

OCTOBER: A TIME TO CHALLENGE YOURSELF

In *Measure for Measure* William Shakespeare wrote, "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt." The most vexing aspect of this whole college application process is not what school to apply to, but how to objectively evaluate your own accomplishments, capabilities, and aspirations. Of course, parents, teachers, counselors, families and friends all have their opinions. But you are the only one who lives inside yourself and can sort through the kind of doubts or fears which need your attention before you can free yourself to think objectively about your future. If you think that you are more capable than your GPA and test scores indicate; if you think that inside you lives an observant, active and sensitive self; if you think that you want something more out of life, then seek "to win the good", this newsletter can help guide you. If you are still unsure, find a trusted friend or confidant who you can talk to if stress is holding you back. If you can talk with someone who has recently gone through "going off to college" that's all the better.

Estimating the Cost of College: Help Is on the Way!

Net Price Calculator Mini-website

(National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities)

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 has required each college and university to make a net price calculator available on its website - either the one developed by the US Department of Education or a comparable one developed by the institution. On October 29, 2011, all colleges and universities across the country will have unveiled their own net price calculators. Use the following mini-website for more details. Click "Browse Net Price Calculators" to take a look at various net price calculators already on line. http://www.naicu.edu/special_initiatives/netpricecalc/ .

Thought of the Month:

The proportion of undergraduate students choosing liberal arts over other degrees has been declining over time. And yet the much-maligned, classical liberal-arts degree still has deep value. In the digital age, students need to spend more time, not less, learning to read, write and analyze. Most liberal-arts graduates know they won't be employed in their field. But the cultural literacy and adaptability they acquire make it easier to succeed in a knowledge-based economy. *(The Globe & Mail, Toronto, Canada)*

Types of Students Who Should Not Apply to College Early

(US News & World Report, 12/27/10)

Applying for binding or restricted early admission is not the best idea for everyone. Here are types of students who are better off applying with regular or rolling admissions deadlines: 1) The Clearly Under-Qualified; 2) The Depender on Financial Aid; 3) The Late Bloomer; 4) The Undecided; 5) The Waiter. See useful full article at:

<http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/applying/articles/2010/12/27/6-kinds-of-students-shouldnt-apply-to-college-early>

A QUICK WAY TO REQUEST INFO FROM COLLEGES

If you are still deciding on what colleges to apply to, the easiest and fastest way to obtain information from many private (and a few public) colleges and universities is to do the following:

- Access the Common Application website: <https://www.commonapp.org>

Under "Member Colleges and Universities" click on "College Search". Then click "Search" without inputting any information. Then click "Show All" below the list of the first 10 schools. Then, in the far right-hand column of the 456 schools listed are "Request Info" links. Click on "Send" or "Link" for any schools of interest. Fill-out the requested information, and your colleges will do the rest.

- You can also scroll to the bottom of the colleges list and click on "Compare" for comparing detailed information for a maximum of three schools at a time. Be sure to click the box in the "Select" column on the left before comparing up to three schools. You cannot "Add" schools until you register for the Common Application.

Enhancing Your Chances for Merit Scholarships

(David Montesano, College Match, "College Solution" blog)

At many competitive colleges, awarding merit money is more than just evaluating your GPA, test scores and rigor of courses. One way to make the best case for merit money is by making the most of the supplemental essays that many college applications require.

1) Be specific about why you like a college.

Cite concrete things that attract you to a particular college. Don't wing this –it should be well researched. Your admission officer will not be impressed if you mention the most obvious reasons, such as the location of the school. Dig deeper to find something that is more compelling.

2) Mention the value you would bring to a college.

The value that you bring to a college must be supported by credible proof. Here's an example: "I led my debate team at my high school to the nationals in this year. I plan to lead the debate team at this college in similar competitions".

3) State what you expect to get from a college.

Let the college's admission officers know what educational experiences you would like to have when attending the college and why it is important to you.

