



The Tale of Two College Interviews

If you have the opportunity for a college interview- take it. Colleges and universities with a large admissions pool work very hard to make sure that prospective students who request interviews get them. If the idea of sitting in front of a stranger to convince them that you deserve to go to their alma mater, makes you nauseous, take a deep breath and calm down. As someone who volunteers as an alumni interviewer, trust me when I say that I am not there to grill you about every time you underperformed academically. However, I do want to share with two interviews that could not be more different from one another. One was exceptional and the other was an exceptional disaster.

The Uncomfortably Bad Interview

I scheduled to meet this student at a local coffee shop and to her credit she was on time. However, that was the only positive part of the interview. First off, she brought her father with her. I thought that this was odd because we were meeting at a public place and having lived in the city, I assumed that she would be comfortable meeting me alone. Still, I was willing to overlook the fact that she brought a parent, even though it made me question her maturity. Then after basic introductions, I started to ask her pretty standard questions about herself and why she wanted to go to this specific school. Every answer was terrible. She simply said she wanted to go to this school because it was really good and she wanted to go to an Ivy. I asked her to elaborate and she couldn't. I asked her about her extracurricular activities and she was not involved in any sports or clubs, nor had any after school jobs. When I asked her why she was a strong candidate, she said it was because she had more to offer than just academics. However, she could not tell me anything about her other than the fact that she was a strong student. When I asked her about passions outside the classroom like community service or an interest in art or music, she again had nothing to say.

As, I asked her question after question, she again had one sentence answers or no answers at all. All the while, her father was hanging on every word. If I had it to do over again, I would have asked him to hang out at another table or taken a walk. However, I don't think that he made her uncomfortable or more reserved since she had no problem asking me about what the parties were like at college. (I refrained from answering). The worst answer of all is when I asked her why she had chosen Communications as her intended major and she said it was because she didn't want to take any Math or Science courses. The runner up was when I asked when she applied Regular Admission, rather than Early Decision and she said it was because she didn't think at the time that she could have gotten in to the university, but her teachers urged her to apply. She also added that she was pretty confident that she was going to be admitted. I am sad to say that I could not give a positive review for this student.

The Exceptionally Wonderful Interview

It's easy to read some quick guidelines on how to have a great college interview and it's another thing to execute one. I think what made this particular college interview so great was how genuine the student was. She was of course on time and I could tell she was excited and slightly nervous. What she did so well, which I think is hard, is describe why exactly she wanted to go to this particular university. She was honest and earnest. She eloquently told me all about how she was very excited to volunteer at local elementary schools in the area and talked about all the current community service she currently did. She played sports and had a steady job. She researched classes that the university offered, as well as study abroad options and was passionate about her intended major. She was also very honest about how her current high school lacked diversity and how she was incredibly excited to meet students from different backgrounds. Aside from giving me thoughtful and mature responses to every question I asked, she also came off as a very nice person. I remember college as an incredible time in my life and was fortunate to meet many interesting and intelligent people. However, it's a fact that competitive schools attract competitive students and sometimes in the intensely stressful times of midterms and finals, civility and kindness can go out the window. And if someone is underperforming in a group project, forget it, you're toast. So I added her apparent kindness as an additional asset to the university. This is someone who I saw as a model roommate and an engaged classmate. So, I'm crossing my fingers that she gets admitted to her first choice college.

