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*Advancing
Higher Education
Through Insight
and Innovation*

The Parents' Independent School Network

Finding and Getting into the Right School

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Maguire Associates, Inc.

Finding and Getting into the “Right” School

- Finding the “right” school
 - Defining the “right” school
 - Establishing guidelines for the search process
 - Responding to admissions and financial aid trends
 - Using a range of resources for developing a list
 - Benefiting fully from campus visits
- Getting into the “right” schools
 - The Transcript – Grades and standardized tests
 - The Recommendations
 - The Interview
 - The Essay
- Making the experience work for you

Finding the Right School

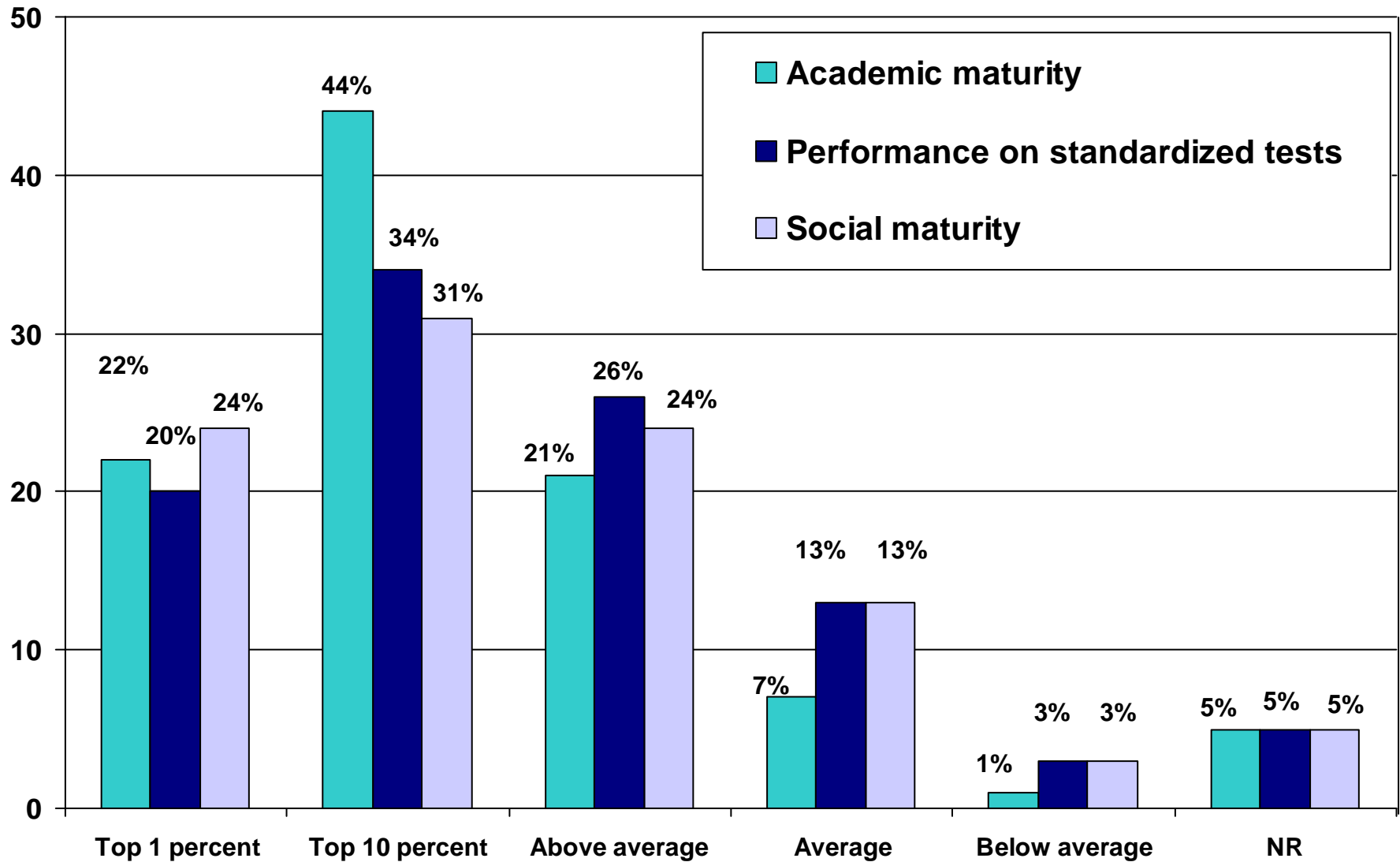
"Give me the freedom of a tight strategy."

