

Advising High School Students for Admission to College Fine Arts Programs

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Abstract

School counselors are a primary source of college and career information for students and families, including students interested in pursuing a degree in fine arts. The admission process to fine arts programs can be complex and involve multiple steps; however, providing this guidance is clearly in line with the role of school counselor, as defined by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) model for school counseling. This article provides a guide for the fine arts admission process, including finding the right fit, academic requirements, financial assistance, and general strategies. Guidance for specific disciplines such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts are provided. The article includes two appendices of resources that counselors may share with students and families.

Keywords: college admission, fine arts admissions, auditions, school counseling

Advising High School Students for Admission to College Fine Arts Programs

One of the most common tasks of high school counselors is to assist students with college admissions. Whether in guidance sessions or individual planning, students and families often turn to their school counselor with questions regarding college selection, costs, and admissions. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) stated in their 2018 executive summary that there should be “ongoing systemic activities designed to assist students in establishing personal goals and developing future plans” (p. 4). As Adams-Johnson found in 2015, “There is a paucity of articles, books, or other forms of peer-reviewed research of fine arts recruitment” (p. 431), which leaves professional school counselors with scant materials to assist them in helping students who wish to pursue the fine and performing arts in college. While the number of secondary students applying as arts majors or minors varies greatly from community to community and from year to year, there is scholarship to support the value of fine and performing arts study even if the individual does not pursue a career as a professional artist. In the latter decades of the 20th century, 66% of students admitted to medical school held Bachelor of Music degrees (Wood, 1990). During the first decade of the 21st century, individuals who held a bachelor’s degree in the fine arts tended to score in the upper half of all students taking the Law School Admission Test or LSAT (Levine, 2008), and during the second decade of the 21st century research noted that liberal arts provided a better foundation for critical thinking and reasoning (Flanagan, 2015).

Fine arts students do not always make up a large percentage of a given school’s advising population. In some institutions of higher education, terms like *fine* and *performing arts* may be used. For the purposes of this article, we include visual/graphic

(usually 2-dimensional), plastic (usually 3-dimensional), and performing arts under the designation of fine arts. However, as the ASCA principles indicate, each student deserves the best that a professional school counselor can offer. Due to the infrequency of advising fine arts students, counselors may find themselves without the resources to effectively advise them. As a result, counselors may feel that they are under-advising fine arts students when supporting these students and their families in establishing their future plans. Historically, many families experience trepidation regarding their children's interest in the arts as a future profession because of the assumption that artists have a difficulty in achieving careers that provide financial independence (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Becker, 1953; Hinely, 1984; McRobbie & Forkert, 2009; Middleton & Middleton, 2016; Roe, 1946). Therefore, these students often rely on the expertise of high school fine arts teachers, as these programs are highly specialized and may be outside of the experiences of many professional school counselors. High school fine arts teachers are often considered as role models and mentors (Conway, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Lynn, 2017; Strickland, 2018); however, these teachers, while expert in their specific areas, are not necessarily trained in the wide range of admission issues facing students applying to college today. Professional school counselors are specifically trained to support students and families in the process of college admissions (ASCA, 2014; Dockery & McKelvey, 2013), and students who avail themselves of their counselors' services tend to have "stronger aspirations to pursue postsecondary education and then to enroll and persist" (Poynton & Lapan, 2017, p. 375). Unfortunately, in these days of often limited budgets, neither teachers nor counselors may have the resources to stay abreast of specifics in fine arts program requirements.

Success in collegiate application processes for fine arts programs, as well as the completion of such degrees, requires forethought and planning long before the application is due (Engle, 2007; Wimberly & Noeth, 2007). It is important for parents and students to realize that fine arts units often begin the cycle of identification of potential students during the middle school years (Adams-Johnson, 2015). Professional school counselors need to address with parents and students during a student's freshman year in high school that preparing for fine arts programs in college requires not only an appropriate level of artistic training and achievement but also a solid background in humanities (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Oreck, Owen, & Baum, 2003; Schmitt et al., 2007; Schorske, 2010; Sumara, 2002; Winterson & Russ, 2009). The authors recommend that this preparation include an academic program with the following elements: (1) a broad knowledge of history and literature, and (2) immersion in the specific discipline via private lessons, specialized classes, camps, clinics, and similar types of activities. It is also important to aid these students in gaining life skills that will allow them to mature appropriately toward healthy professional and social independence (Cropley & Cropley, 2010; Greene, 2006; Huang & Chang, 2004; Kerr & McKay, 2013; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Stemler, 2012; Syverson, 2007).

Little to no training has been made available for advising for these highly focused fields. School counselors may not be aware of the range of qualifications for these majors in addition to more standard admission requirements. This article provides much-needed research in the area; the authors hope that this paper may supplement training associated with fine arts recruitment and admissions and assist counselors by also offering resources for parents and students. The authors have over 50 years of

combined years of experience, action research, and practice of successfully putting these ideas into practice from the perspectives of school counseling, fine arts professorships, fine arts collegiate administration, and professional consulting.

