

Freshmen to Seniors: Seven steps for applying to College

- Step 1: Take time to think
- Step 2: Consider your needs and preferences
- Step 3: Research the possibilities
- Step 4: Narrow your choices
- Step 5: Submit applications
- Step 6: Apply for financial aid and scholarships
- Step 7: Write a letter of acceptance to the school you choose

Graphic by Alan Cartier

Source: mycollegeguide.com

Student organizations do not have enough of a voice

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Student Government. The student newspaper. These are the two most powerful student organizations at H-F that the student body can go to if they want to encourage change in their school, because both organizations have more direct contact with the administration than any other student-run activity here. Theoretically, the students leading these activities are the most powerful people in the student body and have the power to enact change. But this is not the case at H-F.

Upon hearing student opinions about school policies, Student Government will discuss them, while *the Voyager* will write about them. Nevertheless, after that, student opinions will get lost in translation when they are lobbied to the administration.

The administration is too disinclined to hear the opinions of our student body leaders when the opinions go against current policies. For example, there have been several cases over the past two years for *the Voyager* in which the administration has expressed deep concern for controversial articles written against their point of view; as a result, *the Voyager* has been reluctant to write on a few controversial topics in response to the backlash writers have experienced. This ongoing problem needs to be resolved.

Students will benefit if they are confident that any one of these two organizations can successfully represent their opinions about school policies. Without gradual change, these organizations will continue to have their voices of reason stripped from them, and they will become just a dance planning committee, or, in *the Voyager's* case, a piece of paper.

At H-F, Student Government's number one agenda is to raise money for school dances each year. "The dances cost so much money that fundraising takes up a lot of time and effort. We have never really had people that want to go beyond that. Planning a dance and putting a dance together takes so much work that sometimes it is all they can do. Juniors, sophomores, and freshman really get stuck with dances," said Senior and Executive Board President Emily Hurtubise.

Being on the Executive Board allows students to focus on helping the student body with their opinions about school policy. "Executive Board has a lot more prominence and has a lot more opportunities to get things done. But you need an administration that will let you do that. With our administration last year we had a wonderful connection. We met with Dr. Mansfield a couple of times last year. In my experience as President [the administration] has not been too strict because we have not pushed the limits of what we can do," said Hurtubise.

However, during the school year the

group has had minimal contact with student opinions, which is a result of the lack of commitment by many of their members and the lack of students proposing problems to Student Government. This is one of the main reasons why Student Government has not met with administrators outside of monthly school board meetings this year.

Not to belittle Student Government's work, but it is difficult to rely on them to change school policies when their contact with administrators is so subtle. "Anything that [Student Government] does, anyone can do. No [students] have come to me," said Hurtubise, referring to ways students can propose changes at H-F. But even though some students voice their opinions, it is still a difficult process to make big changes in policies.

At Glenbrook North High School, Student Government sponsor Michael Tarjan said their student officers are in regular contact with their administrators. "The student officers meet twice a month with our school principal to discuss school policies. Many times they have disagreements on certain issues, but they talk it out, and both sides usually come out satisfied. The officers really make a big difference and can easily communicate with our principal," he said.

The Voyager still has some credibility when it comes to voicing students' opinions. Although the administration has kept a tight watch over controversial issues covered by the paper, *the Voyager* prints a mix of opinions about school issues. In almost every issue, there are stories that involve interviewing Principal Von Mansfield or Superintendent Laura Murray on school issues. This frequent contact with the administration allows *the Voyager* staff to write about student concerns.

It is far from perfect, but at least over 2,000 faculty members, administrators, students, parents, and community members pick up a copy of the paper each time it comes out. *The Voyager* does receive a bevy of praise and constructive criticism every issue from its readers. Nevertheless, it is rare that drastic changes in policies even occur. Unlike Student Government, it is not that proposals were not made, but the administration does not noticeably respond to them.

It is a losing battle for H-F students to voice their opinions and stand up to administrative policies when their most powerful student leaders are shunned. H-F administrators must put more emphasis on the most influential student body leaders for change: Student Government officers and *the Voyager* editors. They are impressive students in leadership and character, but if the administration does not loosen their grip on these prestigious organizations, they will continue to deprive the student body of a natural right.