US NEWS RANKING CHANGES

SOME SCHOOLS HAVE REALLY LEARNED HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

The most outstanding, strongest four year colleges and universities across the land, which provide the highest quality undergraduate educations, have found themselves locked in a "rankings game" which has taken on unparalleled significance in an increasingly cutthroat market. After reading the following excerpt from this 9/9/11 *Washington Post* summary of the newest *US News Rankings*, ask yourself, "Is it really possible for such traditionally outstanding institutions to increase or decrease so quickly in the quality of the experiences they offer OR do these results simply indicate those institutions which have learned to play the game the best?". "**Cornell** has descended in rank from 9 to 15 since 1991, falling out of the vaunted Top 10. **Penn** has climbed from 13 to 5, more or less displacing Cornell. **Columbia** has ascended from 10 to 4, and **Northwestern** has climbed from 23 to 12. **Washington University** in St. Louis has risen from 24 to 13. **Vanderbilt** wasn't even ranked in 1991 —it now ranks 17. Twenty years ago, **Wake Forest** didn't even make the top 50; it ranks 25. The **University of Rochester**, by contrast, has declined from 25 to 37. **Amherst**, **Swarthmore** and **Williams** have merely switched places at the top of the list over the past 20 years. But **Wesleyan** and **Smith**

have declined from 7 to 12 and Smith from 9 to 14. **Haverford** has climbed onto that list, ascending from 21 to 9. **Middlebury** has risen from 8 to 4. **Oberlin** has fallen from 14 to 23.” With interactive websites such as they are today, there are much better ways of decided on “best fit” schools for yourself.

IMPORTANT WEBSITES!!!

<http://www.FindThePerfectCollegeForYou.com>

Find the Perfect College for You: 82 Exceptional Schools That Fit Your Personality and Learning Style” by Rosalind P. Marie and C. Claire Law. Published in April, 2010, this book includes in-depth looks at a variety of great schools not found on the more selective college lists. Available \$10 used on Amazon.

<http://www.managingcollegecost.com>

Learn how to manage your college costs without excessive debt! Enjoy free video seminars, timely articles, and links to execute the process of applying for aid. To access, you will need to register, then login thereafter. Place your cursor on the videos tabs and view any of the 30 videos available. Click the blog and learn what to do and when to do it by reading the weekly articles.

NACAC College Fairs website

Free and open to the public, National College Fairs and Performing and Visual Arts College Fairs allow students to interact with admission representatives from a wide range of postsecondary institutions to discuss course offerings, admission and financial aid requirements, college life in general, and other information pertinent to the college selection process. Click on either underlined title to find the fairs and dates in your area.

<http://www.nacacnet.org/EventsTraining/CollegeFairs/Pages/default.aspx>

Seniors Considering California State Universities (CSU)

Use: **<http://www.csumentor.edu/select/compareview>** for in-state fees, total costs (including B/R), total enrollment, setting and location. For detailed campus profiles with photos, links and videos, go to: **<http://www.csumentor.edu/campustour/>**

Colleges of Distinction

Here is a website full of outstanding, free college admission resources. On the Counselor’s page, click on “Tools for Your Students.” You’ll find such articles as: "9 Ways to a Winning Application, Don't Sell Yourself Short: and 6 Tips for Presenting your Activity Resume." Use the "Browse Colleges" map for informative profiles of lesser-known schools by state.

<http://www.collegesofdistinction.com>.

Colleges and Universities Requiring ACT Writing Test (optional 30 min. essay)

If a student submits an ACT score, schools have indicated whether to require or to recommend that their applicants submit scores from the (optional) ACT Writing Test. Others have decided Writing Test scores are not needed. To view these decisions, find colleges by name:

<https://actapps.act.org/writPrefRM/>

COLLEGE NEWS

Deep Springs College (CA), a small, unusual institution that is among the last all-male colleges in the United States, has decided to admit women.

