



Summertime with College Applications on the Mind Can Be Fun Too!

With the school year rapidly drawing to a close, many rising high school juniors and seniors are acutely aware of the college application process that looms ahead. After working diligently to prepare not just for final exams, but in many cases for SATs, ACTs, and A.P. tests too, you want nothing more than a chance to relax a little. And the truth is, you desperately need some unstructured time to hang out with friends, enjoy the warm weather, do the things you love to do but haven't had much time for in a while, and generally recharge your batteries.

The good news is that using your summers wisely doesn't mean they should feel the same as the rest of the year. True, college applications ask what you did each summer since ninth grade, and writing "nothing" is certainly not advisable. But performing community service in Uganda will not necessarily make you a more appealing candidate than scooping frozen yogurt or working as a counselor in your town day camp. What will impress college admissions officers is if you can explain some of the impact your experiences have had on you - the reflections and insights they engendered.

Everything you do and everything you witness has the potential to impact your understanding of yourself and the world around you. Every interaction with other people affords an opportunity to learn how others think and feel and to hone your interpersonal skills, and every interaction with nature affords an opportunity to think about our own place in the grand scheme.

Your challenge this summer, then, is a modest one: it's to think a little bit about your experiences and what they've taught you. If at all possible, take some notes. An informal journal which will later jog your memory of interesting experiences and thoughts you've had will serve you well when it comes time to write college essays and maybe even when you prepare for interviews. Admissions officers want thoughtful young people who are ready and eager to learn and grow, and they know that it is equally possible to do so in ordinary places as in extraordinary ones.