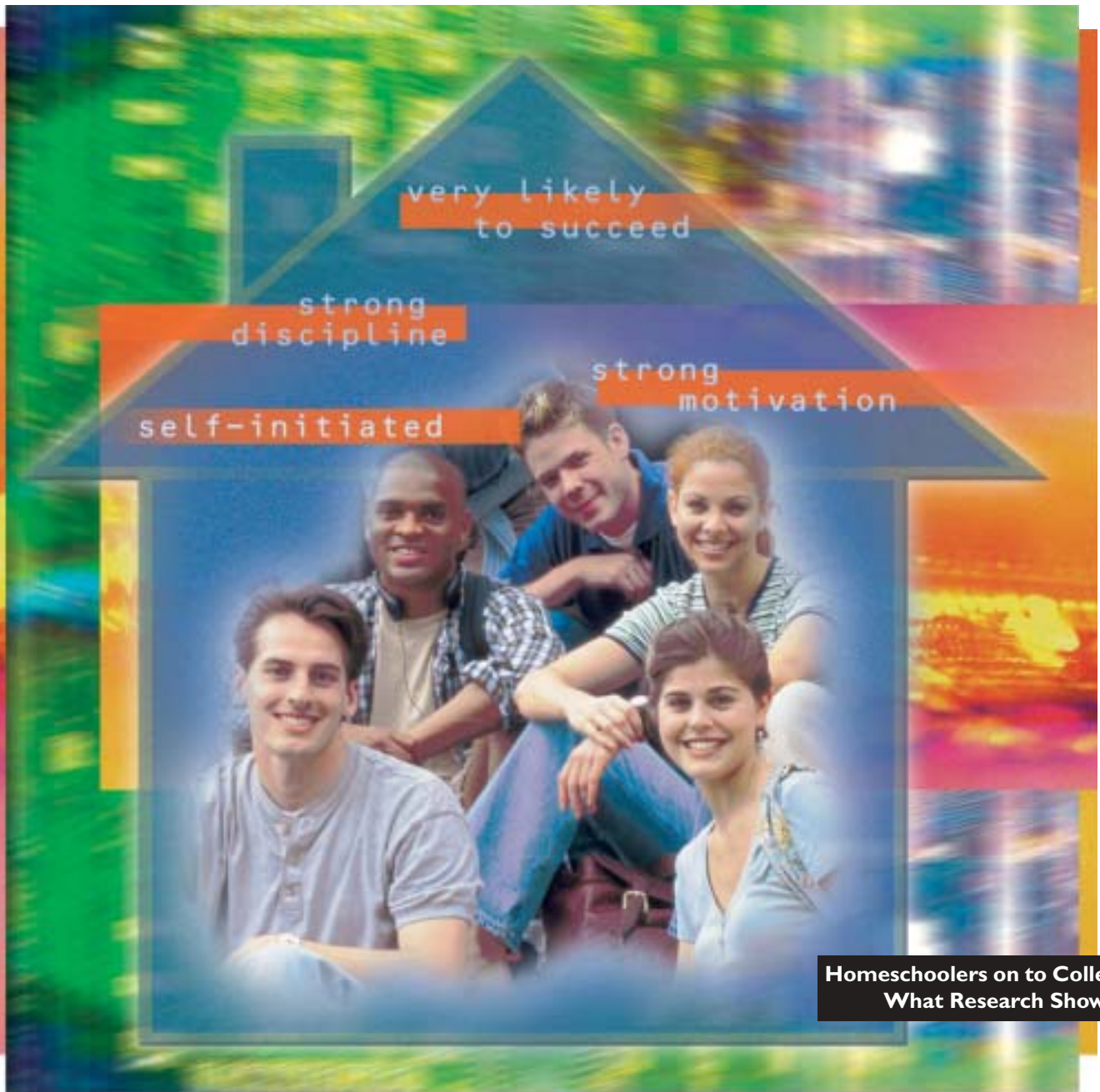


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College Admission

Journal of the National Association for College Admission Counseling

Number 185 Fall 2004



**Homeschoolers on to College:
What Research Shows Us**

Special Homeschool Issue



In This Issue

NACAC

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Number 185

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Homeschool students lack easy access to college guidance counseling, compared to their traditional school peers, and, to some extent, many of these students and their parents look at traditional education—even that found on the college campuses of most of our membership—with some skepticism. College admission officers often mirror this skepticism, even until recently, as the success of homeschoolers, upon their campus arrival, is proving that they are capable students.

Yet, these students face challenges in negotiating the college admission process. Unlike some of their traditional school contemporaries, they aren't lost in the crowd of students served by a small team. Instead, they often go through the admission process without access to *any* professional guidance. Bridging the gap between homeschool and college entrance may prove difficult to a student with no knowledge of admission standards or procedures (having to do with gathering recommendations, mailing transcripts, following deadlines, and taking advantage of scholarship opportunities).

To add to this stress, homeschool students still have to break through barriers that some colleges and universities fence around admission. Too often these students are stereotyped, both positively (as super-smart, self-disciplined prodigies) and negatively (as severely

introverted, socially inept and awkward creatures), and these false impressions often suppress opportunity.

This fall issue of the *Journal of College Admission* focuses on these concerns and others related to this small, yet significant group of students.

Gary Mason opens the *Journal*, sharing his experiences both working with and recruiting homeschoolers. He advises admission officers to help students in the same ways a high school counselor would. This process advantages both parties—students learn the in's and out's of admission, while admission officers present their institutions as trustworthy to a potential recruit.

Next, in the cover story, "Homeschoolers on to College: What Research Shows Us," Dr. Brian Ray researches and describes characteristics of homeschoolers, such as age, how long they were home-

schooled, how many books they have read, how many of them voted in the last election, etc., and how college and universities typically perceive this portion of the student population.

Drs. Paul Jones and Gene Gloeckner continue to share specific homeschool research—including statistics on the documents required for admission consideration, the number of homeschool applications received per year, the expected level of students' social coping, and other fascinating data—in the second feature, "A Study of Admission Officers' Perceptions of and Attitudes Toward Homeschool Students."

In the third feature, "Unintended Admission Consequences of Federal Aid for Homeschoolers," Sean Calloway follows the legal history of higher-education federal aid policies to the present and asks readers to reflect on why the college transition is still overly difficult for homeschoolers.

Regardless of rumors and statistics, the homeschool population needs and deserves the help of colleges and universities. These students, though learning outside the mainstream education system, should be treated in the same way as their traditionally-schooled equals. After all, according to statistics, this segment of learners is just as likely to succeed. We hope that this issue will assist you, the decision-makers, in researching this unique population of future college graduates.

Sarah E. Smith
Journal Editor

Palmer Muntz
Editorial Board



"For a homeschooled student you have an impressive resume...volunteering at a hospital, playing the piano, dusting furniture, emptying the dishwasher..."

College Admission

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Open Forum

Homeschool Recruiting: Lessons Learned on the Journey

by Gary Mason

I love working with homeschoolers! I am a veteran admission professional, and, over the last few years, I have enjoyed working with a new kind of prospective student—those who have been schooled at home during high school. Almost without exception, I have found these students to be friendly, polite, well-prepared, and appreciative of help.

As the number of homeschooling families continues to increase rapidly across the United States, many in higher education have begun to target this group as an emerging market to include in their recruitment plans. When I worked in the admission office at Ball State University (IN), we realized that the number of Indiana homeschoolers was growing and that most of the homeschoolers who were applying seemed well-prepared academically. I took on the duties of coordinator of homeschool relations, and we began to reach out more intentionally to the homeschool community.

Research showed that our homeschooled students had above-average SAT and ACT scores (1210 and 29 respectively). They also performed better academically. They had a combined cumulative grade point average of 3.47, compared to the 2.91 shared by the general student population. Through semi-structured interviews, I found they were also doing well socially.

These students were well prepared for college by their homeschooling experience. However, homeschoolers were often lacking the advantage of a guidance counselor to help them work through the college search and financial aid processes. Admission professionals can help fill this role by being available to answer questions and by directing students and families to helpful resources on the Internet. By helping families with general admission questions, I gained credibility as not just a

college marketer for my own institution, but as someone who truly wanted to help homeschoolers.

Because homeschooled students are coming from intimate environments, it is important that the recruitment techniques colleges use to reach them be personalized. As recruiters, we must be authentic and get to know families personally. Some colleges have begun to offer specific programs and services for homeschoolers. These include things such as special, smaller campus visit days designed exclusively for homeschoolers. Some colleges are also offering unique learning opportunities, helping provide classes homeschoolers may find difficult to teach on their own.

Homeschooling is a loosely-connected, grassroots movement. I found it important to make contacts within the various homeschool networks in Indiana. I met leaders from the Indiana Association of Home Educators, and we exhibited at their statewide convention each year. I joined the list-serve sponsored by the Indiana Home Education Network, and was a resource to homeschooling families across the state regarding high school curriculum and the college admission process. I became a member of the board of directors of the Indiana Foundation for Home Schooling. Through these and other relationships, we changed the perception of Ball State University from a school that was “way too big,” to a school that genuinely cared about and

Because homeschooled students are coming from intimate environments, it is important that the recruitment techniques colleges use to reach them be personalized.



Open Forum

understood homeschoolers and their unique needs.

One area of resistance that public colleges may encounter, in reaching out to homeschoolers, is that many of them have chosen to educate their children at home, at least in part, for religious reasons. They wanted to teach their children traditional Judeo-Christian values, rather than have them educated in the public school context, which can be secular and humanistic. For this reason, public colleges are often seen as the highest level, educationally, of what they have been trying to avoid. This is why it is so important for homeschool recruiters to get know families personally and help them understand that their students can attend a public college, get a good education at a cheaper cost, and still maintain their faith commitment. I can remember exhibiting at homeschool conferences and seeing families literally turn away from my table because I worked for a public university, but, over time, we were able to change peoples' perceptions and they began to seek out our table because they knew we were willing to help answer their questions.

Because of my connections with the homeschooling community, I recently became the director of admission at Patrick Henry College (VA), a new independent Christian liberal arts college near Washington, DC— an exciting opportunity. PHC grew out of the Christian homeschooling movement and has close ties to the Home School Legal Defense Association. The college is highly selective. We employ a classical liberal arts core curriculum and an apprenticeship model within the majors, and the majority of our students have homeschool backgrounds. We have

It is my hope that many other college admission professionals will recognize what a unique and wonderful group of students are represented in the homeschooling movement and will experience the kind of fulfilling interactions I have come to know.

found that homeschoolers are a good match for the kind of rigorous academic program we offer since they tend to be highly-motivated, self-directed learners who are intellectually curious.

My journey working with homeschooled students in the college search process has been rich and rewarding. It is my hope that many other college admission professionals will recognize what a unique and wonderful group of students are represented in the homeschooling movement and will experience the kind of fulfilling interactions I have come to know. Homeschoolers represent more than just a growing market segment in college recruiting, they also make what we do a great deal of fun!