<http://www.deepsprings.edu/home>

Maria Klawe's transformation of **Harvey Mudd College** (CA) college has sent ripples from Seattle to Silicon Valley, where startups and technology giants are desperate to find talented developers. In the U.S., women hold less than 25% of jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math fields. On her watch, the percentage of female computer science majors at Mudd, one of California's prestigious Claremont colleges, has more than tripled, to 42%. Klawe arrived at HMC in 2006 from Princeton University, where she was dean of the engineering school.

Carnegie Mellon University (PA) is planning to open a campus in Rwanda, a milestone for Africa. The Pittsburgh-based institution will be the first American university to operate a full-fledged campus in Africa.

The president of the College Board, the nonprofit owner of the SAT entrance exam, has seen his compensation triple since 1999 and now gets more than the head of the American Red Cross, which has more than five times the revenue.

Undocumented college students in California would be eligible to receive publicly funded financial aid under a controversial bill that passed the Legislature on Friday and that now heads to the desk of Gov. Jerry Brown, who is expected to sign it. The bill, AB131, known as the Dream Act, allows students who have graduated from high school after attending at least three years in California to apply for the Cal Grant program that pays for tuition, fees, books and living expenses for lower-income students.

Carnegie Mellon University (PA) has received a huge new pledge to expand its programs. The \$265 million gift from former steel executive William S. Dietrich II is one of the largest in recent years from an individual to a private university, and the largest in the school's history.

The Department of Education held a public meeting in mid-September on plans for developing a model financial aid award letter for colleges to use, as mandated in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. The goal is to make it easier for students and families to understand and compare award letters.

The number of college admissions officials using Facebook to learn more about an applicant has quadrupled in the past year, underscoring the effect social media has on U.S. culture and academic life, a survey shows. Googling is nearly as prevalent.

HOW TO ANSWER: WHAT'S YOUR 1ST CHOICE SCHOOL?

(C. Joseph Gould, St. Georges' School, Newport, RI)

1. Look at a variety (small/large, urban/rural) of schools to get a set for realistic comparisons. Most students really do not know what "big" means, what "small" means, what "city" means. Organize your tours/visits to test all preconceived notions.
2. There are only colleges which are more selective and less selective. What makes one more selective and another less selective depends upon each student. Students do not really have choices until they receive admissions letters. This makes the question, "What is your first choice school?" irrelevant until April.
3. The term "safety" school also may set in motion school the psychological forces for a sense of failure. If a school has been identified, and that is the only school where the student is admitted, it may say to that

student, "You've failed." A better question to ask is, "What five schools do you like?" If others ask, answer: "I won't know all my choices until April, but my schools of interest are___."

DOES BEING A "LEGACY" MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS?

("Chronicle of Higher Education")

While some colleges and universities try to play down the impact of legacy preferences, research from Princeton's Thomas Espenshade suggests that their weight is significant, on the order of adding 160 SAT points to a candidate's record (on a scale of 400-1600). Likewise, William Bowen, of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and colleagues found that, within a given SAT-score range, being a legacy increased one's chances of admission to a selective institution by 19.7%. The children of alumni generally make up 10-25% of the student body at selective institutions. The proportion varies little from year to year, suggesting "an informal quota system," says the former Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Golden. By contrast, at the California Institute of Technology, which does not use legacy preferences, only 1.5% of students are children of alumni. According to Golden, legacy preferences are "virtually unknown in the rest of the world". They are "an almost exclusively American custom". The irony, of course, is that while legacies are uniquely American, they are also deeply un-American. Thomas Jefferson famously sought to promote in America a "natural aristocracy" based on "virtue and talent," rather than an "artificial aristocracy" based on wealth.

Looking for Strong Schools that Don't Require Test Scores?

