

Dear Harlem Children Society Student:**Congratulations on being accepted into such a prestigious and educational program. Here are some tips on how to maximize your advantages.**

1. You are in a wonderful position for networking both with your mentors and co-workers, and with other students. Older students may have good advice based on their experiences. Remember that your mentors do not get paid for helping you; they are doing it out of the goodness of their heart. Show that you appreciate their efforts not only in the summer, but also afterwards by staying in touch. Keep in touch with them even when you do not want anything from them at that time. You will feel freer to ask them for letters of recommendation if you have stayed in touch with. You can ask them how they are, how the lab work is progressing, or ask for advice about what course to take, etc. it is not polite (and not as successful) to only contact them when you want something.
2. When you do want a letter of recommendation, make it easy for them by giving them a resume or list of your accomplishments including good grades, and giving them a stamped envelope with the address where it should go, or the e-mail address if that is O.K. Also, don't wait for the last minute, there should be at least a week between when you ask for the letter, and when it is due, but longer is better. Also, don't neglect your co-mentors. While the main professor or boss's words carry the most weight, sometimes they are not available, and postdocs, graduate students, etc. can also be helpful. Treat them well too. Secretaries should also be treated with respect, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because they can be very helpful in locating the lab workers. Be sure to keep the phone numbers and e-mail addresses.
3. Whenever you apply for something, a summer program, a job, college, etc., check that all parts of your application have been received. It might have been sent but then misfiled. Or a busy professor forgot to send in your recommendation letter. Or your transcripts were not sent in that means you have to apply before the deadline, so that you have time to check that it has been received, and then follow-up with whatever has not been received. Checking may save you many thousands of dollars in scholarships, or the ability to get into the college of your choice. Also, if you write an essay, do it in time to have someone good in English proofread it for you.
4. Keep a hard copy of all your reports and college or other applications yourself. You may need to send them again, or other mentors, or for a job. It is easy to forget just what you did, and you can't count on the computer disk or hard drive being available and uncorrupted with viruses when you want it. Making more copies is easy and cheap, redoing the whole thing is a pain.
5. Your research can always be helpful to you later in life. If you have not entered college, use it to enter science fairs. Ask your science teachers, other students, Dr. Sat, etc. about what fairs to enter. There is one run by the NY Academy of Science, another by Intel, another by Siemens, etc. If you have entered college, ask a professor to take you on doing research since you already have experience. You can get paid, or get college credit, or do research for your work-study requirement, which is more fun than filing or copying all day. Also, I know someone who used her old high school research to help her get a paying job after college.
6. Your time is precious; use it wisely to get a 4-year college degree before you do anything else. Do not be distracted by "taking time out" or entering the armed forces until you have graduated.

7. When you have made it, and you will, help others as you have been helped.

Some Tips About Applying to and Choosing A College

1. Work on getting as good SAT scores as possible. SAT scores are not a measure of your intelligence or ability, but colleges and scholarship committees use them because they are supposedly an objective number. What you can do is:
 - a. Take a course, especially if it is given at your school, or somewhere else at no or little cost.
 - b. Buy and use as SAT review guide, especially one that is new, so it has information about the writing part, and has real previous tests. You and one or two friends can share the book or books. Princeton Review has the right attitude about the tests, but others are good too. If possible, study the book before you take the test for the first time.
 - c. Make sure you have enough time to see all the questions, so if you know the answer to a question near the end, you will see it and answer it. That means that you shouldn't brood over questions that will take you a long time until you have answered all you can do quickly.
 - d. Use common sense. In a reading paragraph no correct answer will be something obviously bad, such as that "it pays to cheat", or the "United States has a bad government".
 - e. Do not guess unless you are down to 2 choices, since wrong answers count against you.
 - f. In the writing part of the exam, check the first sentence or 2 for good English, since some graders will make up their mind right away. After those sentences, write as much as you can. Long essays are graded higher than short essays. Ask an English teacher to read a sample essay of yours, and give you tips. The same points will appear in all your writing.
2. Apply to at least 5 schools with 2 of them being a NY State or CUNY school that you can get into. Some are far away, such as the State University of NY at Albany, or Plattsburg, or Cornell University. School of Agriculture in Ithaca (you can major in Biochemistry), in case you want to live away from home, and some are nearby. The Honors Colleges in the City Universities are excellent if you can get in, and if you want to live at home. The reason it is important to apply to 2 of these, is that they may be much more affordable for you. Subsidized loans such as Perkins or Stafford loans are O.K., but other loans are a burden. Too many students who went to some private schools without sufficient aid, have dropped out of school because the loans became too much. You can switch later, but it is a waste of time and money.
3. If you are doing research at a college or university, apply to that school as well. Not only is it polite, but they may give you a better deal because they know how good you are. Ask for a letter of recommendation from a professor at the school who knows you.
4. If you can get into a school that has lots of money for grants to low-income Students, such as MIT, Yale, Princeton, Duke, Smith, Columbia, Brown, and some others that "give 100% of need in grants", you will do well. But they are only for excellent students with