College admissions process is overly stressful for students

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For most high school students, applying to college is a very stressful experience. One knows that to get into an elite school one needs practically perfect grades, great standardized test scores and a very long list of extracurricular activities, preferably activities in which one holds leadership positions. With so much to do in only three and a half years, many students become very stressed over the admissions process. Some junior high kids have even started thinking about college. This process seems a bit drastic, but it is a reality to most juniors and the prepared under-classesmen as well. Students live to get into college, and to be denied or waitlisted means that they have worked for nothing. The admissions process has become too stressful for students and must be changed.

The admissions process has become highly competitive over the years. This is because there are more students than before going to college and schools are not increasing their size to accommodate the number of applicants, according to *colletheadmissionsinfo.com*. Also, students are applying to more colleges than in previous years. "The admissions process has gotten tougher because there are more applicants. The colleges and universities are more selective," said H-F Guidance Counselor Mark Jager.

Fixing the admissions process could be very difficult because each school has

different admissions standards. "Each school has a different admissions procedure, so I do not know if there is a way to fix the admissions process, but the students can help themselves," said Jager. Students cannot change the admissions process, but they can change the way they deal with the stress. According to *mycollegeguide.com*, one cannot stress about what has not happened, but one needs to be prepared. Do not forget about what is important, but do not overstress. The best way to deal with stress is to understand what one can and cannot control. You cannot control the questions on standardized tests, the price of college tuition, or pressure from family and friends.

What a student can control is how they prepare. From freshman year on, a student can control their effort in class, schedule, research of colleges, preparations for standardized tests, applications for colleges and their attitude. All of this preparing is very useful when a student finally arrives at their junior year. "For long term planning, students need to start from freshman year, such as having good grades. For short term planning, seniors need to research schools in August or earlier, and make a list of schools they are considering applying to," said Jager.

High school is a stressful time period, and one that is not made easier by applying to colleges. There are many steps students can take to prepare for this overwhelming time. The admission process is not going to get any easier, so students must prepare as soon as they can.

Government, media promote unnecessary bird flu panic

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Pandemic. Plague. Disaster. These are all words used when describing the Avian Flu, or what is commonly referred to as the Bird Flu. In recent months, the federal government has been making preparations for the supposed arrival of the Bird Flu in the U.S. At the same time, the scientific backing for the spread and mutation of the Bird Flu is meager and quite pathetic. The Bird Flu has only become the latest way for the U.S. government and its media to scare the general population by using fearsome rhetoric, which only allows them to act on these fears. Americans, and especially students, must learn to avoid the hype surrounding issues like the Bird Flu and formulate their own educated opinions of the world.

On Tuesday, ABC aired a

made-for-television movie, *Fatal Contact: Bird Flu in America*. Not only did this movie make overzealous disaster scenes, but it represented a larger problem surrounding the Bird Flu. After watching this movie it seemed as if the only purpose in making the film was to terrify the viewer. This tactic is consistent with that of the Bush Administration in regards to the Bird Flu. In October, the Bush Administration proposed that Congress should allow him to use the military to enforce Bird Flu quarantines if the disease were to spread. "One option is the use of a military that's able to plan and move. So that is why I put it on the table. I think it is an important debate for Congress to have," said Bush.

According to CNN, due to rising fear of the Bird Flu, American airports now have the power to screen passengers on international flights whom they believe may possess the Bird Flu. Flight attendants and airport personnel are thus allowed by law to detain these individuals for an indefinite period of time. These policies are meant to help solve the scientific problem only reiterate the fear created by the government. The cycle is just that the government, with the help of the media, create fear and then scared citizens will follow along with whatever crazy ideas they propose, such as quarantines and martial law.

"We have allowed ourselves to lose the habit of our reason. That is the actual danger or the disaster. The politicians and the

media are taking it upon themselves to delude us into believing everything, for instance, delude us into believing that migratory birds in Asia have been infected with an extremely dangerous, deadly virus," said German Virologist Stephan Lanka to the Guerrilla News Network, a German television station.

Americans need to demand scientific proof that the Bird Flu will mutate and if it does, the government must prove that it would be harmful enough to justify governmental quarantines enforced by the military and random profiling at airports. Without evidence, the people of this country will continue to be scared into accepting unjust means of coping with the Bird Flu.



Give that back In a scene from ABC's *Fatal Contact: Bird Flu in America*, chickens are confiscated from civilians. The government should not make scare people until they can prove that the bird flu is capable of causing a pandemic.

Courtesy of mynews.com