As professional school counselors are aware, colleges review a variety of factors when evaluating students. In addition, many fine arts programs use a *dual admission process* involving additional requirements. Admission to a college does not necessarily guarantee admission to a fine arts program, and vice versa. Thresholds of admission differ depending on educational mission (Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Pike, Kuh, & Gonyea, 2003; Rigol, 2003).

Admission Thresholds

As school counselors are aware, each institute of higher education (IHE) has its own admission standards and thresholds. These vary depending on the Carnegie Classification of Institutions (Shulman, 2001). For the purposes of this article, the IHE thresholds are defined as open admissions, minimum admissions, and selective admissions (Atkinson & Geiser, 2009; Hawkins & Lautz, 2005; Horn & Flores, 2003; Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996; Wechsler, 2014). The authors have defined characteristics of each as follows: (1) Open admission format is an inclusive and non-competitive collegiate admissions process that requires a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate. It may also require a standardized test score; (2) Minimum admission format specifies a minimum high school GPA, a minimum standardized test score, and a broader secondary class ranking; (3) Selective admission tends to demand a higher GPA, higher standardized tests scores, and a higher class ranking. This level may also require portfolios, recommendations from high

school teachers and community leaders, essays, and resumes of extracurricular activities. In most cases, students must be admitted to the IHE *before* an admission decision can be made for their fine arts program and before they can be considered for a merit award.

Fine Arts Admission Processes

Fine arts programs may also be open, minimum, or selective. In some cases, they will use the same criteria as the IHE with additions, such as some level of mastery of the discipline. There will often be a required portfolio review or an audition where the prospective student may be required to demonstrate a variety of styles, e.g., contrasting pieces of music, monologues from different periods, or both 2D and 3D pieces of art.

In the most selective schools, there can be very detailed examples of what is required. Each fine arts unit may list musical pieces, specific monologues, or examples of dance styles to be performed in the audition. Live or streamed interviews may be included in this process. One effect of this contact is that it gives students the opportunity to meet professors who will serve as their advisors and have a significant influence over their artistic development (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Burgess, Ponton, & Weber, 2004; Butke & Frego, 2009; Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2013; Everett, 2009; Milo, 1986). As technology advances, digital portfolios, live-streamed auditions, and pre-recorded options will increase.

What Programs Look for in Potential Students

Talented students in the arts, much like athletes, may enrich a university by boosting its prestige (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Samble, 2014). Finding a good match between student and program is a principle objective of recruiting. There are a variety of

program designs and structures. Students fare better in programs that match their potential and abilities (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011). Within a fine arts unit, faculty often evaluate prospective students using a holistic and qualitative approach (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Motycka, 1971; Radocy, 1986; Warburton, 2002). Some faculty weigh a student's potential to achieve more than their pre-collegiate skill sets. Talent is also an important element (Florida, 2006), which can be understood as having four essentials: creativity, ability, motivation, and commitment to tasks (Renzulli, 2017).

There are three elements in the recruitment process, applicable to all majors in all academic areas, that are crucial in making and retaining positive impressions between the prospective student and the institution. Note that these basic communication strategies are useful for any prospective academic or professional relationship, and that counselors can help students to learn these skills (ASCA, 2014). First, each encounter should be viewed as a job interview. Professional or semi-professional attire is strongly recommended during official campus visits or auditions (Mathur, 2017). Second, prospective students should discover the preferred method of communication (email, Facebook, voice, etc.) for each faculty member. Due to generational differences that may exist between prospective students and faculty, students may need to adapt to faculty communication preferences (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). Correct, standard English usage is recommended; "text speak" is never acceptable. Formal name/title conventions should be used until otherwise indicated. It is always correct to use the title 'professor' if the

prospective student is unsure of a faculty member's academic title (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007; Bloch, 2002; Hoffman, 2014; Kreuter, 2011).

Third, personal interaction with a prospective primary professor is critical (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Holland, 1962). Students are encouraged to take advantage of a trial lesson, sit in a college class, observe rehearsals, or visit the professor's studio, etc. (ASCA, 2014). Such experiences will assist the student in deciding whether to undergo the admissions process for a fine arts unit and may also aid in finding the match between student and professor (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Presland, 2005). While most programs offer these options, it is always appropriate for the prospective student to ask for these types of access to the collegiate fine arts units during the recruitment process.

Many fine arts programs have administrative staff who are a helpful resource for more detailed information (Pitman, 2000; Tinto, 2005). In addition, many fine arts programs welcome school counselors and are happy to explain specific requirements. The authors believe professional school counselors can begin to promote the independence that college requires by encouraging students to do their own research and bring it to their counseling sessions (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009).