Gary Mason has worked professionally in the admission field for ten years. He attended Greenville College (IL), where he began as an admission counselor, following graduation. He worked in the admissions office at Asbury Theological Seminary (KY), and most recently at Ball State University (IN). He is currently director of admissions at Patrick Henry College (VA). He and his wife, Jill, have two children, ages 9 and 11, and he enjoys birdwatching, which fits in well with his admission travels.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

David Brooks, senior editor of *The Weekly Standard*, recently posed the question: “If your kid was accepted at Harvard, but you secretly thought he or she would be happier at Bennington, would you have the guts to turn Harvard down?” This is a really intriguing question, as it highlights the very reasons why we homeschool.

As homeschoolers we have said “no” to the pressure-filled meritocratic system that organized schooling has come to represent. A meritocratic system rewards achievement for achievement’s sake. It is an environment that fosters kids not to take risks because success is so important, and failure is so detrimental. Students learn that if they stick to subjects or skills they are good at, rather than those they have a passion for or an interest in, then it is easier for them to succeed. This thought process produces students who pursue professions that may make them money or bring them status, but that they ultimately don’t enjoy or that limit their ability and time to do the things they love. Organized schooling makes a great mistake by rewarding good students rather than those with a passion for what is being learned. Anyone can learn to be a good student and play the game of pleasing the teacher to get the coveted “A.” The time spent in this type of system is one in which energies are spent on obtaining that goal of perfection that everyone else defines for you. A homeschooler most likely is the one defining his or her success. To that end, they are usually more successful because they put value on their passions and interests, and they learn to live more spiritually satisfying lives doing what they love to do.

Homeschoolers study and work very hard. Their efforts are usually self-imposed and self-motivated. In cases where it is the parent who defines the goals, they at least do it with the child’s

abilities and interests in mind. In a typical school setting this usually is not the case, as kids are pushed to excel in areas they are not interested in. Consequently, kids learn to play the game of doing whatever it takes to get the highest grade, which doesn’t mean they will retain anything in the process. Homeschoolers don’t cram for tests, thereby committing knowledge to short-term memory until the test is over. Their varied interests—and the time to pursue them on their own terms—make learning long-lasting and more satisfying. In many cases the child can help craft their own curriculum, thereby giving them an ownership of it. This part of who they are is not artificially imposed.

Over the years I have spoken to college admission counselors regarding the application process. They have shared with me that they are weary of reading the applications that demonstrate how the usual high school applicant has traveled to the Himalayas, cured a fatal disease, single-handedly started a non-profit corporation, and is fluent in five languages. They are refreshed to see a person who is well-rounded and has a passion for a particular field of study, and homeschoolers are always looking for ways to communicate these strengths to colleges.

College counselors and admission people, please be open-minded. Test scores, diplomas and other trappings of what is deemed evidence of education may not actually tell you anything about an applicant. Colleges should come to realize that learning does not always

take the shape of textbooks and endless worksheets. They should evaluate a homeschooled kid not based solely on what credentials they carry, but on what they have experienced in their lives thus far. They should see the value in being educated in a way that fosters independent thought, family and life values, and the ability to find information. Colleges should recognize that homeschooled kids are already in tune with how a college environment works, regarding choosing what they wish to study and managing their own time.

Success is not the destination, but the journey. Homeschoolers can be successful in the pursuit of learning, getting into a good college, exploring career opportunities, and winning contests and scholarships. They are successful because their achievements are a part of what they are doing.

Homeschoolers strive to identify their true calling or passion, and then pursue these interests even if it doesn’t meet the typical criteria of success. These kids are different from the children who may graduate from an outstanding high school with all kinds of achievements, while still not having a clear sense of who they are or what their mission in life is. Homeschooled kids are excited by what they are doing and will truly follow their dreams to create personal success and life-long achievement.

Judy Aron is vice president of Connecticut Home Education Network (www.cthomeschoolnetwork.org) and director of research for National Home Education Legal Defense (www.nheld.com)

Homeschoolers on to College:



What Research Shows Us

Experience and anecdotes have led many people to believe that homeschool parents were either move-to-the-country anarchist goat-herders, or right-wing Bible-thumpers, and their children were either mathematically-limited, due to Mama's fear of math, or child prodigies in rocket-science who were unthinkable socially hindered. Although one can find statistical deviants in every group, homeschooling research tells a different story from the experience-based stereotypes and biases concerning those involved in home education.



Quick History and Demographics

Most people know that parent-led, home-based education is neither a new concept nor a new educational practice; it is millennia old. By the late 1970s, however, it was estimated that only 13,000 grades K-12 students were being homeschooled in the United States (Lines, 1991). The practice of homeschooling was specially rekindled during the 1980s, promoted by individualist parents and educational thinkers with a variety of backgrounds in pedagogical philosophies and religious worldviews. With 1.7–2.1 million K-12 students home educated during the 2002–2003 institutional school year, home-based education is now arguably the fastest-growing form of education, compared to public and private institutional schooling (Ray, 2003).

Dr. Brian D. Ray has been researching the homeschool movement for almost 20 years and is internationally known for his work. He has been a classroom teacher in public and private schools and a professor in the sciences and education at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He earned his Ph.D. in science education from Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. Among other things, he currently conducts research, speaks, writes, and consults, and is president of the National Home Education Research Institute in Salem, Oregon (www.nheri.org, mail@nheri.org). Brian, his wife, and eight children live on a small farm in western Oregon.

Although measures of central tendency mask the variety of people involved in homeschooling, the following descriptions give a glimpse of the current homeschool population (c.f., Ray, 2004b for a more comprehensive list):

1. Both parents are actively involved in home-based education, with the mother/homemaker usually as the main academic teacher. Fathers do some of the formal academic teaching of the children and are engaged in other ways in their lives.
2. The learning program is flexible and highly individualized, involving both homemade and purchased curriculum materials.
3. Some families purchase complete curriculum packages for their children, while others approach homeschooling with only a small degree of preplanned structure: this is often called “lifestyle of learning” or “unschooling.”
4. As a rule, home-educated students have relatively little interaction with state schools or their services. A minority participate in public-school interscholastic activities such as sports and music ensembles, and some occasionally take an academic course in local schools.
5. Children study a wide range of conventional subjects, with an emphasis on reading, writing, math, and science.
6. Many students take advantage of the flexibility provided by home education to participate in special studies and events, such as volunteer community work, political internships, travel, missionary excursions, animal husbandry, gardening, and national competitions.
7. Most homeschool children are taught at home for at least four to five years. Most parents intend to home-educate their youths through the high school years.
8. They have larger-than-average families.
9. Male and female students are equally represented.
10. A married couple head at least 95 percent of homeschooling families.
11. The typical homeschooling parent has attended or graduated from college. About half of home educators have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, significant numbers have only a high school education.
12. The total annual household income is under \$25,000 for about 18 percent of the families; \$25,000–\$49,000 for about 44 percent; \$50,000–\$74,000 for about 25 percent, and \$75,000 or more for about 13 percent. This is close to the median (typical) income for American families.



13. In terms of faith, a wide variety of parents and families homeschool. More than 75 percent regularly attend religious services. The majority are of the Christian faith and place a strong emphasis on orthodox and conservative biblical doctrine. However, an increasing proportion of agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Jews, Mormons, Muslims, and New Agers are homeschooling their children.
14. In terms of racial/ethnic background, about 85 percent are white/non-Hispanic, but a rapidly increasing portion of minorities also are engaging in home-based education.

Homeschool Students' Academic Performance

One of the first questions researchers ask is, “Does homeschooling work, academically?” Many policy makers, educators, school administrators, and parents wonder whether ordinary mothers and fathers, who are not government-certified teachers, are capable of teaching their children after age five. Is it possible for adults without specialized, university-level training in teaching to help their children learn what they need to learn?

Many studies have been completed during the past 20 years that examine the academic achievement of the home-educated (Ray, 2004b). Dozens of researchers have executed these studies. Examples of these studies ranged from a multi-year study in Washington state, three nationwide studies across the United States, and a nationwide study in Canada (Ray, 1994, 1997, 2001c; Rudner, 1999; Wartes, 1991). In study after study, the homeschooled scored, on average, at the 65th to 80th percentile on standardized academic achievement tests in the United States and Canada, compared to the public school average of the 50th percentile.

Researchers, wondering if only certain families—in which the parents have a high educational attainment or family income—are able to homeschool such that their children score high on achievement tests, show that children in homeschool families with low income and in which the parents have little education are scoring, on average, above state-school averages (Ray, 2000, 2004b, ch. 4). In addition, research shows that the parents’ teacher-certification has little to no relationship with their children’s academic achievement, and that the degree of state control of homeschooling (i.e., regulations) has no relationship with academic achievement (Ray, 2004b).

Numerous studies, employing various psychological constructs and measures, show the home-educated are developing at least as well, and often better than, those who attend institutional schools.

Homeschool Students' Social and Emotional Development

Socialization questions are asked of nearly every homeschool parent and every homeschool teenager. Some of them tire of the questions; others receive them as an opportunity to spread the word about one of their favorite topics. These questions arise mainly in societies in which the institutionalization of children is the norm for children during the ages of six to 18.

More specifically, the first question usually asks if the child will experience healthy social, emotional and psychological development. Numerous studies, employing various psychological constructs and measures, show the home-educated are developing at least as well, and often better than, those who attend institutional schools (Medlin, 2000; Ray, 2004b, ch. 4). No research contravenes this evidence. For example, regarding aspect of self-concept in the psychological development of children, several studies have revealed that the self-concept of homeschooled students is significantly higher than that of public school students. As another example, Shyers (1992) found the only significant childhood social-interaction difference between the institutionally-schooled and homeschoolers was that the institutionally-schooled had higher problem behavior scores.

The second question related to socialization is how the homeschooled child will do in the “real world.”

Homeschoolers in the “Real World”

Many define the “real world” as the world of adulthood, in which one is responsible for obtaining one’s own food, shelter and clothing. For some college students, the “real world” is four years away. Others are already in the “real world,” because, in addition to taking classes, they work to provide their own food and shelter. To simplify the matter for this article, the “real world” is defined as life after secondary school.

Linda Montgomery (1989), a principal of a private high school, was one of the first to look to the future and adulthood of the home-educated. She investigated the extent to which homeschooled students were experiencing conditions that foster leadership in children and adolescents who attend institutional schools. Her findings on 10- to 21-year-olds showed that the home-educated were certainly not isolated from social and group activities with other youth and adults. They were quite involved in youth group and other church activities, jobs, sports, summer camps, music lessons, and recitals. She concluded that homeschooling nurtured leadership at least as well as does the conventional system.