- good SAT scores, essays, and some luck. You will have to apply in time, and that means in December.
5. Take AP courses if available. It impresses the admission and scholarship Committees.
 6. You can often do well if apply to a small, private, local school, which wants good students. Even NY private schools where you can apply under the HEOP or EOP Program (ask you school counselor) might be good for tuition scholarships. Or a school such as the Univ. Of Minnesota which prizes NYC students since it has so few of them.
 7. Apply for the federal FAFSA early. Early means no later than February. Schools run out of money, and early birds do better. You need to be a citizen or have a green card for the FAFSA
 8. You can get free or reduced rate application forms for most college application, and for the SAT exam if you can't afford to pay. Just ask the guidance counselor or the college for them. If you worked at a college, ask if you can get a free application form from there.
 9. Follow up to make sure all your documents have been received. See points#3 and Points# 4 in the sheet labeled "Dear Harlem Children Society Student". Every year one or more research students find that some form was lost. If it was, don't argue, just send in another one. This is another reason to apply early enough so you have time to follow up and complete the application.
 10. Your guidance counselor is not helpful if you make him or her your friend. On the Other hand, if your guidance counselor is not helpful, don't let that stop you from doing what you need to do to get into a college, and with all the financial support you can get. It will be your life, and ultimately your decision. If you are having trouble with the guidance counselor, see another counselor, see the head counselor, or have a parent or older sibling or aunt or uncle come to talk to them. Guidance counselors have information about scholarships, or see fastweb.com. Don't pay for scholarship information; it doesn't pay.
 11. If you are an underrepresented minority (African-American, Hispanic, or American Indian,) the American Chemical Society (ACS) has a 4 year, (or however many years are left) scholarship if you are majoring in Chemistry, Biochemistry, Materials Science, or Chemical Engineering. You can apply for the scholarship now, or after 1 or 2 or 3 years of college. The applications come out in November or December, and have a February deadline. If your high school or college does not have an application, call 1800 ACS-5558 X 6250 and ask for one. There is also a wonderful GATES (Bill Gates) scholarship if you are going into a technical field and have financial need, but it is very competitive. Those scholarships are not available to undocumented students. Students with visa problems should stick close to home. NYC, especially the CUNY schools are better than many other places, if you have a visa problem, but there are a few other options for excellent students.
 12. When you apply to college or for scholarships, be sure to describe your research in a few descriptive sentences focusing on what you accomplished. It is not enough to say that you were part of Harlem Children Society, because they may not know what that means.

13. You will be able to get into a college that you can afford without going into the armed forces. But if you want to make a career in the armed forces, go as an officer. Go to West Point, or the Coast Guard Academy, or have an ROTC Scholarship and become an officer. You are officer material; don't settle for anything less. The National Guard is a bad idea since you may have to serve for years if they need you.
14. Once you have more than one acceptances to college, with the financial package, it is time to choose. The bottom line is neither how expensive the school is, nor how much scholarship money they give you. The bottom line is how much you still have to pay or borrow, after you subtract your total grants from the total cost. You may be able to bargain if you will have to pay more money to go to school you prefer. That is another reason it is important to apply to several schools. If they really want you, they may sweeten the offer so you match the bottom line of the other school.
15. I would never pay more than \$3000 a year more for one school than another, unless you have rich parents or a rich uncle to pay for it. $\$3000 \times 4$ years are \$12,000 and that is enough. It is not the school you go to, it is what you learn there that counts. All regionally accredited colleges are fine, (not a trade school such as Gibbs). It is often easier to get good grades from a less famous college. The good grades might make a difference if you want to go to medical school.

For the Students Who is Entering College Now:

1. For next year, most scholarships, grants, and subsidized loans come from the federal government, NJ, or the specific college you have been admitted to, and the financial aid office and counselors can be helpful if you apply early enough. However, there are other scholarships that you may be eligible for. The website fastweb.com has a good free Scholarship section, but don't forget your school's financial aid office, since most scholarships come from the government and your specific school.
2. For all students, in college, if you are in work-study, ask for an assignment in a lab. Describe your research experience in words, and ask a science professor to take you on.
3. In college, keep your GPA above 3, (3.5 for med or law school.)
4. Study with other students in a group from the beginning, and ask for help early.
5. If you are headed for a D or F, drop the course in time. Retake it later.
6. Talk to other students about who the good professors and courses are before you register each term.
7. It is often helpful to look at other textbooks in addition to the one assigned to the course. Try the library, and sometimes even your high school book.
8. If a course seems difficult, talk to the professor or graduate teaching assistant during their office hours. They will help you, especially if you don't wait too long to ask for help.
9. Reading ahead of the assignment is another way to learn more efficiently.
10. For summer jobs, start early, go to the job placement office, ask your professors, ask older students, and apply to the pre-college programs such as the Upward Bound Program at your college, or at NJIT, which has a big pre-college Program. If you are good in math or English, ask to be a tutor in the E.O.F. Program or H.E.O.P. for new students. Industry summer jobs are usually only available after you have had two years of college. If you want my help, send me a resume during the Christmas break, then call.
11. Don't get behind in your work. College competition is much stronger than at your high school.
12. Don't let anyone talk you out of your dreams, and that includes saying no to students who want to start partying on Thursday. Form a group with students who want to achieve, not with negative students.
13. If you find some difficult challenges, overcome them in time, and keep going. Almost no one is always successful in everything, and it is not necessary as long as you keep trying.
14. Stay in touch with your previous mentor; you never know when you want a recommendation and it is easier to get one if you have stayed in touch. Stay in touch with me if you wish. I would love to hear how you are doing.
15. Study enough, don't overload your schedule, and still have a good time. You will stay a winner!

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