Greetings from The Short List

Letter from Our Founder

In 2015, The Short List celebrates 14 years of counseling college-bound students. In 2001, there were 12 million students in colleges and universities in the United States. Today there are more than 20 million, with no indication that the number will slow down. The United States continues to dominate the Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU), placing eight universities in the Top 10. We are helping more international clients than ever apply to US schools from all over the world.

Besides the sheer increase in the number of students, those students are applying to more schools. It’s not uncommon for students to apply to 20 – 30 schools! We keep our students focused on far fewer schools so they can build meaningful connections with admissions at the schools they truly want to attend.

One of the biggest changes is the number of students applying early, especially athletes. We believe students should only apply early if they know the school is right for them. In this newsletter we profile five athletes, who took different paths in pursuing their dreams, some of them making binding early application choices and others choosing to remain more flexible—all of them benefiting from doing the right research up front. We hope you will take time to read all of their stories.

We are also excited to report that The Short List College Fund, which helps underprivileged students pursue their dream of a college education, has received non-profit status and your contributions are now tax deductible. We hope you will take time to read about this program and consider donating to this worthy cause. Thank you for your continued support.

Finally, we have announced dates for our New England College Tour: July 19 – 25. Students will stay at the Harvard Club of Boston and choose from among 20 New England colleges and universities to visit. Read more about the College Tour on page 4.

We wish all of our students much luck with their spring college admissions decisions!

— Bill Short, Founder and President

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Reduced Stress: Phoebe

The Lacrosse Player

Phoebe attended one of our fall UK presentations at her boarding school in England. We outlined the opportunities of US education, but Phoebe mostly heard that she could be a scholar-athlete and continue playing lacrosse at the college level.

Phoebe is an outstanding student and a gifted athlete. In addition to playing lacrosse for her school, Phoebe also plays for her county team, a UK regional team, and, most impressively, England’s U19 National Team.

Phoebe was well known in England but not in the United States. Whenever her national team competed in international tournaments, she saw that all the great players attended or graduated from US colleges. Phoebe became determined to do the same.

Our first effort was to help Phoebe raise her visibility with US coaches. The Short List showed her how to begin building relationships. We suggested putting together a recruiting video for her top schools. We also stressed the importance of campus visits and meeting one-on-one with coaches. We then helped her put together a weeklong college tour.

On her first day, she visited the Duke campus. The coach and players were away at a tournament, but Phoebe was able to evaluate Duke’s academics. She went on to visit several other schools and meet with their coaches but kept returning to Duke academics as the standard against which she measured all the other schools.

Phoebe wanted to return to Duke for another visit to meet the coach. We looked at the various summer recruiting camps and, as luck would have it, her national team was scheduled to compete in the US at the same time Duke was scheduled to hold their summer camp. She ended up spending two days at Duke, meeting with the coaches and players. The head coach pulled Phoebe aside at the end of the camp and told her how impressed the staff was with her. Phoebe was thrilled to receive these words of encouragement from a coach whose team is ranked among the best in the country.

Phoebe spent the fall semester considering her options. The Duke coach did not make it easy. She told Phoebe she would have to get into Duke on her own merit but, if accepted, she would have a place on the team. Duke had a binding Early Decision program, which meant that Phoebe would have to commit without having something in writing from the coach. Phoebe and her parents decided it was worth the gamble because of Duke’s strong academic programs. She was clearly excited six weeks later when she emailed The Short List: “The dream has come true! Thank you for all your help; I couldn’t have gotten this without you! (A rather excited and over-the-moon) Phoebe.” A day later, the coach sent Phoebe a note welcoming her to Duke’s nationally ranked team.

Unique Approach: Connor

The Golfer

Connor began his college journey with The Short List focused on academics. A senior from Ohio, he had excelled as a student and was also captain of the golf team two years in a row. He was passionate about golf, but academics was the driving force behind his college list.

Connor’s busy schedule with golf had not left much time for college visits, so he had only taken a few campus tours. The Short List helped Connor realize that looking at college websites was fine, but nothing would beat seeing the campus in person.

Connor planned to pursue engineering or pre-med in college. The Short List suggested he consider a few schools he had not previously, one of which was Emory University in Atlanta. We believed the 3-2 engineering program Emory offers in conjunction with Georgia Tech, as well as Emory’s strong pre-med program, would each be an equally great fit for Connor.

During the fall of his senior year, The Short List helped Connor prepare for a weekend visit to the school and encouraged him to reach out to the golf coach prior to arriving on campus. Connor knew of Emory’s competitive golf program and grew increasingly excited about the prospect of playing for the team. He reached out to the coach and was able to spend time with the coach and members of the team during his visit.

Following what he called a very successful trip, Connor moved Emory to the top of his list. We helped Connor continue building a relationship with the coach, and it was through this communication that the Emory golf coach encouraged Connor to apply Early Decision.