Susannah Sheffer (1995) talked with homeschooled adolescent girls moving into adulthood. Sheffer began her report by citing the work of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues in the Harvard Project on Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development who, lamenting, “have written about girls’ ‘loss of voice’ and increasing distrust of their own perceptions.” Sheffer suggested that the great difference in structure and function—the way things work, the relationships people have, expected behaviors, and the roles people play—between homeschooling and conventional schooling may have explained why she found so many of these home-educated adolescents to have not lost their voice and sense of identity. Meredith, a 14-year-old in Sheffer’s study, said, “I was worried that I would become a typical teenager if I went to school” and “I think some people would have seen [school] as my opportunity to ‘be like everybody else.’ But I didn’t want to be like everybody else.” Sheffer concluded, “Throughout this book the homeschooled girls I’ve interviewed have echoed these statements. They have talked about trusting themselves, pursuing their own goals, maintaining friendships even when their friends differ from them or disagree with them.” Finally, these home-educated girls maintain their self-confidence as they pass into womanhood.

Sheffer’s findings regarding adolescent girls might explain some of the successes that other researchers have found, regarding young adults who were homeschooled. In a study that categorized college students as either home, public or private schooled, and examined their aptitude for achievement in college English, Galloway and Sutton (1995) found that homeschooled students demonstrated similar academic preparedness for college and similar academic achievement in college as students who had attended conventional schools. In a similar vein, Oliveira, Watson and Sutton (1994) found that home-educated college students had a slightly higher overall mean critical thinking score than did students from public schools, Christian schools, and ACE [private] schools but the differences were not statistically significant.

Similarly, Jones and Gloeckner (2004) cited three studies (Gray, 1998; Jenkins, 1998; Mexcur, 1993) as showing the home-educated to be performing as well or better than institutional-school graduates at the college level. Jones and Gloeckner, in their own study, concluded, “The academic performance analyses indicate that home school graduates are as ready for college as traditional high school graduates and that they perform as well on national college assessment tests as traditional high school graduates” (20).

ACTs and SATs are the best-known test predictors of success in university or college in America. Both the SAT and ACT publishers have reported for several years that the scores of the homeschooled are higher, on average, than those from public schools. For example, for the 1999–2000 school year, the home-educated scored an average of 568 in verbal while the state-school (i.e., public-school) average was 501, and 532 in math while the state-school average was 510 (Barber, 2001).

Galloway and Sutton (1997) used academic, cognitive, spiritual, affective-social, and psychomotor criteria for measuring success at a private university. Among other things, they found that homeschooled students held significantly more positions of appointed and spiritual leadership, and had more semesters of leadership service than did those from private schools, and were statistically similar to the public school graduates.

Although some college and university personnel have shown animosity toward the homeschooling process, it appears that most are now interested in welcoming the home-educated. A recent survey asked many questions of 34 college admission officers in Ohio, who averaged 10 years of experience in college admission work and of whom 88 percent had personal experience working with homeschooled students (Ray, 2001b). For example, they were asked how homeschooled students at their institution compared to their general student population in terms of academic success. About nine percent said “far more academically successful,” 22 percent reported “somewhat more academically successful,” 38 percent said “academically about average,” zero percent reported “somewhat less academically successful,” zero percent said “far less academically successful,” and 31 percent said “don’t know.” On a five-point, strongly agree–strongly disagree scale, the admission officers were nearly symmetrical in their responses to the statement, “As the primary instructors, parents should be recognized as capable of evaluating their student’s academic competence in letters of recommendation” (i.e., 32 percent agree, 24 percent neither, and 32 percent disagree). To the item, “The majority of homeschooled students are at least as socially well adjusted as are public schooled students,” 44 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 35 percent responded “neither,” and 21 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Likewise, Irene Prue’s (1997, 62) nationwide study of college admission personnel revealed that “... homeschooled students are academically, emotionally, and socially prepared to succeed in college.”

Several colleges think so well of home-educated students that they have been actively recruiting them for several years (e.g., Boston University, Nyack College). Christopher Klicka’s (1998, 3) survey of college admission officers found a Dartmouth College admission officer saying, “The applications [from homeschoolers] I’ve come across are outstanding.



Homeschoolers have a distinct advantage because of the individualized instruction they have received.” This individualized instruction, combined with homeschooled students’ experience in studying and pursuing goals on their own, may be showing long-lasting effects. Admission officers at Stanford University think they are seeing an unusually high occurrence of a key ingredient, which they term “intellectual vitality,” in homeschool graduates (Foster, 2000). They link it to the practice of self-teaching prevalent in these young people, as a result of their homeschool environment.

A few researchers have examined adults who were home-educated without necessarily linking them to the college scene. J. Gary Knowles (Knowles & de Olivares, 1991; Knowles & Muchmore, 1995) was the first to focus research on adults who were home-educated, collecting extensive data from a group who were home-educated an average of about six years before they were 17 years old. He found that they tended to be involved in entrepreneurial and professional occupations, were fiercely independent, and strongly emphasized the importance of family. Furthermore, they were glad they had been home-educated, would recommend homeschooling to others, and had no grossly negative perceptions of living in a pluralistic society.

I recently conducted the largest nationwide study of home-educated adults (Ray, 2004a). The target population was all homeschooled adults in the U.S. Most of my findings were consistent with what Knowles and his colleagues (Knowles & de Olivares, 1991; Knowles & Muchmore, 1995) found. Of 7,306 adults who had been homeschooled participated, 5,254 had been homeschooled for seven or more years during K-12. This subset of participants had several things in common:

1. Their average age was 21.
2. They were homeschooled for an average of 11 years.
3. Regarding the primary method of instruction used during their homeschool years (of nine listed in the survey), 34 percent selected “more than one of the above” nine methods, 25 percent chose “traditional textbooks and assignments,” and 22 percent responded “eclectic, directed by parent.”
4. A higher percent of them had taken some college courses than the general U.S. population of similar age, and a higher percent of the home-educated already had a baccalaureate.

5. Less homeschoolers (61 percent) read a newspaper at least once a week than do U.S. adults of similar age (82 percent).
6. More of the home-educated (98 percent) read a book in the past six months than did the general population (69 percent).
7. More of the homeschooled (100 percent) read one or more magazines on a regular basis than the general population (89 percent).
8. Seventy-one percent of the homeschooled "...participate in any ongoing community service activity..." compared to 37 percent of the general population.
9. With the statement, "politics and government are too complicated to understand," four percent of the home-educated agree while 35 percent of the general population agree.
10. For those of age 18 to 24, 76 percent of the homeschooled voted in the past five years while 29 percent of the same-age general population in the U.S. voted.
11. Of those ages 18 to 24, 14 percent of the home-educated participated in a protest or boycott during the past 12 months while 7 percent of the general population did so.

In essence, the home-educated were very positive about their homeschool experiences, actively involved in their local communities, keeping abreast of current affairs, highly civically engaged, going on to college at a higher rate than the national average, tolerant of others' expressing their viewpoints, religiously active, but wide-ranging in their worldview beliefs, holding worldview beliefs similar to those of their parents, and largely home-educating their own children.

These home-educated adults' degree of community and civic involvement supports some ideas Patricia Lines, formerly a researcher with the U.S. Department of Education, expressed about homeschoolers a decade earlier (1994). She asked whether homeschooling parents and their children were withdrawing from the larger public debate about education and, more generally, from social discourse that was an integral part of a liberty-loving republic. In a sense, she addressed whether these children and youth were being prepared to be a significant part of society. Lines concluded:

"Although [homeschool parents] have turned their backs on a widespread and hallowed practice of sending children to a school located in a particular building, adhering to a particular schedule and program, they have not turned their backs on the broader social contract as understood at the time of the Founding [of the United States]... Like the Antifederalists, these homeschoolers are asserting their historic individual rights so that they may form more meaningful bonds with family and community. In doing so, they are not abdicating from the American agreement. To the contrary, they are affirming it."

In essence, the home-educated were very positive about their homeschool experiences, actively involved in their local communities, keeping abreast of current affairs, highly civically engaged, going on to college at a higher rate than the national average, tolerant of others' expressing their viewpoints, religiously active, but wide-ranging in their worldview beliefs, holding worldview beliefs similar to those of their parents, and largely home-educating their own children.

The data on the degree of community involvement and civic engagement of adults who were homeschooled are not shocking. After all, researchers Smith and Sikkink (1999) found that homeschool parents, the main models for their children, were highly civically engaged. In a survey examining the rate at which parents were engaged in public civic activities, Smith and Sikkink used data from the 1996 National Household Education Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, which differentiates between students educated in public, Catholic, non-Catholic church-related, and nonreligious private schools, and homeschool students. Parents were asked about the extent of family involvements in a variety of civic activities. The researchers concluded:

"Far from being privatized and isolated, home schooling families are typically very well networked and quite civically active. The empirical evidence is clear and decisive: private schoolers and home schoolers are considerably more civically involved in the public square than are public schoolers, even when the effects of differences in education, income, and other related factors are removed from the equation. Indeed, we have reason to believe that the organizations and practices involved in private and home schooling, in themselves, tend to foster public participation in civic affairs... the challenges, responsibilities, and practices that private schooling and home education normally entail for their participants may actually help reinvigorate America's civic culture and the participation of her citizens in the public square."

Findings on homeschoolers in New Mexico (Ray, 2001a) and Ohio (Ray, 2001b) are consistent with those of Smith and Sikkink. The aforementioned recent study of adults who were home-educated, therefore, implies that the modeling of their parents with respect to civic activity is having a long-lasting impact on homeschool children and youth.

Recently, several academics have claimed that (a) homeschool parents are selfish for home-educating their children (Lubienski, 2000) and anti-state (Apple, 2000), (b) homeschool parents and children are removing themselves from basic and essential participation in the democratic processes of the U.S. republic (Lubienski, 2000; Reich, 2002), and (c) homeschoolers will be socially isolated and likely not learn to be decent, civil and respectful and to work with others (Evans, 2003; Reich, 2002).

Yet, to date, it appears that almost a dozen investigations address home-educated adults and the research shows that the home-educated are disproportionately involved in community life, civic activities and in democratic processes, decent, civil, respectful, and disproportionately exhibiting leadership traits. This is not to say, of course, that every homeschool graduate is brilliant, attractive, and destined for success. It simply means that, on average, they appear to be doing well in the “real world” because the environment in which they were educated—in the broad sense, academically, mentally, morally, and aesthetically—gave them sound academic skills, a solid and confident social and emotional nurturance, respect for others, a stable worldview, and a zest for learning.

How Colleges Approach the Home-Educated

Jennifer Sutton (2002) wrote in Brown University’s alumni magazine, “Although the number of homeschoolers applying to college is still small, it represents only the first wave. The next homeschooled generation—the real boom—is just hitting puberty.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* headlined another article, “Homeschooling: Growing Force in Higher Education” (Morgan, 2003). Sixty-two percent of college admission officers agreed “the homeschool movement is having or will have a significant impact on higher education” (Ray, 2001a). As the number of homeschooled college applicants increases, college admission officers should keep the following in mind:

Research and probability show that the home-educated college applicant is very likely to succeed in college, both academically and socially. Consider that the home-educated typically have strong self-discipline, motivation, and self-initiative. “These kids are the epitome of Brown students,” says Joyce Reed, who became an associate dean of the college twelve years ago. “They’ve learned to be self-directed, they take risks, they face challenges with total fervor, and they don’t back off” (Sutton, 2002).