Recommendations for Students

Professional school counselors faced with the need to guide students preparing to select a major in the fine and performing arts cannot know or do everything about every situation. Bearing this in mind, the authors have created the following recommendations for counselors to use in serving that population of secondary students preparing for this field of study. We have found that prospective students, and often

their families, are unaware of many of the deadlines and demands of majoring or minoring in the arts in college (Adams-Johnson, 2015). Many of these deadlines are applicable to any student in any specialized field; awareness of the timelines is also an indicator of college readiness (Malone, 2013). This competence clearly aligns with the ASCA mindset of understanding the importance of a post-secondary behavior and with the learning behaviors that include goal setting, researching needed information, and making informed decisions (ASCA, 2014). These steps and deadlines are also arranged as a reproducible checklist (Appendix A) for ease of use by professional school counselors working with students and families.

The authors recommend going through each of these steps as early as possible. Because fine arts programs train for practical application of skills, many requirements for these programs are unlike those for other academic programs. Meeting the application requirements early may place a student closer to the head of the line for consideration; it also allows time for unexpected requests (ASCA, 2014).

Academics are important. It is a common misconception that athletes and fine arts students do not need to excel academically because they spend more time in skill-set practice (Hodge, Burden, Robinson, & Bennett, 2008; Motycka, 1971; Newman, Meyers, Newman, Lohman, & Smith, 2000; Pargman, 2012; Richards, Gipe, & Duffy, 1992; Winner, 2000). The authors recommend that counselors advise students to visit multiple schools, starting in the sophomore year or very early in the junior year with a local or state school for practice. It is often difficult for sophomore, and even junior, students to get permission to miss classes for college visits; however, given the demanding requirements for these disciplines, it is strongly recommended that students

seek these opportunities. Students should plan to target the desired fine arts unit, request information, contact faculty, and make the best use of a college visit day (Moogan, Baron, & Harris, 1999; Pascarella, 1980).

The authors suggest that students test and re-test, retaking standardized tests whenever possible to improve scores. Be aware that extra-curricular and school support activities (e.g., marching band competitions, speech and debate competitions, etc.) and other early deadlines and conflicts may limit available testing dates. Students should begin taking standardized tests during the junior year at the latest (Standardized Testing Timeline for Seniors, 2014; Witte, 2014).

Students should be reminded that there is often a two-step process. First, they should apply early to the IHE (typically in the summer between the junior and senior year of high school); second, they should apply in the early fall of the senior year, based on program requirements, to the chosen fine arts unit (Adams-Johnson, 2015). They should also be aware of the application fee for the IHE and a possible application fee for the fine arts unit. Professional school counselors will naturally advise students to take advantage of early admission programs (Avery, Fairbanks, & Zeckhauser, 2009; Fluitt & Strickland, 1984).

Students and families should be encouraged to apply for scholarships. In addition to general funding sources, they should look for any reference to the student's specific discipline. Counselors are familiar with many sources and can advise accordingly. Research has shown that awareness of the need for and availability of financial aid is an element of college-readiness (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Linsenmeier, Rosen, & Rouse, 2002; Tierney, Sallee, & Venegas, 2007; Wimberly & Noeth, 2005).

Parents, caregivers, and students should be made aware that colleges, like employers, are looking for potential, not perfection (Agrawal, 2010; Hunter, 1992; Jacobi, Astin, & Ayala, Jr., 1987; Silzer & Church, 2012). Students' high school academic performance may be an indicator of how they will handle the rigors of college-level work, which includes the intensive demands placed on fine arts majors of practice, rehearsals, studio time, exhibitions, and performances (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Winterson & Russ, 2009). As noted in ASCA's (2014) self-management skills, students need to have the ability to balance school, home, and community responsibilities. It is helpful for students to be well rounded academically; conversant with the styles within their disciplines; and to be socially, culturally, and technically adept (Cropley & Cropley, 2010; Greene, 2006; Huang & Chang, 2004; Kerr & McKay, 2013; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Stemler, 2012; Syverson, 2007). Extensive reading in general literature and history can lead to a broader knowledge of their concentration area, as the arts often reflect or help shape the historical, political, and social contexts of their times (Albrecht, 1954; Edelman, 2003; Fenza, 2000; Gibson & Larson, 2007; Hirst, 1973; Hoock, 2006; Oreck et al., 2003; Schmitt et al., 2007; Schorske, 2010; Sumara, 2002; Winterson & Russ, 2009). A knowledge of discipline-specific technology is beneficial in helping any student stand out from other prospective candidates (Cropley & Cropley, 2010; Laovanich & Chuppunnarat, 2016; Pitts & Kwami, 2002; Rieland, 2014).

Pre-Collegiate Skills Development

According to research and the authors' collective experience, future fine arts majors need to begin developing their technical and personal skills early (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Zdzinski & Horne, 2014). In addition to these skills, students need to

have good study and practice habits, which are critical for students to make the most of the limited time that fine arts students have for general academics. Excellent practice and performance habits are essential for success in any discipline.