<http://www.fairtest.org/univ/optional.htm> This website contains a list of nearly 850 schools from all 50 states which allow applicants for admission the option of submitting standardized test scores or choosing not to include SAT I or ACT test results as part of their application credentials. The list includes such schools as **Denison University** (OH), **Middlebury** (VT), **Bowdoin** and **Bates**(ME), and **Mount Holyoke** and **Holy Cross** (MA), **Hamilton, Bard, and Union Colleges** (NY), **Franklin & Marshall and Dickinson** (PA), **Wake Forest** (NC). and western schools: **Lewis & Clark** (OR), **Pitzer** (CA) and **Whitworth** (WA). Contact schools for specific requirements in lieu of submitted test scores.

Only 65/1,186 Colleges Are Affordable to Low-Income Students

("Chronicle of Higher Education", 6/01/11, by Beckie Supiano)

The National Postsecondary Student Aid Study has calculated a benchmark for college affordability for low and middle income families. The report calculated how much of a family's income would be required to pay the average cost of college after grant aid at colleges generally, and found that it was 27% of income for those who made \$54,001 to \$80,400. The authors of the report explain that "one possible way to identify model institutions is to look for those that, at the very least, expect their lowest-income students to contribute no more than what middle-income students do as a proportion of household income." So they calculated 27% of the average family income in the lowest group, about \$17,000, and come up with about \$4,600. By that guideline, 65 of the 1,186 colleges surveyed were affordable—10 private nonprofits, 55 public institutions, and no for-profits. Of course, out-of-state costs for public universities make them prohibitive for all except in-state students in those states. Full Report at:

http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/PricedOutFINAL2.0_0.pdf

LATEST COLLEGE FACTS

(From the latest 2011 issue of "The Chronicle of High Education's" almanac)

347,985 students earned business degrees in 2009, only 15,496 grads walked away with a degree in mathematics. During a 10-year period, the number of students earning park, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies degrees (31,667) jumped 92%. During the same period, the number of students earning an education degree declined 5%. Only 0.4 % of undergraduates attend one of the eight Ivy League schools. Just 16 % of students attend private nonprofit colleges and universities. The annual family income of more than 47 % of undergraduates is less than \$40,000. Among freshmen, 21.7 % are conservative and 27.3 % are liberal. Less than one third of Americans hold at least a bachelor's degree, but a much greater percentage of high school graduates expect to earn at least a bachelor's degree.

Liberal Arts Degree Now More Useful

("Springfield (IL) News-Sun", 9/3/11, by Tom Stafford)

In the future, graduated college students who are able to reason will be more useful to companies. Therefore, a liberal arts education is more important today than it has been in the past 40 years. In a time of economic uncertainty, jobs that exist today won't exist five years from now. There is an essential practical value to having a nimble mind in a quickly changing economy. As a result, the traditional "knowledge based" learning, in which the subject matter of a single profession is learned, is now less useful than "skill-based" learning that stresses how to do something. Learning such skills will depend on the core capabilities to analyze, reason, communicate. They will be in higher demand in the economy of the future and can best be learned in the kind of college environment that develops the whole person. Since a lot of kids, when they go to college, have no clue what they want to do, finding something with the help of professors, whose main charge is to teach students in small classes rather than do research, is one thing liberal arts colleges can offer. As one college official put it, "A liberal arts education, done right, opens the mind and the heart to the creative, imaginative capacity of people. That can lead to creative leadership, social responsibility, and to something far deeper."

DON'T GET TOO CARRIED AWAY BY FLATTERING COLLEGE RECRUITMENT LETTERS

When students take the PSAT their junior year of high school, and the SAT after that, they often mark the box that allows the College Board to send their addresses to schools looking for prospective applicants. The ACT Assessment test operates in a similar way. Colleges buy the College Board or ACT lists, often focusing on high scorers, minorities or students with particular interests. In recent years, some experts say, the marketing executives who help compose the search letters seem to be making promises that their admissions officers cannot keep. As a result, Diane B. Epstein, a Bethesda-based educational consultant who has advised college applicants for 22 years tells her young clients, "Look, it's flattering . . . but take it with a grain of salt." Party invitations and personal letters from alumni and special summer school brochures that often follow the initial letters make it hard for even the most cynical high school student to accept the notion it's still possible to be wait-listed or rejected. Selective school officials

acknowledge that they cannot guarantee even the highest-scoring seniors a place in their freshman classes.