As with any applicant, you will need to use your wisdom and experience to determine whether the individual person fits the particular ethos of your institution, if “fit” is of high importance to your college.

Recognize that you may hold biases and prejudices you do not recognize. After all, about five American generations have been attending age-segregated, institutional places of learning



for 12 years of our lives, and most reading this article spent at least 16 years in these institutions. Most Americans (and those in many other nations) have no idea of what it would be like to be home-educated and how we might be different, for better or worse, had we experienced this age-old practice.

Make sure your college has policies for receiving applications from and admitting the home-educated and make sure that your admission policies are reasonable, based on research and broad experience, and fair.

Here are some guidelines (some of which are from the Home School Legal Defense Association, 2004):

1. If your institution requires an SAT or ACT score in general, then simply also require that of the homeschooler.
2. Ask the home-educated to provide you with a transcript, but have flexible guidelines for these records and documentation of courses of study completed. They will not have the same look as those from institutional schools.
3. Ask the home-educated for a list of “extracurricular” activities.
4. Ask them for a bibliography of what they read during their secondary years. You might learn things about the breadth and depth of their education that you would have never known, especially if you only ask for a transcript.
5. Recognize the validity of homeschool high school completion or diplomas. Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states and, as explained in this article, the research shows that they are doing well academically.
6. For more information, contact the National Home Education Research Institute (www.nheri.org).

Homeschooling is growing and will continue to grow. Based on current information, there may be 3 million homeschool K-12 students living in the U.S. by 2010 (Ray, 2004a). Colleges and universities will soon see a sudden growth in the number applying for admission. Evidence to date points to a high success rate in adulthood in general, and in college in particular, for these individuals who have been raised and educated outside mainstream institutional schools. Perhaps they will bring, at a higher rate, some distinctive and positive traits to your college’s or university’s life that neither you nor professors have seen in awhile.

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A Study of Admission Officers'



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Perceptions of and Attitudes Toward Homeschool Students

Introduction

While the recent growth of homeschooling in America may not be an overall threat to public education in America today, some school districts are reporting that they are experiencing declines in their enrollments, which ultimately means a revenue loss in their school districts (Hetzner, 2000; Vater, 2001). The U.S. homeschool population (K-12) is estimated to be growing at a rate of 7-15 percent annually. The home-educated population is now expected to be the size of the public school population in Los Angeles and Chicago combined (Hill, 2000).

Before compulsory attendance laws became statutes in all states by the early 1900s, home education was practiced in many American homes. During the 17th and 18th centuries, parents and others were acting as tutors and educators for children in their homes. According to Knowles, Muchmore and Spaulding (1994) in the Native American culture, “Learning from elders through example was typically the only way in which Native American children were educated, and in such environments, education was viewed as being inseparable from life” (Knowles et al., 1994, p. 239). Some notable homeschoolers include William Penn, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Agatha Christie, Pearl Buck (Moore & Moore, 1982) General Douglas MacArthur, Charles Dickens, Andrew Carnegie, and Mark Twain (Gorder, 1987).

Once compulsory attendance became law, the home-education population not only was reduced, but was illegal in many states or seen as a tremendous controversy. Families homeschooling their children in the United States resurfaced as a viable alternative during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Knowles et al., 1994). The many families that elected to homeschool their children were either dissatisfied with public education or were being influenced by the writings of John Holt, one of the biggest critics of public education.

Today, homeschooling is legal in all 50 states. However, in spite of what homeschool families might see as a legal victory, college and university admission officers across the United States continue to grapple with how to address a growing population of the newly graduated homeschooled student that is knocking at the door of admission. It is estimated that the number of homeschooled children between the grades 9-12 is 14,000 (Bielick & Chandler, 2001).

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of college admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate and, more specifically, to gain an understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel, by examining their college admission policies for homeschool applicants and analyzing their attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate population. The study was guided by the following research questions: What are the college admission policies for homeschool applicants? What are the attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate population?

Method

Subjects

Fifty-five admission officers participated in this study. The admission officers were from institutions belonging to the Hawaii Association for College Admission Counseling, the Pacific Northwest Association for College Admission Counseling, Rocky Mountain Association for College Admission Counseling, and the Western Association for College Admission Counseling.

Only admission officers who were members of four-year institutions from these regional associations were surveyed. All accredited four-year institutional members were sent an electronic survey.

Data Collection and Instruments

Jenkins' (1998) survey instrument served as a model for the present survey. A modified three-part questionnaire was developed to gather data on the homeschool admission policies of four-year colleges and universities in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. The institutions were selected because they represented the entire western and rocky mountain regions of the United States.

Section One of the survey was Institutional Characteristics, which included institutional characteristics including institution type (state-supported, private, or church-affiliated) size, campus setting, and the Carnegie classification type. Section Two, Home School Admission Policies, requested information on the institution's admission policies for homeschool graduates. Section Three, Attitudes and Perceptions, requested information from admission officers on their perceptions and attitudes toward homeschool graduates.

Data Analyses

Data were collected from a survey containing 15 items. The survey instrument used rating scales, categorical scales, and rank-ordered scales. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and compiled in SPSS for analysis. To answer research question one, survey questions five through seven were analyzed to understand the homeschool admission policies of four-year institutions. To answer research question two, data were summated using questions 10-14 to understand the perceptions and attitudes of admission officers toward the homeschooled graduates expected success in college.

Additionally, a supplemental analysis was conducted to examine if there were differences between rural, suburban and urban institutions in how they expected the overall first-year success rate, and social coping of homeschooled students to be compared to traditional high school students. To test for differences, a One-way ANOVA was used. Secondly, to determine if there were differences between public and private institutions in how they expected the overall first-year success rate and social coping of homeschooled students to be compared to traditional high school students a *t* test was used.

Findings

A 15-item, three-part questionnaire was emailed to admission personnel at 159 four-year colleges and universities in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Wyoming. A total of 55 responses were electronically received for a 35 percent return rate.



The primary purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of college admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate and, more specifically, to gain an understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel, by examining their college admission policies for homeschool applicants and analyzing their attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate population.

Section I:

Homeschool Admission Survey

In section one of the survey, nearly 57 percent of the institutions responding to the questionnaire were from state-supported colleges or universities. Thirty-five percent of the admission officers reported that they were private institutions and 9 percent were church-affiliated institutions. Thus, 44 percent were private colleges. These percentages are similar to 51 percent of the selected sample that were private institutions (church and private combined), and the 49 percent that were public institutions (see Table 1).

Table 1

Survey Respondents by College Type		
Institutional Type	n	Percent
Church-Affiliated	5	9.1
Private Institution	19	34.5
State Institution	31	56.4
Total	55	100

The three largest Carnegie types that responded to the questionnaire were doctoral/research universities—extensive at 27.3 percent; master’s colleges and universities—at 25.5 percent; and baccalaureate colleges—liberal arts at 20 percent. The selected sample represented 36.4 percent doctoral/research intensive and extensive institutions compared to 27.3 percent in the actual sample, 41.1 percent were classified as master’s level institutions, and 22.8 percent from baccalaureate level institutions. The remaining 8.8 percent were coded as theological, business, or engineering institutions (see Table 2).

[Carnegie explains these types at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/Classification/CIHE2000/defNotes/Definitions.htm>:

Doctoral/Research Universities—Extensive: These institutions typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs, and they are committed to graduate education through the doctorate. During the period studied, they awarded 50 or more doctoral degrees per year across at least 15 disciplines.

Doctoral/Research Universities—Intensive: These institutions typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs, and they are committed to graduate education through the doctorate. During the period studied, they awarded at least ten doctoral degrees per year across three or more disciplines, or at least 20 doctoral degrees per year overall.]

Table 2

Survey Respondents by Carnegie Classifications		
Carnegie Classification	n	Percent
Baccalaureate Colleges—General	2	3.6
Baccalaureate Colleges—Liberal Arts	11	20.0
Baccalaureate/Associate’s Colleges	2	3.6
Master’s Colleges and Universities I	14	25.5
Master’s Colleges and Universities II	2	3.6
Doctoral/Research Universities—Extensive	15	27.3
Doctoral/Research Universities—Intensive	5	9.1
Unknown	4	7.3
Total	55	100

Campus Size

The distribution of questionnaires returned by campus size is shown in Table 3. The most respondents, at 27.3 percent (15), were from institutions with enrollments fewer than 2,000 students. The second largest, at 23.6 percent, came from institutional enrollments between 10,000 and 19,999 students, followed closely by institutional enrollments between 2,000 and 4,999 at 21.8 percent. The lowest number reporting were institutions between the enrollment size of 5,000 and 9,999 at 12.7 percent.

Table 3

Survey Respondents by Campus Size		
Institution Size	n	Percent
Fewer than 2,000	15	27.3
2,000 to 4,999	12	21.8
5,000 to 9,999	7	12.7
10,000 to 19,999	13	23.6
20,000 or more	8	14.5
Total	55	100

Campus Setting

Finally, respondents were asked to classify their institutions by campus setting. The distribution of respondents by campus setting is shown in Table 4. Nearly half or 43.6 percent of the institutions responding indicated that their institution were located in a suburban setting. Urban setting at 29.1 percent was the second largest response followed by rural setting at nearly the same percentage at 27.3 percent.

Table 4

Survey Respondents by Campus Setting		
Campus Setting	n	Percent
Rural	15	27.3
Suburban	24	43.6
Urban	16	29.1
Total	55	100

Section II:

Admission Policy

In Section II of the Home School Admission Survey, admission officers were asked a series of questions regarding their homeschool admission policy. In the first question, admission officers were asked, “Does your institution have an official homeschool admission Policy?”

Forty-one or 74.5 percent of the admission officers indicated that they had an official homeschool admission policy. The remaining 13 (23.6 percent) institutions indicated that they did not have an official homeschool admission policy. Institutions with an official homeschool admission policy were asked to indicate what types of documents were required for homeschool graduates and to rank each required document by the level of importance, from highest to lowest, one being most important, eight being least important. Table 4 shows the results of their responses.

Table 4

Documents Required for Consideration for Admission for Homeschool Graduates			
Required Documents	Frequency	M	SD
ACT or SAT Test Scores	43	1.81	1.91
Essay	39	3.67	2.52
GED	37	3.95	2.68
Letters of Recommendation	40	4.13	2.52
SAT II (Subject Tests)	35	4.46	2.92
Personal Interview	37	4.49	2.65
Portfolio	33	4.64	2.86

Note: Mean rank with 1 being most important, 8 being least important.



The admission officers (43) said ACT or SAT Test scores were the most important ($M=1.81$) for admission. While 40 admission officers indicated that letters of recommendations were required for homeschool admission, letters of recommendation ranked fourth in importance. A total of 39 admission officers required an essay for homeschool admission, which ranked essay second in importance. Thirty-seven admission officers required GED test scores and personal interview for homeschool admission. However, personal interviews ranked near the bottom and GED test scores ranked third in importance for consideration for admission. Thirty-three required a portfolio for admission, which ranked as the least important among the grouping of documents.