Professional school counselors may have to help high school students and their families realize that long-term ambitions and goals often require immediate sacrifice (Cronin, Arthur, Hardy, & Callow, 2015; McDermott & Snyder, 2000; Stinson, 1997). This is a truism in arts, sports, medicine—any career that demands a period of intense preparation and focus (ASCA, 2014). There is an expectation to practice nearly every day in college as well as in the eventual professional environment (Carey, Harrison, & Dwyer, 2017; Quested, Duda, Ntoumanis, & Maxwell, 2013; Solarski & Donovan, 2012). They should take every opportunity to learn from professionals in their discipline through reading, watching videos/lectures, and attending performances/exhibitions (Andrews & Asia, 1979; Catterall, Chapleau, & Iwanaga, 1999; Creech, Gaunt, Hallam, & Robertson, 2009; Laovanich & Chuppunnarat, 2016; O'Brien, Stewart, & Moje, 1995).

Students should surround themselves with elements of their discipline by attending private lessons, specialized classes, festivals, camps, competitions, concerts, and clinics (Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Dawes, 1989; Koza, 2009; Lawhorn, 2008; Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 2004; Robson, 2004). Performing or showing their work at every possible opportunity (e.g., community events, school functions, or faith-based organizations) provides opportunities to interact with audiences, as these events expand their experiences, expose them to commercial realities, and add to their resumes (Bell, 2004; Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003; Lowe, 2000; Mathews, 1889).

Highly selective institutions will look for a resume as part of the portfolio (Bryan, Young, Griffin, & Henry, 2016; Dorn et al., 2013; Lankes, 1998; Shulman & Bowen, 2002; Wiedmer, 1998). Students should create a resume that promotes their accomplishments to future audiences, potential teachers, and fine arts units. Resumes should list training, private teachers, any exhibitions or performances/roles performed, and camps/internships. Portfolios should include their headshot, GPA, and standardized testing scores (Lankes, 1995). Artistic resumes should emphasize artistic accomplishments and performances over non-artistic ones. Performers should keep a repertoire list as a part of their resume. Visual art students should maintain a thorough portfolio. This type of detailed information about a student's artistic formation will aid faculty in the evaluation process (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Dorn et al., 2013; Evans, 2014; Hayton, Haste, & Jones, 2014; Ragan, 2016).

Academic awards, civic engagement activities, performances, and a visual arts portfolio are important; however, not equally to the IHE and the fine arts unit. The IHE will be more concerned with academics and civic engagement; the fine arts unit, while interested in those elements, will place more emphasis on the artistic development and achievements (Cohen, 2000; Dorn et al., 2013; Friedland & Morimoto, 2005; Mamlet & VanDeVelde, 2011).

Auditions are a combination of performance for a critical panel and a placement interview. Students must prepare thoroughly for a presentation that will emphasize their best attributes; it is preferable to show less intricate work that is beautifully performed or finished rather than complex material that they have not fully mastered (Davidson & Coimbra, 2001; McPherson & Thompson, 1998). They should choose an audition piece

that they can wake up and perform early in the morning or late at night, regardless of weather, allergies, condition of the audition site, etc.; they will have no control over time or place of the audition/interview, so they must prepare for anything (David, 1982; McPherson & Thompson, 1998; Trunk, 2017). Before the audition, students are advised to practice in front of a mirror, record themselves, and to find groups of people—both supportive and critical—to serve as practice audiences. Visual artists must similarly practice, since they will have to present their work and may be asked to explain or describe it (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Davidson & Coimbra, 2001; Evans, 2014; Hallam, 2012; Lien & Humphreys, 2001; McPherson & Thompson, 1998).

Professional school counselors may want to consider working with fine arts high school teachers to sponsor practice auditions, presentations, and interviews at the school, perhaps involving local professionals to serve as a practice panel. It is critical to check audition dates; they occur in a short window of time from December to early March, may overlap each other, and are almost always over long before spring break of the senior year. Students auditioning for multiple institutions and programs may have to be flexible in scheduling their auditions.

All admission settings require that a prospective student be accepted into the institution before they will be scheduled for an audition, which is necessary before the student can be accepted in the fine arts program and be considered for scholarships. In single admission settings, the audition is for scholarship availability; in dual admission settings, the student must audition for placement as well as for scholarship opportunities (Adams-Johnson, 2015). Depending upon the selective nature of the fine arts program, some units will require a taped/streamed audition before inviting a student to perform a

live audition. Other units will require only a live audition; most will work with students in case of travel difficulties or illnesses.

Academics

A fine arts degree is just that, a degree. There will be academic requirements and non-art related courses required to complete the degree. Programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Credit, or International Baccalaureate (IB) may be used by universities to meet some of these requirements. Counselors should refer to transfer policies regarding these credits, as they would with any other major.