Norman Berry

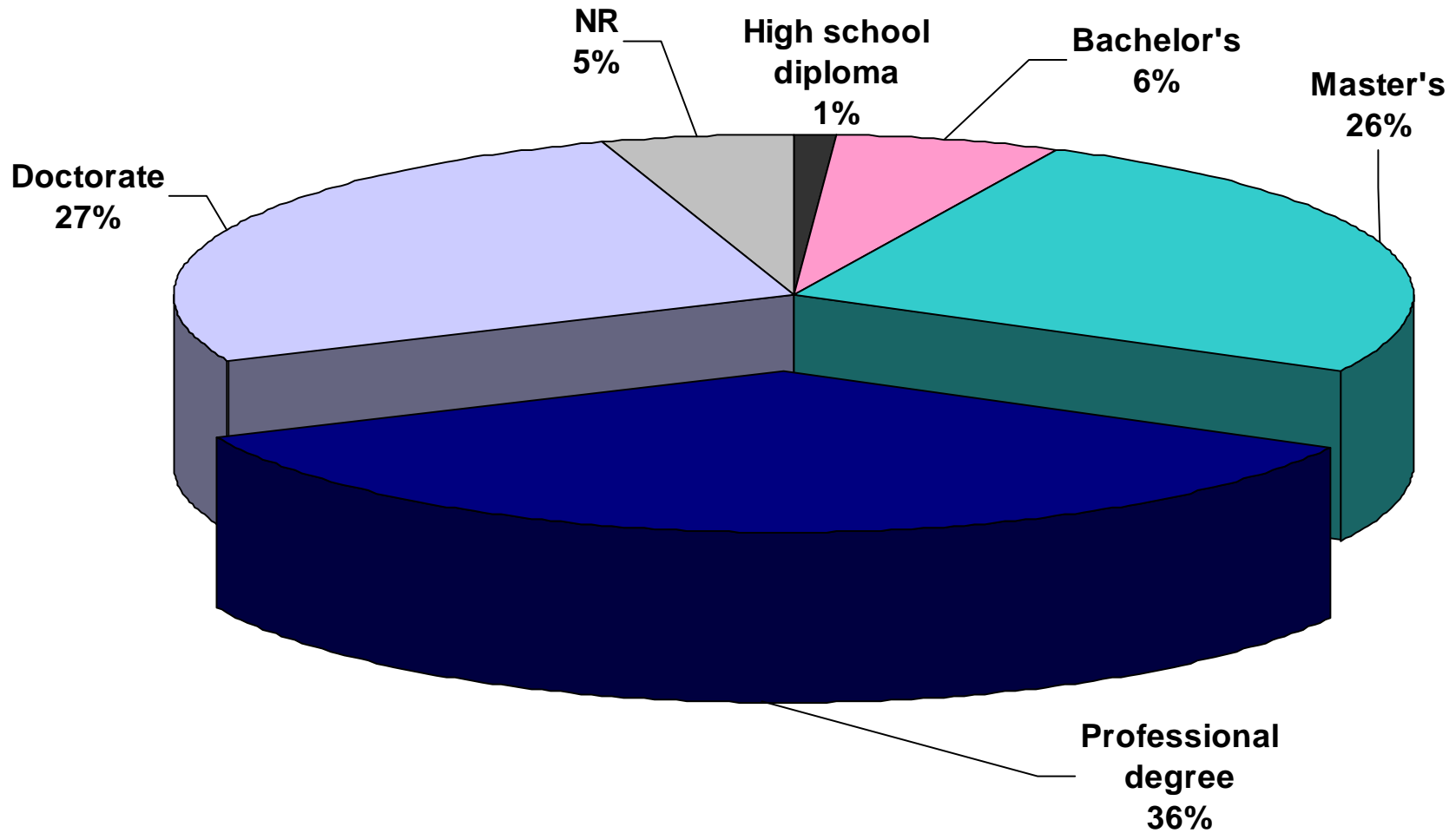
What is the “right” school?