Nearly one-third (29 percent) of the admission officers also indicated other documents are required for admission of homeschool graduates, including a homeschool transcript, a GED if homeschool transcripts were not available and transcripts from an approved school (accredited). One admission officer also stated that students must meet statewide eligibility test requirements consideration. One institution indicated that they “would not consider a homeschool applicant unless the homeschool applicant had taken courses in a community college or four-year university.” Another institution stated that they would “only consider a homeschool applicant if the homeschool graduate had taken community college work to validate essential course work.” Finally, one institution reported that homeschool applicants must demonstrate second-language proficiency for consideration for admission, perhaps because this is required for all applicants.

Institutions that responded that they did not accept homeschooled applicants, were asked why they did not accept these graduates. Only four schools responded. One admission officer reported that he or she did “not believe that students (homeschooled) are prepared for college.” Two admission officers indicated that the lack of (high school) accreditation prohibited the acceptance of homeschool applicants. The fourth admission officer reported that their state policy prohibited them from accepting a homeschool applicant, perhaps due to the institution’s misinterpretation of the policy since no other institution reported such a policy.

Admission officers also were asked to define their institution’s selectivity (less selective, open admission, selective, most selective). Nearly half (27) indicated that they were selective. Eleven admission personnel reported that their institution was highly selective and another 11 indicated that their institution was less selective. Five institutions reported that their institutions were considered open admission.

Admission officers were asked to provide the number of applications received from homeschool applicants during the most recent academic year. Table 5 shows the number of admission applications received from homeschool graduates.

Table 5

Number of Homeschool Applications Received Per Year		
Applications Received	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10	24	43.6
10-29	22	40.0
30-49	6	10.9
No Response	3	5.5
Total	55	100

Nearly 95 percent of the institutions indicated that they had received applications from homeschooled graduates. Twenty-four institutions (43.6 percent) indicated that they received less than 10 applications from homeschooled graduates. However, 22 (40 percent) reported that they received between 10-29 applications from homeschool applicants. Only six, or nearly 11 percent, reported receiving between 30-49 applications from homeschooled high school graduates.

One admission officer reported that he or she did “not believe that students (homeschooled) are prepared for college.”

Section III:

Attitudes and Perceptions

This section of the survey examined the perceptions and attitudes of admission officers toward the homeschooled population. Admission officers were asked how successful they expected homeschooled graduates to be compared to traditional high school graduates.

The first question asked admission officers how they expected the overall success of homeschooled applicants to compare to traditional high school graduates during their first-year of college.

Approximately 56 percent of the admission officers expected homeschool graduates to be as successful as traditional high school graduates, and nearly 22 percent expected them to be more successful. Only two admission officers expected homeschooled graduates to be less successful than traditional high school graduates. Ten (18 percent) admission officers did not respond.

Admission officers were also asked how they would expect the first-year grade point average of homeschool applicants to compare to traditional K-12 schooled applicants in the first year.

More than half (52.7 percent) of the admission officers expected the first-year grade point average of homeschool graduates to be about the same as traditional high school graduates, while nearly one-fourth (23.6 percent) expected homeschool graduates to outperform traditional high school graduates.

All admission officers at church-affiliated schools expected homeschooled graduates to earn about the same first-year grade point average as traditional high school graduates compared to 50 percent and 51.6 percent, respectively, of the private and state institution admission officers. A total of 27.8 percent of the admission officers at private institutions and 25.8 percent of the state institutions responding expected homeschooled graduates to have higher first-year grade point averages.

The third question asked admission personnel to rate how they expected the first-year retention rate of homeschooled graduates to compare to traditional high school graduates. Twenty-five (45.5 percent) of the admission officers expected homeschooled graduates to have about the same first-year retention rate as traditional high school graduates. Twenty percent expected a higher first-year retention rate among homeschool graduates and 12.7 percent expected traditional high school graduates to be retained at a lower rate than homeschool graduates. A total of 16.4 percent of the admission officers did not respond.

Admission officers also were asked to compare the number of credit hours each group earned. The majority (65.5 percent) of the admission officers expected homeschooled graduates to earn about the same number of credits as traditional high school graduates in their first year of college. Only one admission officer expected homeschooled graduates to earn fewer credits in their first-year, while 20 percent expected homeschooled graduates to earn more credits in their first-year.

Admission officers were asked how they expected homeschooled graduates to cope socially in their first year of college compared to traditional high school graduates. This question revealed that 43.6 percent of the admission officers expected homeschooled graduates to cope socially as well as traditional high school graduates their first year of college. However, almost 35 percent (19) expected homeschooled graduates would not to cope as well as traditional high school graduates (see Table 6).

Table 6

Expected First-Year Socially Coping of Homeschool Graduates Compared to Traditional High School Graduates		
Social Coping	Frequency	Percent
Not as well	19	34.5
About the same	24	43.6
Better	1	1.82
No Opinion	9	16.4
Missing	2	3.64
Total	55	100

The first question asked admission officers how they expected the overall success of homeschooled applicants to compare to traditional high school graduates during their first-year of college.

Finally, admission officers were asked if they would encourage homeschool applicants to attend a community/junior college before attending a four-year college or university, which allowed admission officers to say whether or not they would prefer homeschooled graduates to start at the four-year level or seek admission to a community college first. The majority (72.7 percent) of admission officers would not encourage graduates of homeschools to seek enrollment at a community college before enrolling at a four-year school. Only 16.4 percent answered “yes” to this question.

Supplemental Analysis

Supplemental analyses were conducted to examine whether admission officers at rural, suburban, and urban institutions differed in their opinions about homeschooled students’ overall first-year success rate and coping skills, compared to traditional high school students. A second analysis determined admission officers’ opinions at public and private (church-affiliated and private combined) institutions.

Investigating whether campus setting (rural, suburban or urban) seemed to have an effect on the expected overall success of homeschooled students compared to traditional high school students, a one-way ANOVA test yielded no significant difference between the admission officers based on campus setting. [$F(2,42) = 1.228, p = .303$].

Investigating whether campus setting (rural, suburban or urban) seemed to have an effect on how admission officers expected the first-year coping socially of homeschooled graduates to compare to traditional high school graduates, a one-way ANOVA test revealed a statistically significant difference between admission officers based on campus setting. [$F(2,41) = 4.585, p = .016$]. A post hoc comparisons test revealed that rural college admission officers thought homeschooled graduates would cope socially better [$p=.015$, urban $M=1.33$, rural $M=1.92$].

Determining if there were differences in public and private (church-affiliated and private combined institutions) admission officers expectations of the overall first-year success rate and coping socially of homeschooled students compared to traditional high school students, a t test revealed no statistical significance. [$t(43) = -.381, p = .705$]. The test also revealed no significant difference between public and private institutions in how they expected the homeschooled students to cope socially compared to traditional high school graduates in their first year. [$t(42) = -.453, p = .653$].

Discussion

Nearly three-fourths of the colleges and universities in the survey had an official homeschool admission policy. Barnebey’s (1986) study found that 90 percent of the institutions did not have an official homeschool admission policy. Jenkins (1998) study found that only 47 percent of the community college admission officers surveyed had an official admission policy for homeschooled graduates.

The ACT or SAT test was found to be the preferred item utilized for consideration for admission, followed by an essay or GED test score. Similar results were found in Jenkins' and Barnebey's studies, although 97 percent of the admission officers in Barnebey's study stated that high school grades were a standard requirement. Jenkins's study also revealed that no community college admission officer reported that they would require an essay for admission.

The final research question asked about the attitudes and perceptions of admission personnel toward the homeschooled graduate population.

Overall, more than half (55 percent) of the admission officers surveyed expected homeschooled graduates to perform about the same as traditional high school graduates (overall success rate, first-year grade point average, retention rate, credit hours earned, and social coping); 18 percent expected homeschooled graduates would be more successful; and nearly 12 percent expected homeschooled graduate would be less successful. Jenkins' (1998) study found that not as many community college admission officers expected homeschool students to be as successful (36 percent) as traditional high school graduates; however, 27 percent of the admission officers expected homeschooled students to be more successful than traditional high school graduates, and only 5.7 percent expected homeschooled students to be less successful than traditional high school graduates. Barnebey's (1986) study found that nearly 46 percent of the admission officers that accepted homeschooled applicants expected them to be as successful, 4.5 percent more successful; however, 50 percent expected homeschooled students to be less successful.

The study revealed that only 16.4 percent of the admission officers would encourage homeschooled students to attend a community college or junior college prior to attending a four-year institution. This compares to 65.5 percent of the admission officers in Barnebey's (1986) study who stated that they would encourage homeschooled applicants to attend a junior/community college before applying to a four-year institution.

This study revealed that nearly 11 percent of the institutions received between 30-49 applications each year from homeschooled applicants, 40 percent received between 10-29 applications, and nearly 44 percent received less than 10 applications each year.

Also, 33 institutions indicated they require homeschooled graduates to submit a portfolio for admission; 37 required a personal interview and GED; 35 required the SAT II subject tests; and 40 required homeschooled students to submit letters of recommendation. This might indicate that admission officers may be requiring homeschooled graduates to jump through more admission hoops than traditional high school graduates. Therefore, homeschooled graduates may be opting for fewer hoops to jump through and are applying to and attending the community college prior to applying to the four-year college or university.

Overall, the attitudes and perceptions of admission officers were favorable toward the expected success of the homeschooled graduate. More than seventy-three percent of the admission officers anticipated that homeschooled graduates would be as successful or more successful in their first-year of college. While most colleges and universities in this study indicated that they had an official homeschool admission policy, doctoral (85 percent), state (80 percent) and church-affiliated institutions (80 percent), those with enrollments between 10,000-19,999 (92 percent), or in rural (86.7 percent) settings seemed more favorable to the homeschool applicants.



Conclusion

This study reveals the tremendous shift, over the past 15 years, in admission officers' attitudes toward and perceptions of the homeschooled graduate. More than 78 percent of the admission officers surveyed indicated that they expect homeschool graduates to perform, overall, as well or better in their first-year of college than traditional high school graduates. In a recent study, Jones and Gloeckner (2004) revealed that homeschooled graduates performed as well as their traditional high school peers.

