

Making Summer Count

What are you doing to enhance your profile?



By Nikkee Porcaro

Ah, the allure of a cool pool and an alarm that doesn't go off until noon. Summer is almost here —

and with it, a myriad of missed opportunities to enhance your college profile.

I know, I know: Way to be a downer, Nikkee. But with college admissions becoming ever-more competitive, many students are missing out on time and opportunities to showcase why they are unique fits to their first-choice colleges.

You don't need to get a nine to five job or take four college classes, nor do you have to forgo vacations and time with friends and family, but colleges are certainly looking at how you spend your summers. As such, you should consider how the following activities look on your teenage resume:

Internships. While often hard to come by for high school students, internships are a fantastic way to show your maturity, commitment, love of learning, and

interest in a potential major. Internships at this age will most likely be unpaid (though some do provide a small stipend), but the experience you gain is invaluable. At this juncture, most internship deadlines have long since passed, but it might be worth talking to family friends to see if they need an unpaid intern or know of any opportunities, or keep this on the radar for next winter (when most applications open and are due).

Jobs. Having a paid job can definitely enhance your college application, but the key is to try to attain as much of a leadership position as you can, and to be specific about your duties. “Camp counselor” doesn't really say much; “head counselor for water sports,” followed by a specific list of the duties you had, does.

College Classes. I love this one because there are so many options. Most colleges, including the University of Maryland and Georgetown University, offer fabulous (albeit pricey) summer discovery programs that allow students to live the college lifestyle while taking classes for college credit. I've had students take everything from

calculus to sociology and have fabulous experiences. However, community colleges offer affordable options for high school students as well, and many courses are offered online. Taking college courses can help you achieve many goals: It shows colleges you're serious about your education; it allows you to earn college credits before you matriculate, saving time and money when you do; and it can improve your academic skills while you finish your high school education.



Camp. Camp is a tough one, because while many teenagers are transitioning into adulthood, they're still technically kids, and often have developed a relationship with a camp they've attended their whole lives. Camp isn't the strongest activity on a college profile, so if you can attend camp and still work on something more meaningful — a community

college class (either online or in person), community service, or a short internship — that would be ideal.

Service Trips. Another tricky one, because these trips are typically very expensive, and can appear to be more privilege than service. Many of these trips are billed as two weeks of service, but involve a very small number of hours of actual work and more hours of beach and relaxation. Make sure your program is reputable and you'll come back with legitimate service hours and potential essay topics. In other words, try to make this as meaningful as possible, and consider extending whatever you did (e.g., holding a soccer clinic for underprivileged kids in the Dominican Republic) here in the DC area (e.g., holding a sports clinic for local underprivileged children).

So, enjoy the pool, sleep in a little bit and grab an ice cream cone with your friends, but don't forget that kids from all over the country and the world are using their summers to build their profiles. Are you?

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