

# TAKING THE NEXT STEP

WITH ROBIN ABEDON, CERTIFIED EDUCATIONAL PLANNER

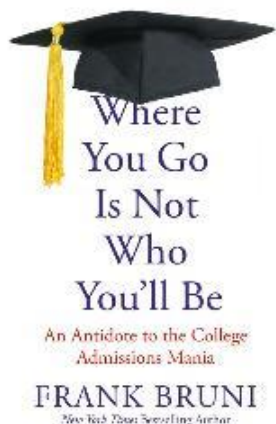
Essential Information for the College Bound

May 2015



As I guide students developing their plans for college, we work together to define and reach their goals. I focus on successful outcomes, and I am overjoyed when students are accepted to their dream school. However, I know from experience that first choices are not always realized. For the initial moment a rejection may be too difficult to bear. Once the shock subsides, however, I count on our careful planning process to allow them to select an alternative college that will provide a meaningful and satisfactory college opportunity.

This year, I know of no better antidote to disappointment than New York Times columnist Frank Bruni's wise and wonderful book: **Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be**. Word for word, page after page, Bruni has infused his understanding of the college admissions process and the college experience with a clarity that speaks to every family member addressing this bewildering life passage.



The portraits of individuals will allow each reader to find himself or herself on those pages. It is always the "stories" we share that help us to know we are not alone, as we work through the many challenges that life throws our way. For students moving from high school to college, this may be the first most daunting challenge.

Much time is spent on those who have attended "unsung" colleges and gone on to achieve great success in life. Perhaps the college chosen was dictated by a college rejection. He reminds us more than once that "people are often defined as sharply by



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setbacks, and by their responses to them as by getting ... 'yes.' ... One of the most potentially meaningful aspects of the college admissions process is, in fact, rejection."

One individual who fits that description is Richard Parsons who first became the Chief Executive of Time Warner and, then, Chairman of Citi-Group. Initially, turned down by Princeton, he enrolled at the University of Hawaii. There he felt he discovered what survival and prospering meant. This makes me think of one of my students who had rejections she had not anticipated. She enrolled in a small school, little known to her at the beginning of our work together, where she became a school leader and a successful student. She is now pursuing her law degree with great confidence that she will find her niche in the legal realm of the entertainment world.

Bruni exhorts students to think of college as "an expansive adventure, propelling [them] toward unplumbed territory and untested identities rather than indulging and flattering who they already are." Where one goes to college is more than attending a school with the best name; and it should be much more than a path to a career. In closing he returns to his conviction that, " ... Where we go to college will have infinitely less bearing on our fulfillment in life than so much else ... "

At the outset of this posting, I described Frank Bruni's book as an antidote to disappointment. More than that, I find it a positive message of constructive guidance for students and their families confronting college admissions. I recommend it - would even like to make it required reading for all of my upcoming counselees.