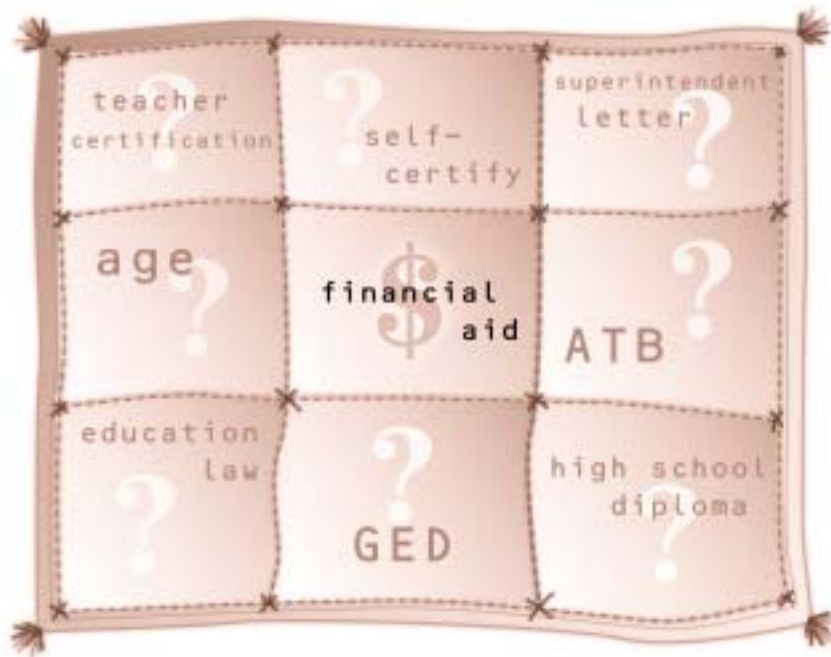
While three-fourths revealed that they have admission policies in place for homeschool applicants, colleges and universities still should reevaluate their policies to ensure the removal of unnecessary barriers for these students. For example, the 35 percent of colleges and universities, which don't expect homeschooled graduates to cope socially as well as their traditional school peers, are reluctant to change their personal interview policies. However, if schools do not require certain admission criteria of other applicants, they must reassess the fairness of a policy required *only* of homeschool applicants. Schools that are unwilling to make their policies more homeschool-friendly will see homeschool graduates gravitate elsewhere and miss admitting a large, and often highly successful, percentage of the student population.

While three-fourths revealed that they have admission policies in place for homeschool applicants, colleges and universities still should reevaluate their policies to ensure the removal of unnecessary barriers for these students.

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Unintended Admission Consequences



of Federal Aid for Homeschoolers



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Introduction

Because homeschooled students often enter higher education appearing to be traditionally-educated high school students, due to differing state regulations and the accreditation status of different homeschool programs, and because related records are not kept, it is difficult to know how many enter postsecondary education every year. Current estimates of the number of homeschoolers in the United States range from about 900 thousand¹ to 1.7 million². Because this is a large portion of the population an ever-increasing number of colleges and universities are integrating admission guidelines for homeschool students.³ With these guidelines come homeschool federal aid regulations for every college and university that receives Title IV funds and the related consequences homeschooled students face.

In 1998, Congress amended the Higher Education Act (HEA), changing the basis for awarding federal financial aid to homeschoolers.⁴ The new eligibility rules, published in the Federal Register, October, 1999, set July, 2000 as the effective date, but, because the Department of Education did not reflect these changes in the Student Aid Handbook until October, 2002, financial aid officers, generally, did not act on the changes. The new regulations allowed homeschooled students to self-certify that they completed homeschooling and were qualified for federal aid, saying, “Exemption from compulsory attendance requirements under State law,” means that the State does not consider a home-schooled student to be in violation of the State’s truancy laws” and that “Home-schooled students who satisfy the (self-certification) requirements... are eligible to receive title IV, HEA program funds. They are not required to take an ability-to-benefit test.”⁵

Grounds for compulsory attendance and self-certification were defined at greater length:

“Some students finish their home schooling at an age younger than the age of compulsory school attendance in their state or in the state where your school is. Another part of the federal law defines an eligible institution as one that admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma or equivalent or persons beyond the compulsory attendance age for the institution’s state. The Department considers a home-schooled student to be beyond the age of compulsory attendance if your school’s state would not require the student to further attend secondary school or continue to be home-schooled.⁶

“A student may self-certify that he has received a high school diploma or GED or that he has completed secondary school through home schooling as defined by state law. If a student indicates on the FAFSA that he has a diploma or GED, your school isn’t required to ask for a copy of the diploma or GED. Because the current FAFSA doesn’t contain a self-certification for homeschoolers, such students may certify that in writing to your school, for example, on an admissions application.

“Under federal law a home-schooled student is not considered to have a high school diploma or equivalent. Nevertheless, such a student is eligible to receive FSA funds if the student’s secondary school education was in a home school that state law treats as a home or private school. Some states issue a secondary school completion credential to homeschoolers. If this is the case in the state where the student was home-schooled, she must obtain this credential in order to be eligible for FSA funds.⁷”

In practice, therefore, the federal aid conditions set for homeschooled students became the ability to self-certify that the home education had been completed according to the laws of the student’s home state, and that the postsecondary institution qualified the student for aid under the compulsory education laws of its home state.

State Regulations

Postsecondary institutions court disaster with admission policies separated from financial aid realities. Fifty different state definitions concern the completion of a homeschool education, affecting the fifty different definitions for self-certification for federal aid purposes, and creating fifty different potential conditions affecting aid and admission policies.

Pennsylvania students must be high school graduates to qualify for state aid. Students in homeschool programs accredited by one of seven agencies, approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, or students who submit certification from the appropriate local school official that their education is in compliance with the state home schooling law, are considered graduates of an approved high school for state grant purposes. Superintendents, however, are under no obligation to certify that the home education program is in compliance with Pennsylvania law. Therefore, certification is dependent on cooperative districts.

In New Jersey, case law determines the legality of homeschooling. There is minimal contact with district superintendents who do not have the right to certify completion of homeschooling.

In California, teacher certification is required of one parent, but only if the parent chooses to qualify as a private tutor. If the homeschool registers as a private school under California law—thereby having the same validity as Harvard-Westlake—or enrolls in an independent study program with a private school, no certification is necessary. Therefore, it may be necessary to know the particular legal basis for the individual homeschool.

New York State tries to provide an objective determination of substantial equivalence of homeschool and traditional high school educations. High school diplomas may be awarded only to students enrolled in registered secondary schools. Substantial equivalence, therefore, refers to content, not outcome, since the diplomas are not equivalent. In reality, because state homeschool regulations require that certain standard subjects be addressed at the secondary level, coupled with quarterly progress reports and a single year-end achievement test, equivalence, is about process rather than content, because content is not directly supervised.

In New York, if a student reaches the maximum age for compulsory attendance during the school year, that student’s Individual Home Instruction Plan (IHIP) must cover the full year. However, the district is not required to review the IHIP submitted for the student beyond compulsory attendance age. The student can request that the superintendent of the school district attest to completion of a homeschool education on district letterhead, but the regulations expressly say that the superintendents are under no obligation to do so. Moreover, there are two ages of compulsory attendance. In the five counties of New York City it is seventeen. In every other county in New York it is sixteen.

These differences occur because no single exhaustive source for state homeschool law exists. Even the federal compilation is flawed. Generally, the Home School Legal Defense Association (www.hsllda.org) and the National Home Education Network (www.nhen.org) are good sources, but no national homeschool authority exists because no comprehensive national homeschool organization exists.

A Short History

Chris Klicka, of the Home School Legal Defense Association, the most politically effective homeschool organization to date, drafted the Higher Education Act (HEA) amendment that changed federal aid for homeschoolers. Prior to this, homeschool students needed a GED or an Ability to Benefit Test to qualify for federal aid and, depending on institutional policy, SAT I and SAT II tests to qualify for admission. However, in the documents accompanying the financial aid amendment, the House Committee on Labor and Human Resources stated that colleges and universities should have not overly legalistic and overly burdensome admission policies, saying:

“The Committee is aware that many colleges and universities now require applicants from non-public, private, or non-traditional secondary programs (including home schools) to submit scores from additional standardized tests... (GED or... SAT II) in lieu of a transcript/diploma from an accredited high school. Historically... the SAT II was not designed for, and until recently was not used to determine college admissions. Given that standardized test scores (SAT and ACT) and portfolio or performance based assessments may also provide a sound basis for an admission decision regarding these students, the Committee recommends that colleges and universities consider using these assessments for applicants educated in non-public, private, and non-traditional programs rather than requiring them to undergo additional types of standardized testing. Requiring additional testing only of students educated in these settings could reasonably be seen as discriminatory...”⁸

“In a related area, the committee has heard concerns that some institutions of higher education have established unnecessarily burdensome admissions standards for graduates of nonpublic, private and nontraditional educational programs. Again, the setting of admissions standards is the responsibility of institutions themselves. However, the committee encourages institutions that receive Federal funds to make every effort to evaluate and treat applicants from nonpublic, private and nontraditional educational programs fairly and in a nondiscriminatory manner in determining requirements for admission.”⁹

Several discussions about the new (but not yet effective) regulations took place in February of 2000 on FINAID-L, the financial aid administrator’s elist. Chris Klicka argued one view of the impact on admission in a letter to Greg Becher, a director of financial aid at a college in California. In it, Mr. Klicka linked the compulsory age of attendance and college admission eligibility.

“Furthermore, it is ludicrous to think that Congress would allow home schoolers, regardless of age, to obtain financial aid for college based on obtaining a self-certified home school high school diploma if it did not also intend to allow their admittance into the college on this basis... it is clear that Congress intended to officially recognize high school diplomas earned by home school graduates.

“Finally, any students, of any age, who have graduated from any high school—whether public, non-public, or home school—are outside the compulsory attendance requirements imposed by their state statutes. Home school graduates need only to demonstrate that they have successfully completed a secondary school education in a home school setting and have met state law requirements. No college may refuse admittance based on the argument that these graduates are under compulsory attendance age.”¹⁰

Michael Goldstein, then sent a message to FINAID-L pointing out that verification of the state-compliance of home-schooled students was an institutional responsibility. “There remains an obligation on the part of the student aid administrator to reasonably ascertain that the [home-schooled] student has complied with either option... although that does not seem to be a pre-requisite to admission and awarding aid.”¹¹

Mr. Becher responded, “...the [United States] Department of Education allows a student to ‘self-certify’ his compliance with state law in the same way that a high school graduate or GED recipient may.

“So the only time a college ought to require a GED or state proficiency test or ability-to-benefit test of a home-schooled student is if information has come to light that indicates the student was not in compliance with state truancy laws in the manner of his home education.

“...it would clearly be discriminatory for a college to allow some high school students to self-certify that they have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent (e.g. GED) and then require other students (home-schooled students) to produce additional evidence that they have a recognized equivalent, especially given that the Department of Education specifically wrote... that home-schooled students may self-certify...”

“Normally, there should be no need for colleges to query each state regarding individual state laws and how they apply to home schools, just as you are not required to query each state regarding how they approve high schools. The student’s self certification is sufficient.”¹²

Mr. Goldstein responded, “I am not questioning the self-certification. But most institutions require that a student ultimately provide a high school transcript, and one who cannot is terminated from enrollment if that is a requirement for admission, self-certification or not. The same sort of test: verification that the self-certification is correct, is no different

for home-schooled students. Self-certification is not a substitute for accuracy, and if an institution has reason to believe the self-certification is incorrect, REGARDLESS of the basis for admission, they need to deal with that issue.”¹³ [Emphasis Mr. Goldstein]

Subsequently, the discussion wound down on FINAID-L, but it had highlighted the concerns about institutional responsibility to verify self-certification, about compulsory age requirements, and about Mr. Klicka’s assertion that the federal government implicitly recognized the validity of homeschool diplomas in passing the aid amendment.

