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A Newsletter for South Carolina's Guidance Counselors

# The Guide

Fall 2009  
Edition

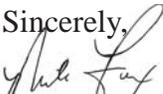
Dear Guidance Counselors,

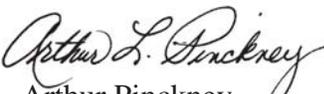
Arthur and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for all of the support you have offered to us and SC Student Loan during the past school year, 2008-2009. We have really enjoyed being even more involved with many of you. I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the statistics for last year:

- You allowed us to participate in 93 financial aid night presentations. The welcome and hospitality we received at your schools across the state was wonderful. Hopefully, we were able to help your students and parents understand the process a little better.
- You invited our Speakers Bureau to make presentations to your students, parents, teachers, and staff on over 60 occasions on a wide range of topics from Transitioning to College to Interviewing Skills.
- You welcomed us to meet with your Teacher Cadets on 35 different occasions.

Our goal is to assist you in preparing your students and their families for the college process. We really appreciate your giving us these opportunities to help and we hope to work with even more of you this year. The only down side of this increased participation is that we can only be in so many places at a given time, so please plan in advance, and we appreciate any flexibility you might have in scheduling events.

We are looking forward to working with you again this year. Please let us know how best we can serve you, your parents and students. We wish you the very best for a most productive and successful school year.

Sincerely,  
  
Mike Fox

  
Arthur Pinckney



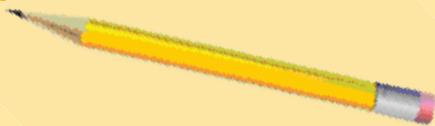
For additional copies of *The Guide*, please visit our website, and click on the "Schools" tab in the upper right, then "Guidance Counselors" then "News and Updates."

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## Write the Essay!



Your students hate writing essays. Whether it is part of a scholarship application or the admissions process at a college or university nothing brings on more whining and foot dragging than this requirement.

Remind students that this is an opportunity for them to 'stand out' instead of 'blending in' with all the other applicants. This is a chance for them to highlight various characteristics, talents and special qualities that would not show anywhere else. Encourage them to approach the essay in a positive manner and they might be surprised at the results they achieve.

Here are some tips to share with your students that will help:

- If given the option of choosing the topic, select one that will allow you to tell why you should receive the scholarship or be admitted to the school. Try to be unique, stay away from topics anyone could write about.
- Rather than chronicling a major event in your life, explain how that event affected you, how it changed you. This will be much more compelling to the selection committee and will increase your chance of being selected.
- Grammar and spelling need to be perfect. Don't rely on your word processing software to catch all errors. Proofread and ask others to check also.
- Ask a teacher, counselor or family member to read your completed essay before you submit it, the more the better.
- Get started. The longer you wait, the more pressure you place on yourself, and procrastination never helps.

## SC Personal Pathways to Success



This is a great site for your students and parents to visit regularly. Students can use the site to access the *South Carolina College & Career Planning System* to create a portfolio, explore education and careers, access their IGP, and learn about extended learning opportunities. Parents can receive information on career planning, college planning, and paying for college, and to access additional parent resources.

There is even a section for counselors. If you haven't visited Pathways to Success recently, please take a moment to check it out at [www.scpayways.org](http://www.scpayways.org).

## College Goal Sunday

Excuses! Excuses! Excuses!

"The FAFSA is so hard."

"I don't have time to complete that huge thing."

"You'd have to be a genius to answer all those questions."

There is no excuse for not completing the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA) because help is available. The 2010 version has been simplified, but even better is that on **Saturday, February 27** financial aid experts will be available to sit down with families to provide 'hands on' help to actually complete and submit the FAFSA. Please help us let your families know that they don't have to do this alone. The website below will provide a list of sites where the assistance will be offered and details of what should be done ahead of time. You will receive more information as the date draws closer but go ahead and mark your calendar and share this date whenever possible.

[www.collegegoalsundaysc.org](http://www.collegegoalsundaysc.org)

## A Gold Mine of Information: College Fairs

Dozens of colleges, all in one place, ready, willing and able to help your students, that's a gold mine of information. Make sure your students understand the importance and take full advantage of this opportunity. One often overlooked fact students need to be aware of is, college admissions representatives, those people at the college tables, love to talk about their colleges and they especially love students to ask questions. Encourage your students to walk up to the table, introduce themselves, and ask some questions. If it is a college which interests them they should get the representative's name, phone number, e-mail address. Stay in touch! Admissions representatives can be a valuable resource, and they might even end up being the person who reads their application for admission.

What should they ask? Well there are always the basic questions; location, size and available majors, but if they really want to "mine the riches" of a college fair encourage your students to ask a few more open ended questions. Two favorites are:

- How is this school distinctive?
- How would you describe the student body's personality?

A list of suggested questions can be found in our publication, "Making Higher Education Possible," which can be accessed by clicking the following link:

[www.scstudentloan.org/UserFiles/File/PDF/parentstuds/9261\\_Making%20Higher%20Education%20Possible%200709.pdf](http://www.scstudentloan.org/UserFiles/File/PDF/parentstuds/9261_Making%20Higher%20Education%20Possible%200709.pdf)

Time management is also important at a college fair, so many colleges and so little time. No one wants to run out of time before they get to their favorite college's table. Be sure to visit those 'favorites' first and then branch out and visit others that 'might' be of interest.

How much gold a student takes away from a college fair is totally up to them, encourage them to get as much as possible.



## Now and Zen: Five Simple Steps to Relaxation

The beginning of the school year can be the most hectic time. Don't let it get to you. When you are pressured to the max, just relax - easy to say but hard to do. Meditation may be the answer.

Regular meditation, with its focus on breathing and concentration, can help you take a peaceful pause from your hectic, fast-forward life. This ancient Indian tradition has been shown to ease physical tension and calm the nervous system -- providing relief from mental stress. Here's how you, too, can practice this age-old discipline:

- Sit comfortably, either on the floor or in a chair with your head and back straight.
- Begin with a few deep, cleansing breaths.
- Close your eyes and slowly breathe, at your own rhythm, through your nose.
- Aim to focus all your thoughts on your breath -- the inhale, the exhale, the sensation, the sound. Do not fret if your mind begins to wander; that is natural for beginners. Just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.
- Start with a 5 to 10 minute daily meditation, and then work up to 15 to 20 minutes or more.



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