Collegiate summer and intersession courses, concurrent enrollment, and transfer courses can be an effective way to complete general education requirements (Robertson, Chapman, & Gaskin, 2001; Struhl & Vargas, 2012). Prospective fine arts majors should take advantage of general education courses during summers before and after matriculation into their fine arts units. Research shows that students who take college-level coursework before they matriculate into their IHE are more likely to be successful (Barnett & Owen, 2017; Catron, 2001; Cevallos, Webster, & Cevallos, 2016; Puryear et al., 2001; Struhl & Vargas, 2012).

An important fact that professional school counselors should convey to students is that it is rare for fine arts discipline-specific courses to transfer from one IHE to another as core requirements; they are often counted as elective courses (Smith, 2015). Therefore, fine arts transfer credits may not reduce the time needed to complete the degree (e.g., ensemble courses may transfer as electives), but the student will be required to complete a full sequence of eight semesters of ensemble at the new fine arts unit. In addition, most IHEs will accept a high score on the AP Music Theory test as

a single elective course in music, but the unit may not substitute AP Music Theory for a required music theory course. The student will have to successfully complete the core requirements of the degree at the IHE. This may apply to any transfer course; therefore, the student should verify all transfer courses with both the IHE and the fine arts unit (Chen, 2017; Monaghan & Attewell, 2015).

It is recommended that high school students with access to AP or other collegiate level coursework avail themselves of the opportunity (ASCA, 2014). It will familiarize them with the material, prepare them for college-level work, and may give them a significant advantage at the college level (Conley, 2008; Robinson, 2003). It may be possible, for example, to avoid taking general education requirements, such as English composition or US History, through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) or other testing (Barry, 2013; Lakin, Seymour, Nellum, & Crandall, 2015). Basic fine arts classes, such as Piano I for music majors, may also be passed by exam. In many cases, tuition and fees for the class are still due to the IHE (Klein-Collins, 2007). Similar conditions apply in other performing and visual arts.

College Finance

The same rules pertaining to college financial matters apply to prospective fine arts majors as to other students. They should apply for any academic, university, or private scholarships they can find, such as grants from private foundations or local service organizations like Rotary or Kiwanis (Charles, 1993). Professional school counselors are aware that for any type of financial aid, a student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and receive a rating from the Federal government. It is best to complete the FAFSA the fall before they start post-secondary

coursework. Almost all financial aid from the IHE or through any government-funded source must be linked to a FAFSA rating (De La Rosa & Tierney, 2006). Some students may also be eligible for other need-based grants and scholarships based on the rating (Castleman, Long, & Mabel, 2017; Perna, 2006). Counselors may also wish to remind students and parents that part-time work by the student to provide some financial support for college expenses can reduce the debt that college programs generate (Keane & Wolpin, 2001; Perna, 2008).

Professional school counselors should point families toward scholarships targeted for fine arts students. These awards take additional factors into consideration; some are primarily based on merit and are often renewable (Schuh, 1999). Some fine arts funding is based on the initial audition/interview, and other sources require an audition/interview that is specific to the scholarship. For example, an endowed scholarship in the name of a well-known sculptor who is an alumna may require a specific showing or application process. Additional dollars may be available based on specific needs of the fine arts unit or the IHE. Certain performing groups may have a need for specific instruments, voices, or talents; such an institutional need may affect the availability of merit awards (Adams-Johnson, 2015).

In addition, professional school counselors should be prepared to remind students and their families that fine arts programs often carry additional fees and costs that are not covered by scholarships or tuition waivers. Paying for studio time, materials and supplies, and technical support is the student's responsibility; hence the value of civic or private grants, such as from a faith-based organization or a service organization (Stone, 1992).

Social Contacts

It is easy for students and their families to overlook the social aspect when preparing for admission to college. In addition to personal practice in their disciplines, students will be using time in college to build personal/professional connections and networks; these networks may overlap and provide support in later professional life (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Skeels & Grudin, 2009; Wright, White, Hirst, & Cann, 2013). Members of these networks include professors in the discipline, student organizations, student chapters of professional organizations, program alumni, and community performance/artist groups (ASCA, 2014). These contacts may be able to help introduce students to the IHE/fine arts unit, assist students in adapting to life in the program, provide links to funding, or lead to future employment (Cain, 2008; Braxton & Hirschy, 2005; Hammer, 2000; Holland, 1962).

Professional school counselors can remind students to create a positive social media presence by using a social media account that focusses on professional life and is not linked to a private or purely social account (Manca & Ranieri, 2015; Shier, 2017). Students should check all privacy settings on social media and be cautious in what they post; many institutions and faculty will check these pages (Barnes, 2006; Sanderson, 2011). Unprofessional or socially questionable posts can negatively impact a student's social contacts as well as affect admission or lead to expulsion (Cain, 2008; Barnes & Mattson, 2010; Kind, Genrich, Sodhi, & Chretien, 2010).