More than two years passed and, on April 19, 2002, Eric H. Jaso, deputy general counsel of the United States Dept of Education, responding to inquiries from Chris Klicka, sent him a letter to clarify the now more than two-years-old federal regulation that was still to appear in the Student Aid Handbook. Mr. Jaso’s letter, which Mr. Klicka released publicly, said in part:

“We therefore wish to clarify the circumstances under which home schooled students, including students who complete their home school curriculum before reaching the minimum age of compulsory education, can properly be admitted to a post-secondary institution participating in Title IV programs, and the impact of that admission on the student’s and the institution’s eligibility to participate in the federal student aid programs. We consider a home schooled student to be beyond the age of compulsory attendance if the State where a postsecondary institution is located would not consider that student truant once he completes a home school program; in other words, the State would not require that student to further attend secondary school or continue to be home schooled after completing a secondary curriculum.

“Finally, we note that home schooled students may self-certify their completion of a secondary school curriculum, just as high school graduates may self-certify their receipt of a diploma. Home schooled students need *not* obtain a State certification of home school completion unless the law of the State in which they completed their home schooling provides for the issuance of such a certification... Home schooled Students from such States may self-certify their receipt of such certifications. Because the current FAFSA does not provide a “check box” for self-certification of home school completion, we expect postsecondary institutions to accept such self-certifications in application documents, in a letter, or in some other appropriate record.” [Italics Mr. Jaso]

On May 29, 2002, Mr. Klicka’s office posted a long email to FINAID-L that restated Mr. Jaso’s points (generally unknown until this post). Mr. Klicka seemed to imply that the change in aid regulations required a change in the admission for homeschooled students based on implied federal recognition of the validity of home school diplomas. The National

Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC) became concerned about the impact that some of the Department’s language might have on the admission policies of states and institutions—policies that were not under the Department’s regulatory scope. While NACAC welcomed the assurance given to institutions that they would not lose federal financial aid over the admission of homeschooled students who fall outside the HEA’s scope of “traditional” (i.e., under the age of compulsory attendance) completers of secondary education, it was concerned whether the Department’s guidance was to be considered more broadly. NACAC contacted the Office of the General Counsel, which replied that the regulations concerned financial aid only, particularly relating to the issue of self-certification.¹⁴

Unintended Consequences: “Undocumentable” Students

Postsecondary institutions need to have consistent and well-stated admission and aid policies and procedures. Unfortunately, the attempt to reduce the admission and aid burden placed on homeschooled students may actually result in worse burdens for some. As Mr. Becher said in February of 2000, “In some states, if you are a home-schooled student it can be a lengthy process to document that you are in compliance with the state’s truancy laws. It can be much more difficult than simply sending a copy of a high school transcript with a graduation date printed on it. Depending on state laws you may have to document various permissions granted by the local school administrator or the school board, or you may have to provide attendance logs for four years, or you may have to provide evidence that you filed the proper affidavit with the state even though the state doesn’t have the manpower (or the will) to acknowledge the state’s receipt of the affidavit.”¹⁵

How do district superintendents or state departments of education respond to multiple post-secondary requests for the certification documentation of a multiple number of applicants? In fact, how do most states know the homeschooled student “graduated?” And, what if the student finishes in June? Does the state certify in August when the district staff returns to the office, months after institutional financial aid has been exhausted in the postsecondary institution?

There is a further difficulty in the federal legislation and regulation as written. A student should be required to homeschool for the last year prior to receiving aid to ensure against system manipulation. For instance, under New York regulations, a failing high school student can withdraw from high school in May of senior year, file an intent to homeschool, and finish homeschool a month later and be qualified for federal aid.

Unintended Consequences: New York State's Response

The New York State Education Department's (SED) regulations, governing who qualifies for financial aid, are 30 or more years old. They were written for different times and circumstances. On October 11, 2002, after the new federal aid regulations were published in the Student Aid Handbook, Johanna Duncan-Poitier, deputy commissioner, Office of Higher Education of the State Education Department (SED), sent a memo to the Chief Executive Officers of New York State Degree-Granting Institutions. Its intent was to clarify what was needed to pass New York State financial aid audits in light of the changed federal regulations. But it also had a chilling impact on the transition to higher education of homeschooled students, especially into private colleges.¹⁶

What is acceptable documentation of high school graduation?

"Documentation is required; *students cannot self-report*. Although self-reporting may be acceptable for federal Title IV financial aid, Education Law specifies that a student must have a "certificate" of high school completion or the equivalent of such certificate. This requirement is interpreted to mean that the institution must maintain some physical evidence in the student's file... [Italics Duncan-Poitier]

Can prior college credits be accepted in lieu of a high school diploma or GED?

"Section 100.7 of the Commissioner's Regulations provides that a student can receive a high school equivalency diploma (GED) when the student has completed 24 college credits as a recognized candidate for a degree at an approved institution. If a student never completed high school or is otherwise unable to document high school completion, a college can admit a student who has completed 24 college credits as the equivalent of having the GED for TAP¹⁷ purposes, providing the credits satisfy the appropriate course distribution requirements... Such students must apply for and receive the GED before being awarded a degree...

How should homeschooled students be handled?

"Home schooled students cannot receive a high school diploma. Only public schools or registered nonpublic schools are permitted by law and regulation to issue diplomas. *Self-reporting of home schooling is not acceptable for financial aid purposes*. To establish eligibility for State student aid, the following options are available to a home schooled student:

- obtain a letter from local school district officials confirming that the student has received an education 'substantially equivalent' to instruction given to students graduating high school in the public schools;
- take and pass the GED test; or
- achieve a satisfactory score on an ability-to-benefit test approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education."¹⁸ [Italics Duncan-Poitier]

Unintended Consequences: State University of New York's Response

Even though the City University of New York for years has had an admission policy that denies admission without a GED or high school diploma, the State University (SUNY) has had a policy which allowed students without diploma or GED to attend community colleges as non-matriculants, awarding them a GED after they passed 24 credits. In 2000, this was changed to 24 credits in a core curriculum. Unfortunately, the core requirements don't fit into most associate degree programs so many students must graduate with more credits than SUNY four-year schools will accept. Moreover, over the years, the 24-credit policy had not been administered evenly and, by 2000, there were graduates holding associates' degrees who had produced neither high school diploma nor GED. Some four-year SUNY institutions were matriculating home-schooled students as freshmen.

On October 10, 2002, one week after the federal regulations were published in the Student Aid Handbook, Dona S. Bulluck of the SUNY Office of University Counsel released a memorandum to the SUNY Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers. It said in part:

"...Education Law... has been interpreted to mean that community college applicants must possess a high school diploma or its equivalent. The SED has determined that there are only two acceptable alternatives to a high school diploma. The first is a GED certificate. The second relates to home-schooled students, who must submit a letter from the superintendent of the school district within which the student resides, stating that the student's home instruction is substantially equivalent to the instruction offered by that student's local high school. Please note that the ability-to-benefit test is not accepted by SED as an alternative to a high school diploma and may not be used as such.

"Education Law... has been interpreted to convey that a high school diploma or its equivalent is required for admission into a program leading to a degree or certificate.

"There appears to be confusion about the ability-to-benefit test and its appropriate use. ...the ability-to-benefit test... establish[s] eligibility for financial aid, which is not the same as meeting requirements for admission.

"Some of you stated that when a student enrolls in a 24-credit hour program (in lieu of a GED), you have adopted a practice of simultaneous enrollment. You enroll the student in both the 24-credit hour program and a degree or certificate program at the same time ...However, if a high school diploma or its equivalent is required for matriculation... then simultaneous enrollment appears to violate an institution's admissions policy for matriculation."¹⁹ [Emphasis Bulluck]

Unintended Consequences: New York Students

The positions of the State Education Department and the State University, in response to the change in federal regulations, were driven in large measure because of the huge financial exposure New York State has under its Tuition Assistance Plan (TAP grant) program open to New York residents attending postsecondary education in New York. Annually, \$750,000,000 millions are distributed. State educational law requires qualification standards for TAP awards by statute. Students cannot self-certify for TAP. At the minimum, an ABT is required.

Nevertheless, the responses in October of 2002 to the updated Student Aid Manual create huge confusion and upset in homeschooling circles and in postsecondary education in New York. In private institutions in New York State, one can matriculate without a GED or high school diploma if the admission staff believes the student can succeed and benefit from the education. However, under the interim regulations, the same student cannot receive a bachelor's degree without first obtaining a valid high school diploma or GED, or producing a letter from the district superintendent attesting to the completion of the homeschool program.²⁰ This, generally, was not enforced until 2002 when a graduating senior at NYU, with a doctoral fellowship to Harvard, was told a week before graduation that he needed a GED. As a New Hampshire homeschooled student, he had enrolled in NYU without a valid high school diploma or a GED and New Hampshire rules do not provide for superintendent's letters. NYU had to get a waiver from the SED to award the student a GED based on NYU coursework (rather than on the more than 24 college credits the student had taken while in homeschool—regarded as dual enrollment). The student received his B.S. and went on to Harvard.

Increasingly, homeschool students in New York are finding this graduation requirement becoming being enforced (though not by State Ed. Dept., which has no enforcement arm) through increased postsecondary awareness of the rule. Homeschoolers suspect the pressure for it is coming in response to the change in the federal financial aid regulations and the impact that relaxed admission and aid standards for homeschoolers might have, politically, in a state wed to high-stakes testing and high school failure. There have even been incidents of four-year colleges requiring proof of GED from transfer students who hold valid associate's degrees.²¹

The Home School Legal Defense Association filed suit on October 2, 2003 (one year to the day after the new federal aid regulations were published in the Student Aid Handbook) in federal court on behalf of Paul Owens, a homeschooled fourth-semester student pursuing an associate's degree in marketing

at Monroe Community College (MCC) in Rochester, New York. MCC notified the student that his matriculated status had been revoked because he didn't graduate from an accredited high school, nor have a GED or superintendent's letter, nor did he take the core curriculum leading to a GED.²²

The current New York State Education Department (SED) regulations enabling homeschool are found in 100.10, in the section on elementary and secondary schools. The regulations governing postsecondary aid and admission are administered under the higher education section. In effect, by requiring district superintendents to sign off on a homeschool education, the higher education section is requiring something of district superintendents that 100.10 says they are not obliged to do. Specifically, 100.10 does not require a district to review the IHIP submitted for a student beyond compulsory attendance age. Yet the higher education section requires it for the college application of a homeschooled student who doesn't wish to submit a GED, and is beyond age compulsory attendance.