Lowered State Funding Leads to More UC Out-of-state Offers

(May 2011 UC Counselors and Advisers Bulletin)

California has cut its 2011-12 higher education funding by \$1.4 billion. That includes a \$500 million reduction in UC's budget. As a result, the number of students admitted to University of California campuses from outside California increased this year to 18%, compared to 14% last year. The decision to admit more international and out-of-state students is a direct result of the state budget situation. Out-of-state students pay nearly \$23,000 additional tuition. In the midst of these budget uncertainties, UC campuses have directly tied the number of California-resident students they could admit to the amount of state funding they expect to receive. Consequently an additional 12,000 UC-eligible California students who were not admitted to any campus because of higher out-of-state numbers were only offered admission to last-choice UC Merced, the newest campus in central California.

The Beloit College Mind-Set List

Two Beloit College (WI) professors of English and the humanities began compiling the Mind-Set List in 1998 to help educators understand the cultural touchstones that have shaped the worldviews of each successive year of college freshmen. Most members of this year's freshman class were born in 1993. For this freshman class:

- There has never been an official Communist Party in Russia
- Music has always been available via free downloads.
- Public schools have always made space available for advertising.
- Andy Warhol is a museum in Pittsburgh.
- The full list can be found online at: <http://www.beloit.edu/mindset>

EXCELLENT/RELIABLE FINANCIAL AID WEBSITE

<http://www.csocollegecenter.org/guide/paying.aspx>

CSO College Center is an online clearinghouse of college programs, admissions information and the most important and useful financial aid links. The intent is to serve first-generation, low-income, and minority student populations, but it is excellent for all income groups. It contains a thorough summary of the different steps of applying for money for college. Consult CSO College Center's Links and Resources page to begin your scholarship and loan search. Also has very informative articles on "Thinking about Financial Aid" and "Financial Aid Terms."

More Colleges Soliciting Videos – A Negative Opinion

(Jon Reider, Director of College Counseling, San Francisco University High School)

This trend of soliciting videos from applicants and taking them seriously as part of the admissions evaluation creates considerable “noise” or static in the system. Parents and applicants may now indeed believe this new gimmick is important, just as many now believe what you do in the summer is important. And they may go chasing after the illusion of cuteness in the hope that a cute dance about math functions will compensate for a so-so transcript or a mediocre essay. Admissions people who support these new wrinkles don't seem to realize that they are implicitly cutting the academic ground out from under themselves. At Tufts, for example, what does the faculty think this says about the importance

of traditional old-fashioned reading, writing, and figuring in the curriculum? Was there something missing in previous Tufts applicant pools that this new diversion will now fulfill? Or is it a marketing ploy?

SCHOLARSHIP AND CONTEST PROGRAMS

***OUTSTANDING STUDENTS OF AMERICA SCHOLARSHIP

These annual \$1,000 scholarships have turned out to be a SCAM! Here's one quote from the College Confidential website (4/29/10): "I applied for this scholarship back in October and got notification today. Apparently I was selected but they do not have any scholarship money to give. Instead they offered me a t-shirt and certificate but wait, it gets better- I have to buy the \$13.50 tee and the \$7.00 certificate. Did this happen to anyone else? I am so disappointed and angry. Finally thought I got just one scholarship."