Advising Information for Each Discipline

Professional school counselors may not often be faced with advising students in each of these disciplines; for that reason, the authors have assembled information

pertinent to each area of study so that school counselors can have this available when meeting with students and families. At the end of this section, we have included some material that is applicable to all programs in the fine and performing arts.

Dance

Dance programs will require each student to provide their own rehearsal wear and dance shoes for classes and rehearsals, and possibly for performances. Students should expect to need ballet flats and jazz oxfords for most programs; female ballet students will have the added expense of character and pointe shoes. Students should be prepared to purchase a theatrical makeup kit as determined by the program. External grants and scholarships from private sources may be very helpful at covering these costs. Counselors may be able to assist students and families locate such resources.

Each program may focus on specific types or styles of dance. The traditional styles include ballet, classical modern, and jazz; some schools may also include cultural dance traditions, folk styles, and post-modern styles (e.g., hip-hop). Students should research the unit's requirements and be prepared to perform several different dances for their audition. Many schools select students based not only on skill but on appearance; for example, dance teams often have a uniform "look." Students should be emotionally prepared to be rejected for no other reason than they do not fit the desired "look" for that school. This is common practice in the professional world; it occurs in auditions at this level as well (Bowen, 2016; David, 1982; Green, 1999; Oreck et al., 2003).

Dance programs consider many factors in evaluating students (Adams-Johnson 2010). These include the level of advancement for the age of the student, or whether the student is at a point in their development to make good use of four years of collegiate training. Faculty members assess body potential: does the student's body conform to currently accepted shapes or forms, or can it be easily modified to do so (Benn & Walters, 2001; Green, 1999; Ritenburg, 2010)? A dancer is expected to have an awareness of how their body moves in space; they are also assessed on a sense of artistry. Strength and stamina are also important factors (Aceto, 2012; Corsi-Cabrera & Gutierrez, 1991; Wilson, 2009). Dancers need to be aware of appropriate dress and deportment for different styles of dance and environments. Teachability, or the dancer's openness to critique and learning, is also extremely important. Dance demands a tremendous amount of dedication; consequently, faculty members assess whether the student demonstrates the focus and drive necessary for the discipline (Flett & Hewitt, 2014). Pre-collegiate training is expensive, so students without socio-economic support rarely have access to it. And last, but certainly not least, programs consider the student's academic strength (Adams-Johnson, 2010; David, 1982; Oreck et al., 2003).

Music

All music programs require a level of piano and music theory proficiency. As part of the music degree, students will have to show mastery of their instrument (Lien & Humphreys, 2001; McPherson & Thompson, 1998). Students should practice daily to become the strongest possible performer. They should be familiar with multiple genres of music, attend performances, and study audio and video presentations (Kelly & Weelden, 2004; Winterson & Russ, 2009). They should maintain a repertoire list that

includes major solo works, ensemble pieces, and technical studies (Winchester & Dunlap, 2008).

Music students should be prepared to pay accompanist fees for lessons, juries, and recitals. An accompanist will often become a member of tripartite relationship including the faculty member and the student (Kiik-Salupere & Ross, 2011; Tobias & Leader, 1999). In some cases, the student will be responsible for hiring and paying the accompanist directly; in others, the school or program will charge a fee to cover the cost of accompanists provided in specific circumstances. Most such fees, charged by the program for specific items, are not covered by many scholarships. Again, it may be possible for professional school counselors to guide students and families in locating supplementary financial resources.

In addition, music students may be expected to have their own formal wear; for men, this will be a tuxedo in a classic cut, and for women, a conservative formal gown in black or a gown specified by the program. Instrumental students are generally expected to bear the cost of maintaining their instrument; except in the case with program-provided pianos. Opera and musical theatre students may also be required to provide or purchase a theatrical makeup kit and character shoes or jazz oxfords.

Faculty are looking for students who demonstrate ability and technique, and who are motivated to learn and improve their skills (Asmus, 1986). Openness to learning, self-reliance, and independent discipline are important factors (McPherson & Renwick, 2011). Positive personality traits (the ability to interact well with colleagues and as stage presence) are desirable. The ineffable quality of musicality is a critical and very subjective criterion (Adams-Johnson, 2015; Oreck et al., 2003).

Theatre

Theatre students should have a detailed resume which includes shows, companies or schools, and roles. Students should expect to provide their own footwear for rehearsals; jazz oxfords, ballet flats, and character shoes are basic equipment. In addition, theatre students may be required to purchase a theatrical makeup kit. Funding from private organizations can be useful in meeting these expenses.

Technical theatre. When applying for a program in technical theater, students should have a portfolio that shows examples of their design work. This portfolio, in many cases, should be a digital presentation. (See the visual art section below for information on digital portfolio presentation.) Students should be prepared to discuss and defend their decisions regarding design choices.