- Prepare to find the best match
 - Resist “only one and only” perspective
 - Remember- places for every kind of student
 - Connect student and school “personalities”
 - Consider most important family values
 - Make list of child’s strengths, interests, and areas of needed growth
 - Think about educational goals
 - Anticipate essential criteria and boundaries

Parent Assessment of Child's Maturity/Performance



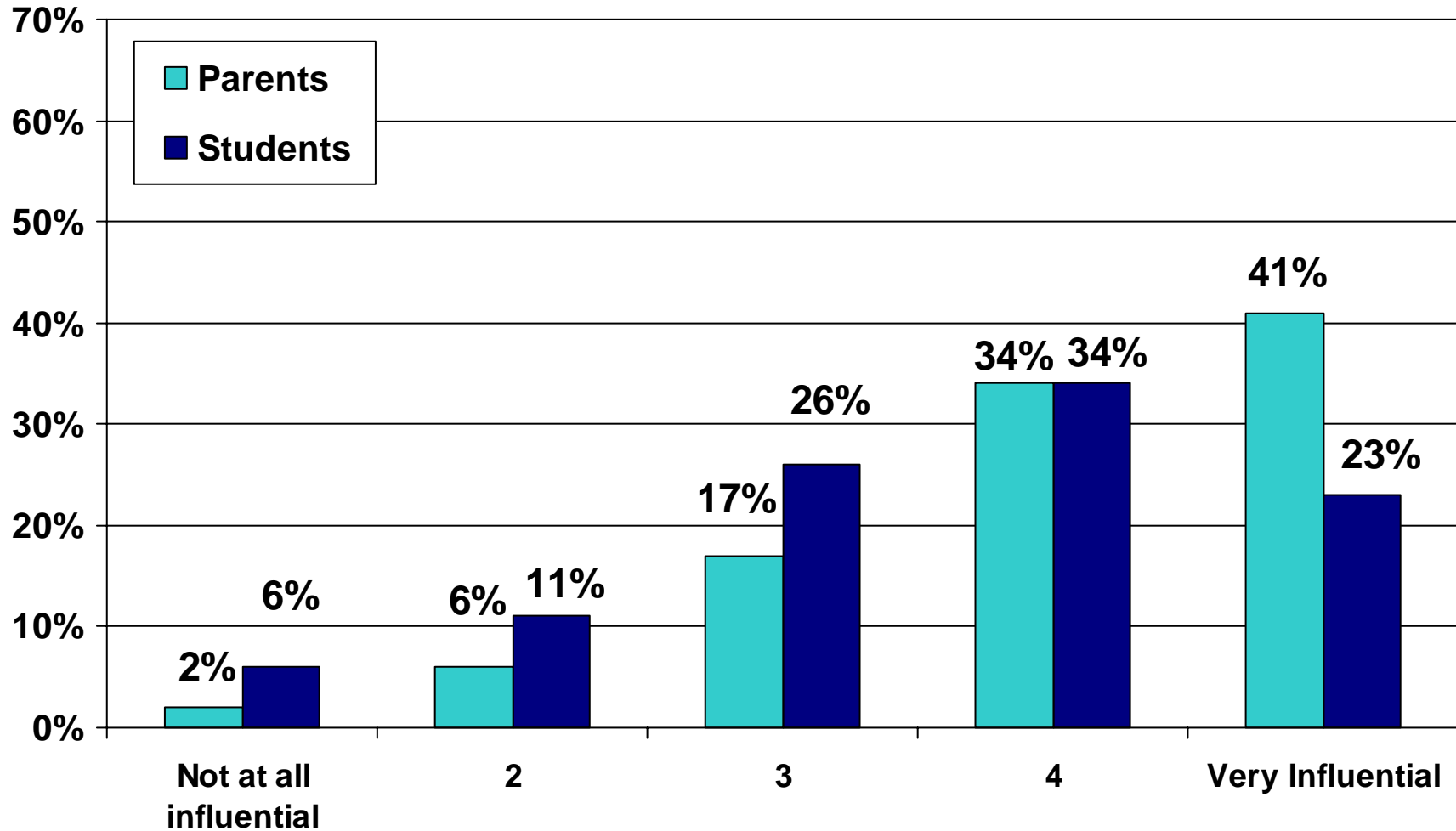
Educational Aspirations for Child



Establishing Family Guidelines

- Set ground rules for decision making
 - “We know what’s best for you” model
 - Partnership (both are interested, work together)
 - “Go/No” model (insist on application process, but allow right of refusal at enrollment point)
 - “Laissez faire” model (student motivated, less involvement of parents)
- Assign roles of involvement/responsibility
 - Contacting schools for information
 - Setting up campus visits