STOKES EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Open to 2012 seniors, with minimum SAT score of 1600 (1100 Critical Reading and Math, 500 in Writing), or ACT of 25 and 3.0 GPA who **plan to major in Computer or Electrical Engineering, Computer Science.** With the Stokes Program, you work during the summer at NSA in areas related to your course of study. If you are selected, you are required to work for NSA after your college graduation for at least one-and-one-half times the length of study. Pays full tuition at the college of your choice, reimbursement for books and certain fees, housing and travel entitlements during summer employment. Guidelines at <http://www.nsa.gov>. Under "Careers" choose "Student Programs." Click on Stokes Scholarship under "Scholarships" to access application instructions. First you must submit an online resume after registering with a username & password. Applications must be submitted online or postmarked on or before **November 15th, 2011.**

WELLS FARGO COLLEGE STEPS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

\$1,000 scholarship drawings at the end of Oct., Jan., April & July for all entrants who will be included in all sweepstakes drawings. College Steps offers valuable information on scholarships, financial aid, testing, and college preparation in the form of electronic postcards. Each eligible entrant will be automatically entered in each sweepstakes. <https://wfefs.wellsfargo.com/csteps/rules.jsp>

JFK PROFILE IN COURAGE ESSAY CONTEST

Contest is open to high school students in grades 9-12. The essay requires 1000 words or less, that is original, creative, and demonstrates an understanding of political courage as described by John F. Kennedy in *Profiles in Courage*. The **deadline for the contest is January 7, 2012.** Essay may be submitted online. <http://www.jfkcontest.org/>

FULL TUITION MERIT BASED SCHOLARSHIPS

At many top level colleges and universities merit scholarships, which are not based on need, represent the highest level of competition. Recipients of these awards are usually in the top 1% of their high school class while enrolled in rigorous academic programs. They typically score above 1500 (CR + M) on the SAT-I and/or above 34 on the ACT. Additionally, they exhibit strong leadership or exceptional talent outside the classroom. Read about such scholarships at the following schools:

Vanderbilt University (TN) - <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/scholarships/>

Boston College (MA) - <http://www.bc.edu/centers/psp/>

Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering (Boston)- All students admitted to Olin College receive an Olin Scholarship covering tuition during the four years of the baccalaureate program.

<http://www.olin.edu/admission/costs.aspx>

Boston University -

<http://www.bu.edu/admissions/trustee>

HORATIO ALGER ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIPS

104 National Scholar awards of \$20,000 each and a variety of state and county scholarships are available. In addition to the National Scholarship Program, to find your own state programs, just indicate your state on the map. For example, eight \$5,000 scholarships are available in Oregon. Applicants who demonstrate critical financial need (\$50,000 or less AGI) and having overcome adversity will be eligible for awards. Three Essay Questions: 1) If your adversity is strictly financial need, please describe how your financial situation has been an obstacle in your life. Include what you have done to overcome and cope with these obstacles. (250-350 words) 2) Explain your career goal(s) and the importance of a college education in attaining those goals. (250-350 words) 3) On the webpage, select and read several biographies of well-known Horatio Alger Association Members. Choose a member and explain how and why you have and intend to apply in your own life the virtues exemplified in the members life story. Use real life examples from your own experience (150-200 words). Apply online: **HURRY!! Application Deadline: October 30, 2011.** <https://www.horatioalger.org/scholarships/sp.cfm>

14th ANNUAL LIVE POETS SOCIETY POETRY CONTEST

Open to all U.S. high school students. Poems must be 20 lines or less, unpublished, the sole work of the entrant. No entry fee. One entry per contestant each quarter. PRIZES: The Easterday Poetry Award of a \$500.00 college scholarship will be awarded to the American High School Poets, "Poet of the Year". There will also be prizes of \$500 to \$100. **Quarterly deadlines are: 12/31, 3/31, 6/30 and 9/30.** Website: http://www.highschoolpoetrycontest.com/to_enter

GATES MILLENNIUM SCHOLARS PROGRAM

Students are eligible to be considered for a GMS scholarship if they: Are African American, Asian Pacific Islander American or Hispanic American; Must be a citizen/legal permanent resident or national of the United States; Have attained a cumulative 3.3 GPA. Must meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility criteria. All forms and information are available at website:

<http://www.gmsp.org/publicweb/Scholarships.aspx>

The Deadline for Submission of Nomination Materials is January 11, 2012.