Theatre performance. Theatre performance majors should prepare several memorized monologues (Oreck et al., 2003): classical dramatic, classical comedic, contemporary dramatic, and contemporary comedic at least. Each theatre program will have specific requirements which should be researched well in advance. For musical theatre, the prospective student should prepare songs from Broadway shows from several periods and composers and beware of doing a song that has become overly popular. The student should also be prepared to take a dance class or participate in a 'cattle call' style of audition process (David, 1982; Jackson, 1993). Many colleges will conduct such group or unified auditions to present students to several programs at one time. Various competitions and festivals may also offer auditions to various programs. As with dance majors, theater majors may need to be emotionally prepared to be judged on their "look" (Oreck et al., 2003).

Faculty look for potential rather than a polished performance; they look for trainability in voice and body, and the ability to portray authentic feeling. They consider the personality of the prospective student: would they fit in with others in the program? Would they contribute in the classroom? This is like the criteria used in dance and music programs (Oreck et al., 2003; Pasto, personal communication, November 22, 2017).

Visual Arts

For students in the visual arts, materials (i.e., paper, pencils, paints, sculpting tools, etc.) may be available through the program, in which case there will be a materials fee which is not likely covered by scholarships. In some cases, fees may exceed tuition costs. In addition, the quality of materials available through the programs may vary from school to school, and students may prefer to purchase their own materials, which will be in addition to the materials fees. Professional school counselors may be able to assist students and families locate additional financial resources.

As students prepare a portfolio, they should work to become comfortable showing and talking about their art (Barrett, 2000; Barrett, 2004; Dorn et al., 2013; Subramaniam, Hanafi, & Putih, 2016). Students should visit galleries, museums, and showcases that focus on a wide variety of styles (Lemon & Garvis, 2013). They should also be conversant with art history and have a good arts vocabulary; taking AP courses may be helpful (Dorn et al., 2013) even if they do not eventually count as credit toward a degree. Students interested in commercial art and graphic design should be familiar with several forms of software and have some practical experience with image enhancement and manipulation (Kang, 2003; Ojo & Ntshoe, 2017). Some high school

journalism experience may also help commercial arts students, as would internships in a graphic arts field. Counselors may be very valuable in guiding students toward secondary school coursework and after-school programs that will help them prepare for post-secondary work.

Many schools will expect a digital presentation of the portfolio, so students should select and photograph their art to clearly demonstrate their strengths. Arrange the work to show the student's understanding and mastery of the artistic vocabulary (e.g., negative space, golden ratio, etc.) and the nature of artistic thought. Each work should be labeled with a thoughtful title, the list of materials used, and a brief description of the artist's process. The digital presentation needs to be intelligently constructed; faculty will scrutinize the images as carefully as a proofreader. Visual and commercial arts faculties are generally looking for an understanding of concepts and mastery of basic skills rather than in-depth technical or artistic proficiency (Dorn et al., 2013; Hayton et al., 2014; Zdunek, 2016).

Across all disciplines, professional school counselors should remind fine arts students to have a high-quality headshot and a prepared resume/portfolio for campus visits. Finding the right fit is important for all students and majors (Reid & Moore, 2008); it is especially important for fine arts majors, and one way to do that is to visit the program. Opportunities to visit include campus tours and prospective student days. Students may attend concerts, shows, and exhibits on campus; they might also consider a shadow day, where they attend an academic class, take a short lesson with a professor, or participate in a dance class. Students should dress and groom professionally for all such visits. Research conducted by the student should determine if

the school has the desired degree *and* if it specializes in their style of artistic work. For example, a jazz trumpeter may not find a good fit at a classically focused program. Research should also include job placement rates of graduates, job placement services, and the expertise of the faculty.

It is important to remind high school students that a thank-you note or email is essential after an audition or an interview with a fine arts program/unit. This is not merely a courtesy; it identifies the student as being aware of relationships and responsibilities and makes them stand out as college-ready students. Even more imperative is the formal acceptance response of a financial award and of placement in the fine arts unit (Hossler, 2000). The unit cannot proceed in aiding matriculation until this acceptance letter is signed and returned (Adams-Johnson, 2015). Whether the student accepts or declines an offer, it is important for the student to formally respond. Institutions and fine arts units that are declined need this information so that they can make offers to students who are wait-listed (Adams-Johnson, 2015).

Future Research

While this article provides some practical strategies and information for these specific needs for high school fine arts students, the authors are aware of the need for research. Future studies could examine the experiences of professional school counselors' perceptions of advising specialty admissions, the development of mock auditions and interviews for specialty admissions, partnership between fine arts high school teachers and professional school counselors in the advising process, and understanding the experiences and expectations of first year undergraduate fine arts students and their reflections on their high school advising experience.

Summary

Certain principles are common to the admissions process for all fine arts majors. As stated above, these include the fact that it is very important to meet the faculty and visit the campus, and this outreach to faculty can start early—even a year before application. Unlike many other fields, fine arts majors often have a single professor who serves as both primary instructor in the discipline and as academic advisor. It is essential to have a good working relationship with that professor. Students need to know all application and audition dates and apply early. Many times, fine arts admission cannot be processed until acceptance to the IHE is granted. There may be a limited number of spots in some programs, and they will fill up quickly; therefore, fine arts majors should be advised to apply to multiple schools. Formal responses of acceptance or decline are critically necessary. Significant guiding principles in selecting a school include student fit with campus, program, and major professor.