Extent of Parental Influence at Final Selection Stage



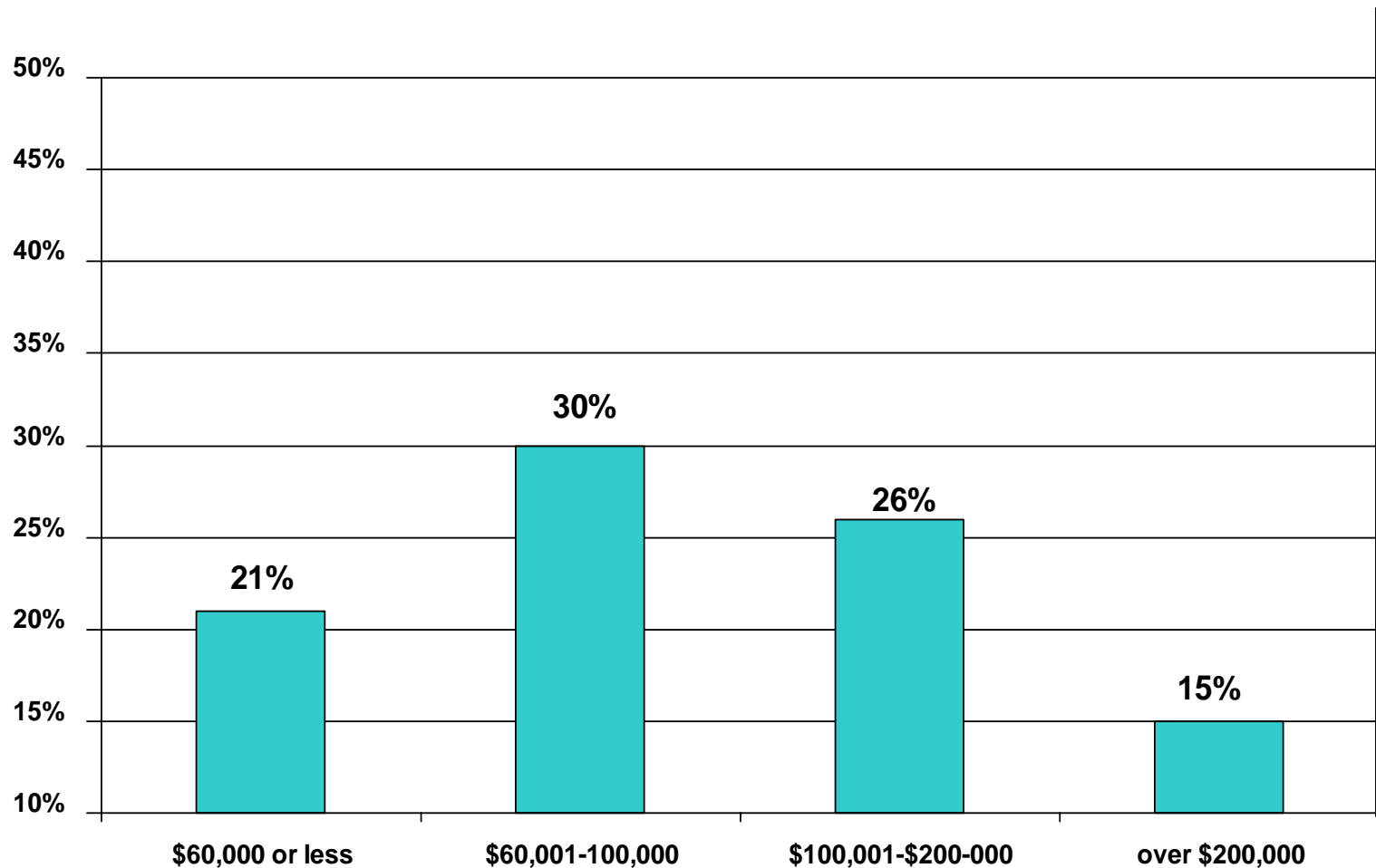
Establishing Family Guidelines

- Set timetable for action in advance
 - Campus visits
 - Applications
 - Recommendations
- Define success
 - Rejection = daring to reach
 - “Right” match for academic and personal growth
 - Happy enrolled student