The situation gets even more complicated for colleges or universities with campuses in different counties, such as Pace University, located in New York City and Westchester County. With different ages of compulsory attendance, coupled with the equivalency or letter from the superintendent, admission and aid outcomes for the same student technically can be different on different campuses. In addition, differing regulatory outcomes can be possible for students from differing states applying both to SUNY and New York State private schools.

Conclusion

One of the laudatory goals of the HEA amendment was to smooth the transition to college process facing homeschoolers. The legislation appears to have made it easier for most to get financial aid. The difficulties facing less-fortunate homeschoolers are wide-spread. New York is probably the worst-case scenario in the country, but, because New York is the home of one of the two most comprehensive public systems of higher education in the country, as well as the home of an extremely large number of private postsecondary institutions, what occurs in New York affects homeschool applicants nationally.

Three proposals are before the New York State Board of Regents that step beyond the GED and the high school diploma's attempt to regularize postsecondary graduation inconsistencies for homeschoolers. These could be adopted as soon as September of 2004. Postsecondary institutions could grant degrees to homeschooled students beyond compulsory school age (1) who are in receipt of a letter from

their superintendent documenting equivalency of instruction to a high school program (but still there will be no change in section 100.10 requiring the superintendent to write a letter if equivalency has been attained); (2) who pass five NYS Regents examinations or approved alternatives; or (3) who complete 24 semester-hours of Regents specified distributed college coursework.

Another proposal before the Regents, that seems likely to be adopted, is that New York students under compulsory age limits can attend college full-time (defined as 12 credits) as part of their homeschooling if the student's Individual Home Instruction Plan (IHIP) states the name of the postsecondary institution and the courses to be covered. The IHIP then needs to be approved by the district superintendent.

If the proposed changes governing the awarding of baccalaureate degrees are adopted, then the State University system will follow suite because applicable educational statutes or SED regulations govern its policies. The proposed

Regents changes affect admission and graduation. They do not affect state aid, which will continue to be controlled by statute and will not allow self-certification for aid, and which will still require superintendent's letters, GED or ATB for state aid. In New York private institutions and in SUNY we may yet see the anomaly of matriculated students receiving federal aid but no state aid until the Regents distributed 24 credits are reached.²³

NACAC and the state and regional admission associations need to assume more leadership in addressing the financial aid and admission issues facing homeschooled applicants and institutions. Currently, our knowledge is like a patchwork quilt. In addition, with potentially 400,000 homeschooled applicants to higher education over the next ten years, we need some serious research on fit, retention and debt to fulfill "our responsibility as financial aid administrators and admission directors to ensure legal compliance [and,]... be... not unduly burdensome to our students."²⁴

Footnotes

1 United States Department of Education telephone survey

2 Dr. Brian Ray of the National Homeschool Research Institute

3 NACAC Admission Trend Surveys

4 Pub. L. No. 105-244 amending 20 U.S.C. 1091(d)

5 Department of Education Student Assistance General Provision, Part Sec. 484(d), 34 Code of Federal Regulations 668.32(e))

6 Student Aid Handbook 2002-2003, Vol. 1, Student Eligibility, Academic Qualifications p. 1-5, published Oct. 3, 2002

7 Op.Cit. p. 1-4

8 Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1998. Pub. L. No. 105-244 (Reauthorization of the HEA).

9 IBID

10 A letter from Chris Klicka, Esq., to Greg Becher, posted with permission to the FINAID-L email list, 11 February, 2000

11 Michael B. Goldstein, Esq., Dow, Lohnes & Albertson, pllc 1200 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W. Washington, DC 20036, posted to the FINAID-L email list February 11-15, 2000

12 Greg Becher, 15 February, 2000 on FINAID-L

13 15 February, 2000, Michael B. Goldstein, Esq., to FINAID-L

14 Private communications with David Hawkins, Director of Public Policy, National Association for College Admission Counseling, June 4 & 6, 2002

15 Greg Becher, 17 February, 2000 on FINAID-L

16 The public colleges and universities in the SUNY system are not audited individually.

17 Tuition Assistance Plan – New York's need-based financial aid grant.

18 Memorandum dated 10/11/2002 from Johanna Duncan-Poitier, Deputy Commissioner Office of Higher Education and Office of the Professions, the State Education Department to Chief Executive Officers of New York State Degree-Granting Institutions

19 Memorandum dated 10/10/2002 from Dona S. Bulluck of The State University of New York Office of University Counsel to Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers

20 New York State Education Department: Chapter 1 of Title 8 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Section 3.47 - Requirements for Degrees

21 The president of New York State LEAH, the largest homeschooling organization in the state, stated in a public email that Syracuse University has asked homeschool graduates of the local community college to produce a GED or letter from the superintendent before admitting them as juniors.

22 The MCC press release said that it was enforcing a SED regulation, "..... which it has no control over." The financial aid director of another community college said to me that community colleges were caught in the middle and were "cannon fodder." He also said that the homeschooled students on his campus have always been superior.

23 This doesn't bode well for New York. Already, on homeschool list-serves, postsecondary NY has the reputation as unfriendly to homeschoolers. NY homeschoolers (and families) are going elsewhere, and homeschoolers are shying away from NY for undergraduate studies. It's the beginning of a negative flow of students in this niche, which may be hard to reverse.

24 Greg Becher, 18 February, 2000 on FINAID-L



Book Review

Orientation to College Learning, Fourth Edition

by Dianna L. Van Blerkom
Thomson Wadsworth (Belmont, CA), 2004
\$43.95, 349 pages, soft cover

Reviewed by Matt Beagle Bourgault, resource center advisor,
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, Winooski, VT

For most students, college academics are unlike those in high school. College studies require more self-discipline, more analytical thinking and usually more time. Often students just entering college don't realize this until they are several weeks into their higher education studies. Van Blerkom sites this experience in her introduction to *Orientation to College Learning*, saying:

“During the past nineteen years, I've had the opportunity to work with freshman and sophomores at several colleges. I found that they were often as unaware of the level of work that would be expected of them in college as they were lacking in the skills and strategies that would help them succeed.”

This book, which can be used as class text or stand-alone manual, is the fourth edition of an attempt to give students these skills and strategies. *Orientation to College Learning* does not contain formulas for achieving better grades through specific steps, but rather offers instruction on how to become a better college student through practice.

Van Blerkom begins the book by defining successful students and addressing how different learning styles affect academic success. Throughout the book she follows her own advice, catering to students with different learning styles by providing study and testing strategies for students with kinesthetic, auditory and visual

learning preferences. Each chapter, for example, ends with a summary, review questions and a series of activities (including Internet-based activities) to help students learn and retain information through a variety of methods.

Van Blerkom posits that students can succeed only if prepared and motivated to learn, and if they take full advantage of resources available to them. This means students must understand why they are in college and believe that college is the right choice for them. Students must utilize fellow students, professors, career counselors, and others as resources to help them maintain their motivation and to reinforce their goals for college. Take a campus tour once school begins, she suggests, to get to know where things are (study spots, library, professors' offices) and just what campus resources are available to students.

While Van Blerkom gives background and theory about key learning principles, such as goal-setting, concentration and memory, she more importantly provides practical strategies for turning theory into practice. She offers tips on how to set goals for the

first three weeks as well as the entire semester, on how to pay attention and get the most from lectures, and on how to remember as much as possible for exams and tests. For each topic she tells the reader what the topic is, why it is important and how to take action. This results in a book rich with real advice for not only first-year students, but any college student hoping to improve her or his academic performance.

Orientation to College Learning analyzes college-level learning and supports its analysis with cited research on how people learn, retain knowledge and analyze information, among other topics. The author then transfers this in-depth information into practical advice, such as how to read a textbook, write lecture notes and take an exam. This text does not provide the easy way to success in college. In fact, following the advice here may mean putting in more time and working harder. However, through text, charts, examples and Web-based and other activities, this book can help students take advantage of that time and hard work to reach their college academic goals. *Orientation to College Learning's* major weakness is its textbook format, so, in order for students to get the most from its information and advice, they must wade through it. Despite this contradiction, this book can provide valuable academic guidance for students transitioning from high school to college.



BookReview

Getting Ready for College

(Everything you need to know before you go from bike locks to laundry baskets, financial aid to health care)

by Polly Berent
Random House (New York, 2003)
\$12.95, 209 pages, paperback

Reviewed by Tricia Georgi Howard, admissions counselor at Bowling Green State University, OH

Polly Berent created *Getting Ready for College* from her self-published pamphlets, of the same name, written in 1993 and 1997. She got the idea for her book after her son returned from his first year of college, wishing he had known certain things beforehand. In talking with her son and his friends, Berent attempted to create a practical guide to preparing for the college experience. She followed up with twenty of her sons friends and “with scores of others long after my son and his friends had graduated.”

The book starts with a checklist of items to pack. This is a good basic list of essential (and not so essential) items every student needs. However, colleges and universities usually provide this information free of charge. The book is loaded with useful “tip” boxes and “true story” segments. The true stories, recounted by the students, are not just positive fluff about how great college is. She includes stories about students who learn the hard way about theft on campus, and other unfortunate aspects of campus life. Although useful, this portion of the book seems more suited for the original pamphlet format.

Two problems with expanding a pamphlet to a full-length book plague Berent throughout. First, she mixes audiences. The book is clearly written for the student; however, in several places, she shifts to the parent audience without warning.

Second, Berent uses a light, informal tone throughout the book. While making the book easy to read, the tone and nature of the information date the book. Also, as things change on campuses, such as technology and safety regulations, the book will become out-of-date. A more general guide would better serve students.

This tone does not mix well with serious issues, such as eating disorders. While Berent acknowledges she is not an expert and advises students to find the counseling center, the serious subjects get only a paragraph’s worth of mention in an otherwise upbeat book.

Berent also throws in several diagrams that seem to depart from the tone of the book. She provides a daily planner, monthly expense sheet and loft-building directions, in addition to a “connections” figure to help students. The daily planner and expense sheet seem unlikely to be used in the format provided. The instructions on how to build a loft are helpful, but this infor-

mation can be found in many other locations. The connections figure asks the students to fill in each circle with the name of someone who supports them and to leave some circles blank to fill in new friends names. This section of the book lost me as an adult, professional reading it, I can only imagine what a high school senior will think. Berent needs to stick to the light, fun tone she establishes early in the book and to avoid sounding philosophical.

Most of the advice Berent dispenses is good, practical information. However, in one section she advises students to avoid getting a part-time job until after their first year. Studies have proven countless times that students do better academically when they have a part-time job. In addition, many departments on campus prefer to hire freshman students likely to stay with that office for their entire time on campus. This, like many other sections, offers no concrete reason to wait to adjust to their new environment. Clearly, Berent has not done any research on many of these subjects and is simply offering her opinion.

Getting Ready for College is an easy, quick read, but not worth the \$12.95 for information found in many other places for free. Berent should stick to pamphlet writing. There are better books on the market for helping students and parents get ready for the college experience.

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