Connor realized Emory offered an opportunity for a great academic school, but also one where he could play golf, so he jumped at the opportunity. The Short List worked quickly to help Connor produce a quality application in order to meet the Early Decision deadline. During the weeks Connor waited to hear back from Emory, The Short List continued working with him on other applications, but it turned out he would not need them. Connor was accepted Early Decision to Emory University and will join the golf team next fall. The Short List is proud to have helped Connor realize his dream of attending a strong academic university as a scholar-athlete.
The Soccer Player

Kosta’s family is from Greece, and they knew very little about the US college admissions process when we first met.

They initially engaged us for our test prep tutoring. We invited Kosta to join one of our group programs, which typically consist of five to 10 students who go through the admissions process together. Each participant benefits not only from the direct guidance and advice of two counselors from The Short List but also feedback from their fellow students.

We asked each student to highlight who they were beyond the classroom. Kosta came alive sharing stories of soccer. He was excited to learn students at US colleges could play soccer at different levels and could even contact an athletic coach before applying to a school.

Kosta was most interested in elite liberal arts colleges where students play sports at the Division III level. “D3” athletes are accepted to a school on their academic merit and are not offered athletic scholarships. Kosta found this appealing because he didn’t want to feel the team or sport owned him.

The more Kosta researched, the more he was drawn to Wesleyan University in Connecticut. He reached out to the soccer coach, who in turn invited him to a home game. Kosta met with the coach before the game and again at the end of his visit, and was thrilled when the coach expressed strong interest. He made the decision to apply Early Decision.

Six weeks after submitting his application, Kosta received a letter saying that his application had been deferred to Early Decision II. Kosta wanted to understand what else he could do to improve his chances. Wesleyan wanted to better understand his high school so Kosta asked his counselor to write a letter that detailed the school’s curriculum and highlighted Kosta’s contribution as a student, athlete, and community leader.

Kosta also informed the Wesleyan coach of his deferral. The Wesleyan coach reached out to Kosta’s current coach to get a better understanding of Kosta’s soccer abilities. Kosta believes this may have helped make the difference, because in the middle of February he received his admissions acceptance. He also received a spring workout plan from the Wesleyan head coach who encouraged him to get ready to play in the fall.

Future Success: Mary Anne

The Tennis Player

Mary Anne (Mac) came to The Short List her sophomore year as an accomplished tennis player. She had been playing since the age of four and knew that tennis would be a part of her future. A bright and accomplished student, Mac knew a strong academic environment was her primary consideration in choosing a college, but she was uncertain whether she should also pursue playing tennis at the competitive level. Additionally, Mac was involved in a number of high school clubs and organizations and had just been selected for an elite choral group; she was looking for a college campus where she could continue to explore all her passions.

The Short List put together a list of potential schools and walked her through an in-depth evaluation and research process for the schools she was considering. We knew it would be important for Mac to visit campuses to find the school that would provide the best fit academically, athletically, and personally, and we helped her plan a few different campus visits.

The Short List understands the challenges athletics places on a student’s schedule and the importance of time management. During fall of Mac’s junior year, we discussed with her and her parents a plan for her standardized tests, as well as campus visits that would work with both her tennis and demanding junior year schedule. By the end of her junior year, having researched and visited several schools, Mac decided tennis would not be a factor in forming her college list; instead, she would focus on schools that had the most to offer in her areas of academic interest.

With this clarity, we helped Mac refocus her list of schools and prepped her for her final campus visits, as well as on-campus interviews over the summer. By the time fall semester arrived and her senior tennis season was underway, Mac had finalized her college list and had a good jump on her applications. Because she had taken the time to visit schools, clarify her goals, and define her criteria, she was able to identify a succinct list of schools that met her criteria and incorporated a range of reach, target, and probable schools.

Mac was offered early admission and scholarships to her top two choices and will be enrolling at Bucknell this fall. Following her acceptance, we encouraged Mac to contact the tennis coach, and she plans to try out as a walk-on in the spring.
coaches, and she returned from her visits filled with excitement. She had fallen in love with several of the schools.

The coaches said they needed to see test scores before moving forward. Sera met with The Short List test-prep counselor, who determined that she showed greater promise for the ACT. This helped Sera focus on just one test. As it turned out, her ACT scores more than met the qualifying scores needed.

The spring and summer were filled with rowing meets, including a return to French Nationals. This time the US coaches present took note. One coach even traveled to Switzerland to meet with Sera’s coach. Sera visited a few more schools at the end of the summer and narrowed her list to two schools. Both had given her the green light from admissions, which meant she would have to choose between them. Although it was tough to turn another Ivy League school down, Sera felt that Yale was the school for her.

The Short List helped Sera submit a quality application with all of her supporting documents by the end of September. She received a “likely” rating letter from Yale by the middle of October that ended, “…we are proud to welcome you as a member of the Yale family.” Sera had to wait until December for her official acceptance, but the weight had been lifted and she began to enjoy her senior year free of admissions angst sooner than most of her classmates.