AXA ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The AXA Achievement Scholarship provides \$670,000 in annual scholarships to young people throughout the nation. Fifty-two winners – one from each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico – are selected by our nonprofit partner, Scholarship America, to receive one-time scholarship awards of \$10,000 each. From the pool of 52 state winners, ten are selected as national winners and earn an **additional** one-time scholarship of \$15,000. These top ten also receive a laptop computer and the offer of an internship with AXA. You are required to write about one outstanding non-academic achievement. <http://www.axa-equitable.com/axa-foundation/AXA-achievement-scholarship.html> **Application deadline is December 1, 2011.**

THE PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARDS

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards recognize high school students who have demonstrated exemplary, self-initiated community service. Schools and designated organizations such as [Girl Scout councils](#), [county 4-H organizations](#), [American Red Cross Chapters](#), [YMCAs](#) may select one honoree for every 1,000 students. State finalists receive \$1,000 and an expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. From the State Honorees, ten National Honorees are chosen and receive an additional \$5,000. **Student Application Deadline is November 1, 2011.**

<http://spirit.prudential.com/view/page/soc>

SOCIETY OF AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERS

A variety of corporate-sponsored scholarships for graduating high school seniors are offered, ranging in value from \$1,000 to \$10,000. All scholarships are contingent upon the applicant's enrollment in an engineering program accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET). Judging will be based on the criteria established by the sponsor and as outlined in the individual scholarship descriptions. Website:

<http://students.sae.org/awdscholar/scholarships/hsengineering.htm>

Applications must be postmarked by January 15, 2012.

Harvard's No. 1 Ranking Makes Us Wonder

*(*Opinion Piece, "Bloomberg News", 8/25/11)*

The U.S. News and World Report "Best Colleges" rankings were published in September. Parents should use this ranking guide with caution. They are produced by an unspecified number of academic leaders -- presidents, chancellors, provosts -- who are sent questionnaires and asked to rate their peers. Though few of those surveyed have sat in on freshman lectures at Harvard or Yale (where students famously complain about the quality of undergraduate instruction), they invariably give the brand-name schools their highest endorsements. Interestingly, when another college guide, the Princeton Review, surveyed students, half of the top 10 schools that U.S. News lauded for having "a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching" received a "C" grade or less. As the survey has grown in importance, some school administrators have found ways to game the ratings race. One example: U.S. News ranks a school, in part, by the number of applications it receives compared with the number of students it accepts. Schools with higher rejection rates do better than those that admit a greater percentage of their applicants. Top ranked schools do not increase their freshman slots, but simply encouraging more teenagers to apply so that their rejection figures are boosted. Class size is also considered in the rankings. Here, too, U.S. News gives the schools room to blur the numbers. Stanford University says 68 percent of its classes have fewer than 20 students. What isn't reported is that these small classes are mainly highly specialized advanced courses. The report considers "faculty resources," meaning salary levels, as a major criterion in scoring. Often at highly ranked schools, the senior faculty members teach three courses a year -- and those may well be graduate seminars. At wealthier research universities, senior faculty get a sabbatical every three years. That means a history major at Harvard may not find a mentor for a senior thesis because 42 percent of the history faculty, was -- last year -- off campus. Another rating in the U.S. News survey is the student-faculty ratio. The University of Southern California can proclaim that it has one professor for every nine of its students. What it omits is that the student pool includes doctoral candidates,

who command most of the faculty's time. Moreover, the faculty numerator adds in adjuncts and other part-timers, who make up more than half of USC's instructional staff. The University of Colorado tells U.S. News that an eye-catching 86% of its teachers are full-time. This is because the U.S. News formula allows the institution to permute its 959 part-timers into 319 "full-time equivalents." (**Andrew Hacker & Claudia Dreifus are the authors of "Higher Education,"*)