



PREPARE • COMPETE • WIN!

The Ultimate College Planning Workbook for Students, 5th ed., 2017

By Peter Van Buskirk

A VALUABLE TOOL

*“For the past five years we have used the workbook with our students during the summer before their senior year. The students complete all of the worksheets and assignments, and we discuss their responses individually and in small groups. **The topics covered generate lively and perceptive discussions with the students.**”*

The workbook is really student-centered and makes the students feel empowered in regard to their college search process. It is extremely user-friendly, and breaks down the process into small, digestible chunks that are easily understood by adolescents.

*Students respond to the fact that they are actually in charge of their own college process—that **they will ultimately decide which colleges are their best fits.** Once they get into the book, they like that it breaks down the search process into very simple steps. Generally, students are very stressed and overwhelmed at the prospect of finding the “right” colleges. **Peter’s approach definitely alleviates some of the anxiety.** Students actually like doing the exercises and can’t wait to talk about their ideas with their peers and with our staff.*

*I love that **the book expands the concept of fit beyond academics, location and reputation.** Traditionally, a counselor would ask a student what she wanted as a possible career and then select possible colleges based on that response. We know that does not work as most students change their minds and their majors more often than not. My favorite concept is that students need to select a college that will “offer a community that feels like home”. **This is often a breakthrough moment for them as they discover so much about themselves and their needs during this exercise.**”*

Linda Perez, Program Coordinator/College Adviser
Achieve Program, San Francisco, CA

A GUIDE TO MAKING SMART CHOICES

One of the greatest handicaps to young people as they compete for admission is their inability to fully grasp the process itself. They see themselves as responding to seemingly arbitrary requirements in what is presumed to be a merit-based process. As a result, their approaches often lack the confidence and creativity that come from self-reflection and a contextual awareness of the admission process.

Prepare, Compete, Win! is a compilation of exercises designed to prepare students to compete for admission. As they progress through the workbook, they will learn about the political pressures that are common to most selection processes and develop a line of questioning that produces answers for them at the colleges where they want to apply. In terms, both straightforward and relevant, the workbook:

- ▲ Engages students in self-discovery that is critical to identifying the colleges that will fit them best.
- ▲ Motivates students to set and achieve appropriate goals educationally and in life.
- ▲ Equips students with tools for navigating the college search and selection processes.
- ▲ Demystifies college admission and exposes the strategic agendas of the decision-makers.
- ▲ Reveals the appropriateness of an Early Decision application.
- ▲ Interprets the financial aid process.
- ▲ Empowers students to assemble compelling applications for admission that tell their stories.

Through engagement with the workbook, students will become more confident in their understanding of the process and see how they can *affect* outcomes by *taking responsibility* for what is under *their control*. In the process, they will sharpen their decision-making skills and feel empowered to make good choices that can be applied to their college education as well as their life beyond college.

INSIDE *PREPARE, COMPETE, WIN!*

Now in its 5th edition (2017), *PCW* takes students from the earliest stages of thinking about college to an evaluation of admission decisions and financial aid offers. It is an easy-read loaded with information from an insider's perspective. It breaks down the complexities of college admission in terms that are real to students, thereby providing greater transparency while guiding them step-by-step through each stage of college planning. The new fifth edition also updates important information on financial aid and testing.

An interactive guide and effective classroom resource, it includes:

- ▲ To-do lists
- ▲ Planning calendars
- ▲ Contextual interpretations of the process
- ▲ Reflective exercises with plenty of space for note-taking and record keeping
- ▲ Action Steps that engage students in critical thinking about how the process works and, more importantly, how they can work within the process.
- ▲ Worksheets promote self-reflection and, ultimately, inspire ownership in a student centered college selection process.

The workbook breaks down the college planning process into three stages: awareness and preparation, the application and final decisions. Chapter topics include: the five elements of a good fit, meeting college costs, the college search and selection process, mistakes to avoid, Early Decision/Early Action, the application as a personal statement, and the Wait List.

HOW TO USE *PREPARE, COMPETE, WIN!* WITH YOUR STUDENTS

- ▲ Classroom resource for college planning
- ▲ Primer for students working independently in the college search and selection process

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