



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 10, 2007

Contact:

Linda Corbett
AdVersace, Inc.
2520 E. Piedmont Rd., Suite F-188
Marietta, GA 30062-1700
Ph: 404.964.1736
lcwilson@adversace.com

**Essays & Letters of Recommendation
Gain Importance With College Admissions**

Alpharetta, GA -- Leigh Anne Spraez, M.A., President of Academic Futures, Inc. has been providing intensive college / career counseling and coaching for students and their families in Metro Atlanta and the extending southeast region for over ten years. Over 95% of Spraez's high school senior clients in this 2007 admissions season have already, as of the first week in January, been accepted into their college / university of choice. Most have already been accepted to their top three choices. "This is wonderful for the entire family, because it takes the anxiety and frenzy out of this process. The student and parents begin to enjoy their relationship again, and the student can enjoy the rest of their senior year," Spraez says.

Academic Futures provides individualized counseling services that assist students and their families with educational decision-making. Spraez began her consulting practice in 1997. Currently she spends about 20% of her time traveling, touring and evaluating college campuses across the U.S. She meets with admission deans and staff, faculty panels and interacts with college students to learn specifics about the college or university. Together with these onsite campus visitations and her specialized knowledge of various majors, campus environments, and educational programs, Spraez helps her clients determine the best 'fit.'

Strategizing and guiding students to make calculative educational choices is where Spratz and Academic Futures steps in. Spratz would like to see her clients have the opportunity to successfully present college applications brimming with the influential strengths and experiences many colleges and universities of today are looking for. She begins working with students and their parents early in their high school experience, so they can methodically plan their approach to the application process well before their senior year. In this way, there is plenty of time for planning their high school curriculum, shaping their high school profile, completing applications early, and visiting colleges by using a rational approach to a sometimes-overwhelming process.

Many students go awry in the college selection process because they do not know where to start. They often do not take time to do their own research or take a personal responsibility for the process. Students who have started this way are often very unhappy once in college. Many students admit to choosing a college based on the sports recognition, where their friends are going, or because they have heard a college "is a good school." This approach precludes a student from finding a suitable match based on academic selectivity, social fit, or if it will eventually offer the degree they choose to begin their career journey. This is a decision which is not only important from a family's financial viewpoint, but also as one that will have a lasting impact on whom the student becomes as an adult. At Academic Futures, this selection process is handled through an array of individual assessments, to determine appropriate colleges that would be a 'best fit.' Spratz continues to coach the student through the remaining high school years to best present themselves in college applications.

Spratz closely follows timely research released from the Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) in Fairfax, VA. This is a professional association of established educational consultants equipped to help students choose schools, colleges, or programs that meet their individual needs and goals. On January 4, 2007 the IECA released the following survey, based on consultant findings, shows how essays and letters of recommendation have gained importance with college admissions.

New Survey Shows Essays, Letters of Recommendation

Gain Importance With College Admissions

January 4, 2007

Fairfax, VA -- Standardized test scores have reemerged as the baseline that larger colleges and universities use to eliminate applicants whose scores are too low. With the recent flood of applications, colleges have had to rely on test scores to weed out less qualified applicants.

“Great SAT scores won’t get you in, but lousy ones will keep you out,” says Mark Sklarow, IECA executive director. “They’ve created a floor.” The smaller the college, the less important SAT scores are. Conversely, essays remain important at smaller colleges, but less important than at larger universities.

“With selective schools, the first cut-off is standardized testing,” says IECA member Peggy Baker (PA). “When you reach the particular bar for testing, then everything else is weighed.” Number one on the list, for the third straight year, is a rigorous high school curriculum that challenges students and may include AP or IB classes.

Moving up the Top 10 List over the last three years (from #8 to #5) are letters of recommendation. Colleges do want to know what teachers are saying about the applicant. This year’s survey indicated teacher recommendations to be more important than clergy, counselors, or employers. Supplemental recommendations have dropped off the list, as many colleges are suspect of the authenticity of these. And new to the list is a demonstration of intellectual curiosity. Colleges want students who exhibit a love of learning.

“Grades, course selection, and great ACT test scores are important,” says IECA member Joan Tager (NY). “Also, meaningful use of time, community service that has substance—not just

envelope stuffing, and summer activities that the student enjoys and excites them, are all important.”

Choosing a college will be one of the most important choices a student will make. The admissions process is meant to teach students how to make good decisions for themselves. These are the decisions that will can carry them into college and on into their adult lives.

Academic Futures guides students in life direction – helping students plan their academic and career futures, one student at a time.

###

For More Information:

- *Learn more about Leigh Anne Spraez and Academic Futures, Inc. by visiting <http://www.academicfutures.com>*
 - Contact Linda if you would like to arrange an interview with Leigh Anne Spraez.
LC Wilson, *VP of Communications*
AdVersace, Inc. 2520 E. Piedmont Rd., Suite F-188
Marietta, GA 30062-1700
Ph: 404.964.1736
lcwilson@adversace.com

- *Learn more about the IECA and view a complete **Top 10 List** by visiting www.IECAonline.com.*
 - Note: The original release and complete **Top 10 List** are also attached to this press release.
 - The contact for IECA is Sarah Brachman, *Manager of Communications*.
Sarah@IECAonline.com
703.591.4850 x 11



Top Ten Strengths and Experiences Colleges Look for in High School Students

(Based on a 2006-2007 survey of IECA member consultants)

1. A rigorous high school curriculum that challenges the student and may include AP or IB classes.
2. Grades that represent strong effort and an upward trend. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all As in less challenging coursework.
3. Solid scores on standardized tests (SAT, ACT). These should be consistent with high school performance.
4. Passionate involvement in a few activities, demonstrating leadership and initiative. Depth, not breadth, of experience is most important.
5. Letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselor that give evidence of integrity, special skills, positive character traits, and an interest in learning.
6. Special talents or experiences that will contribute to an interesting and well-rounded student body.
7. A well-written essay that provides insight into the student's unique personality, values and goals. The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well-constructed writing.
8. Demonstrated enthusiasm, often exhibited by campus visits and an interview, showing an interest toward attending the college.
9. Out of school experiences, including work and community service that illustrate responsibility, dedication, and development of areas of interest.
10. Demonstrated intellectual curiosity through reading, school and leisure pursuits, and more.