



A better approach to
university applications

Description

Westmount consultant guides students through admission process

By Patricia Dumais



Elaine Carsley



If you are a student, or the parent of one, who is experiencing some trepidation around applying to university, you are not alone. Today's admissions process can be a daunting undertaking and do-it-yourself admissions efforts often unfold as a stress inducing, time consuming, and overwhelming experience for students and families.

With this in mind, and her desire to transform this chaotic and taxing process into a manageable and positive exercise, Westmount resident Elaine Carsley established **collegial.**, a consultancy offering admissions advisory solutions to personally guide students and parents through the entire application process.

"A while back a student approached me for advice about applying to grad school," she shared with me, "I was then at a crossroads in my career so I agreed to help steer him through the process. I enjoyed navigating the unruly particulars of the application process; the work was different and challenging and allowed me to remain connected with the higher education sector, an area I care deeply about. That was 2012; that's how the concept for collegial. developed."

"Applying to college is far more complicated than it was twenty years ago," she went on to explain. "Students and families have an almost unexplainable drive, and many are looking to enter big banner American schools — which changes the equation entirely. Apart from good grades, colleges are looking for the right fit. Students have an opportunity to show their voice — and themselves — in their all-important personal statement. The demands associated with the essays," she cautioned, "are anything but straightforward."

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And Carsley has what it takes to help students bring out their best. She holds a BA in American History and Political Science from McGill and a MA in Public Policy and Public Administration from Concordia, and is a PhD candidate in Political Communications at Carleton.

Carsley grew up in Westmount, the daughter of writer Marilyn Smith Carsley. After completing her MA, she spent a year in Washington DC working as a communications and policy advisor at the Canadian Embassy. She then moved to Ottawa and worked in the same capacity for the Department of Environment and Statistics Canada. She later became a public affairs consultant, advising companies on the ins-and-outs of influencing government, political and regulatory actors. Returning to Westmount she lectured as part-time faculty at both McGill and Concordia in Political Science and Media Studies.

According to Carsley, collegial. offers a host of services, which can be tailored to individual students. These may include activity and transcript appraisal, college analysis, touring and selection, application strategies, essay and short answer assistance, interview coaching, financial aid and scholarship assistance, athletic recruitment help and waitlist/deferral strategies. "Some students and families seek holistic guidance throughout the application process, and this is especially true for Canadian students who aspire to attend American colleges," says Carsley. "On the other hand, there are self-motivated students who are committed to independently spearheading most of the work, but seek expert review to ensure that all application materials are perfectly fine-tuned and edited."

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work, but seek expert review...

Carsley added, "But even the best prepared application does not guarantee admission. Rejection happens. Wait-listing and deferrals do too. Disappointment doesn't have to mean the end of the road, but it does reinforce the importance of having a viable Plan B already on standby."

Some further advice from Carsley: "College applications are lengthy, protracted and, at times confusing. Nothing is more important than giving yourself time — to consider, weigh, breathe, apply — and bring in and specialized guidance. That's the spirit of collegial., that's what we do."

Carsley shared some important dates and deadlines to consider when applying for college:

Early October 2016

- OCAS early application (Canada)
- OCAS begins its online application process in early October 2015.

November 1, 2016

- early decision I (US).

Call collegial. to confirm. Some schools adhere to a November 15, 2015 ED deadline.

January 1, 2017

- Regular decision (US)

February 1, 2017

- deadline for most Canadian colleges and universities

McGill University has an exceptional admissions process:

- US students: January 15, 2017
- Canadian students: February 1, 2017
- Quebec students (CEGEP graduates): March 1, 2017

February 1, 2017

- OCAS equal consideration
- deadline for those applying to most OCAS programs.

March 1, 2017

- CEGEP application deadline
(exclusive to Quebec students)

April 2017

- admissions decisions

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To consult the Collegial website:
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