Admissions and Financial Aid Trends

- Independent schools
 - Seeking to expand to more families with no independent school background
 - Looking at merit-based financial aid to shape class
 - Developing stronger partnerships with parents
 - Giving more attention to character development
 - Anticipating school rating guides

Loss of Interest in Independent Schools by Family Income



Admissions and Financial Aid Trends

- Colleges and universities
 - Complex admissions entry programs:
 - Early Decision
 - Early Action (two options)
 - Rolling Admissions
 - Regular Admissions
 - Erosion of Candidate's Reply Date
 - “Need blind” versus “need sensitive” admissions
 - On-line applications and Common Applications
 - Earlier recruitment through direct marketing
 - Web-based/Electronic recruitment
 - Attention to parents

Admissions and Financial Aid Trends

- Colleges and universities
 - Impact of college ratings by guides
 - (Mis)Use of Early Decision/Action
 - (Mis)Use of waiting list
 - Rejection/Wait list of “safety school” candidates
 - Investments in peer marketing
 - Increased attention to standardized scores
 - Financial aid
 - Affordability to willingness to pay
 - Merit aid to leveraging to shape a class

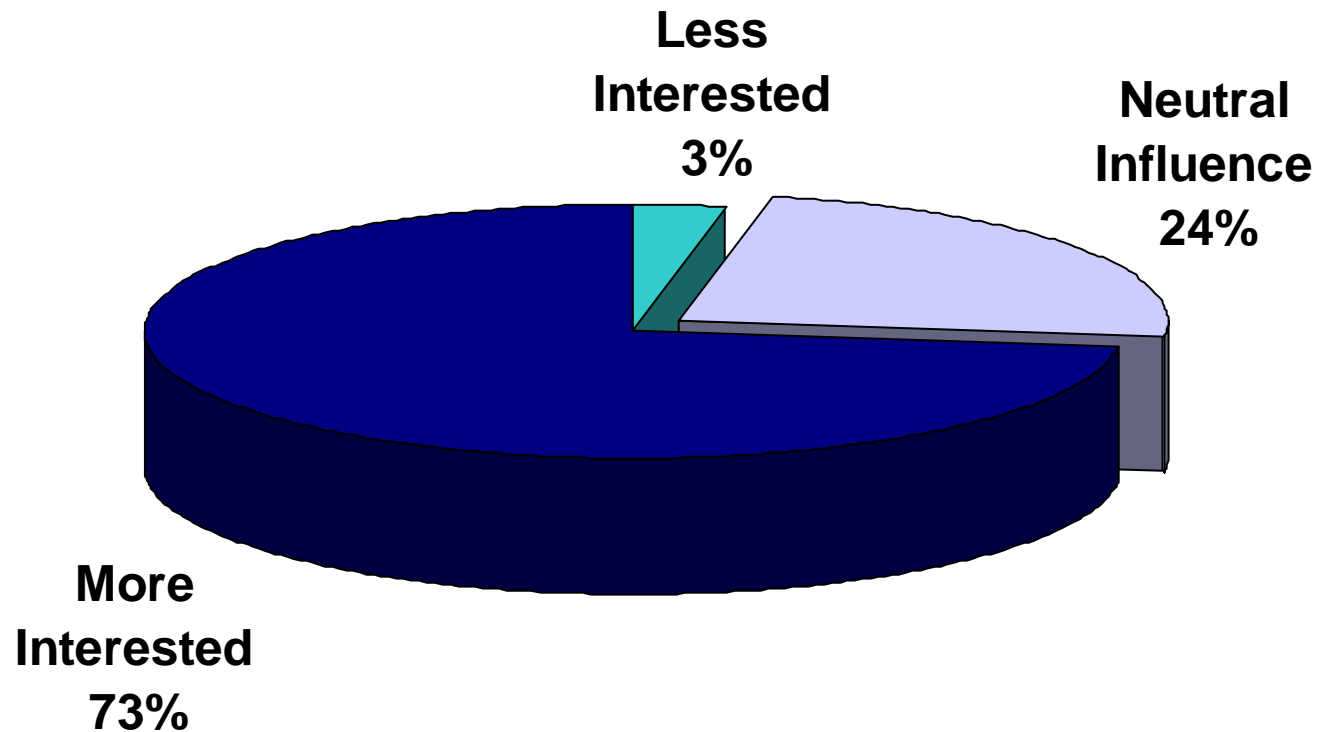
Resources for Developing a List

- Web sites – being used at all levels
- School publications – more trusted resource
- Referrals (alumni, teachers, counselors, friends, coaches, etc.) – underutilized
- Resource guides/Rating guides, e.g.:
 - *US News & World Report*
 - *Fiske's Guide*
 - *Peterson's*
 - *Atlantic Monthly* (see November 2003 issue)
- School software and "data books"
- Campus visits – formal and informal dimensions

The Campus Visit

- Visit as many schools as possible.
- Attend special on-campus programs for prospective students. In addition, return to...
- Take individual scheduled tours and ask to sit in on a class. Then...
- Wander around campus and eat in dining hall to chat informally with students.
- Be alert to:
 - Quality of facilities and equipment – deferred maintenance?
 - Atmosphere on campus/Students' faces
 - Visibility of faculty outside of class.

Effect of Campus Visit



Getting into the Right Schools

*“The more you know,
the more luck you will have.”*

Chinese Proverb

The Transcript

- Seek strong curriculum for child's ability level
 - Use teachers/counselors as resources
 - Don't ease up in senior year
- Encourage in-depth involvements vs. many activities
- Try to relax about standardized test scores
 - Colleges take best combination

The Recommendations

- Select teachers from different academic disciplines
 - Who knows you best?
 - Who will do a thoughtful job?
 - Who writes best?
- Focus on relevant subject areas
- Ask for copy of recommendation
- Include non-academic references (employer, coach, community service supervisor, etc.)
- Talk with recommenders about:
 - Why interested in each school/college choice
 - Things you want them to know about you
- Avoid “padding”

The Interview

- Waiting and Wondering – Encourage your child to prepare by:
 - Reading materials in advance
 - Preparing a list of questions NOT answered in materials
 - Making sure your child is ready to answer:
 - “What are your strengths as a student, as a person?”
 - “What do you do well, academically and personally?”
 - “What do you like to do and why?”
 - “What don’t you like to do and why not?”
 - Concentrating on his/her distinctive qualities

The Interview

- Arriving and Thriving – Encourage your child to:
 - Take the tour first
 - Dress properly
 - Use eye contact, strong voice, good hand shake
 - Meet with admissions officer alone
 - Take time to formulate answers
 - Expand on answers
 - Use interview to explain any extenuating circumstances
 - Be him/herself!
 - Remember the school is selling itself, too.

The Interview

- It's All Over or Is It? – Ask your child to wrap up the experience with:
 - Thank you note to the interviewer
 - Preparation of a summary of positives and negatives of the visit
 - Notes on how to improve his/her interviewing skills

The Essay

- Have child prepare by analyzing him/herself
 - List distinctive qualities, talents, accomplishments to use as resources
- Encourage him or her to:
 - Pick a natural writing style
 - Select question and use to his/her advantage
 - Be concise, but show depth in thought
 - Focus on information the admissions office DOES NOT KNOW and WHAT MATTERS MOST to your child
 - Let his or her character and personality shine through
- Provide feedback without extensive editing

Making the Experience Work for your Family

*“People rarely succeed at anything
unless they have fun doing it.”*

Anonymous

Concluding Thoughts

- Don't chase prestige. Search for the match.
- Trust your instincts.
- Give your son or daughter a real voice.
- Diversify list of choices on basis of:
 - Selectivity (5-7 with a spectrum of risk)
 - School characteristics (developmental changes occur!)
 - Price (difficult to predict merit and need-based aid).
- Remember you have control over 2 of 3 decisions.
- View this process as an important and meaningful “passage.”

*“All change is a miracle to contemplate,
but it is a miracle which is taking place
every instant.”*

Henry David Thoreau