The work of professional school counselors is complex; it is impossible for all counselors to know all the requirements of all the programs available in all disciplines. The authors hope that this paper has provided some useful resources for the specific disciplines in the fine arts that can assist school counselors in guiding students and families. The recommendations listed in this article represent the common practices and action research of the authors' combined work in the field of fine arts admissions. We have included a generalized checklist for the high school process for fine arts majors as Appendix A. Appendix B outlines daily routines and expectations of fine arts majors. Professional school counselors may duplicate and share these Appendices during the process of helping young artists prepare for the transition to higher education.

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Appendix A

Advising Checklist and Timeline

<i>Freshman Year</i>	
Dates	Action
Pre-enrollment	Plan to take any AP or advanced level classes available
Early Fall	Begin to create resume and/or portfolio
All year	Contests and competitions Private lessons and studio time Performances for local or other groups Showings, sales, commissions of artwork
<i>Sophomore Year</i>	
Dates	Action
Fall	Begin to schedule available standardized testing, including PSAT
All year	Research available programs and schools to see what's available
All year	Maintain resume and/or portfolio
Spring	Schedule and go on tours of college campuses
All year	Contests and competitions Private lessons and studio time Performances for local or other groups Showings, sales, commissions of artwork
<i>Junior Year</i>	
Dates	Action
Pre-enrollment	Plan to take any AP or advanced level classes available
Early Fall	Research available scholarships
Fall	Apply for at least one scholarship each week. Some will require that admission has already occurred.
Fall	Identify target schools and programs that meet their needs Research the admission processes and fees Will they require a digital interview/audition?
Fall	Schedule SAT and/or ACT tests
Spring	Apply to target schools for early admission
Spring	Retake SAT and/or ACT tests to improve scores
All year	Maintain resume and/or portfolio
All year	Schedule and go on tours of college campuses
Late Spring	Plan for summer, take college-level classes in basic general education topics
Late Spring	Plan and prepare audition material Singers, actors, dancers: Find out audition requirements of various schools. Prepare several pieces in different styles. Rehearse each many times every week. Prepare for Q&A about your work.

<i>Junior Year (continued)</i>	
Dates	Action
Late Spring	Graphic and plastic artists: Find out portfolio requirements. Prepare a presentation on your art work for those schools that require it. Practice the presentation many times to become very comfortable. Prepare for Q&A about your work.
All year	Contests and competitions Private lessons and studio time Performances for local or other groups Showings, sales, commissions of artwork
<i>Between Junior and Senior Years</i>	
Dates	Action
Summer	Take college-level classes as available
Summer	Retake SAT and/or ACT tests to improve scores (if available)
Summer	Last chance to visit target campuses
<i>Senior Year</i>	
Dates	Action
Early Fall	Research pertinent scholarships for the school and program and begin applying for them
Fall	Apply to target schools and fine arts units
Fall	Fill out the FAFSA
Fall	Retake SAT and/or ACT tests to improve scores (if available)
Fall & Spring	Audition for fine arts programs.
All year	Contests and competitions Private lessons and studio time Performances for local or other groups Showings, sales, commissions of artwork

Note: In some states, if your test scores are high enough, you can substitute a community college class in English composition for senior English; some other substitutions may be available. Some states will cover the tuition for some of these courses.

Appendix B

Life as a Collegiate Fine Arts Major

Based on the combined experience of these authors, fine arts students in college must be prepared to practice their art consistently. If the student is not interested in disciplined practice at the high school level, they should consider another major. There may be room for a fine arts minor.

On their first day, fine arts majors begin working with professionals and faculty on a schedule that is similar to graduate work in other academic fields or to professional work in their discipline. It is important to develop and maintain a good working relationship with one's primary professor(s). Performing and creating can be a very personal thing and accepting criticism and critique can be an emotional challenge. Fine arts students also have workloads that do not match their academic credits. It is common for required lab (studio or practicum) classes to earn only one credit while meeting 3-10 hours weekly.

There are individual costs associated with each fine arts discipline. Students should be prepared to handle these costs to maintain their abilities to do their work. Fine arts practices and performance often require a different daily living schedule than the socially recognized norms; many times, students will have late night rehearsals, performances, technical practice, or other activities. This affects not only social life, but also the scheduling of other coursework.

The fine arts are highly specialized. As such, the student will often spend most of their time immersed in their discipline. They may have only one general education course in each semester among their discipline-specific classes. In general, full-time

enrollment consists of at least 12 semester credits. Typically, a 12-credit load is composed of four 3-credit courses that each include an additional 2-3 hours of study outside of class. For fine arts students, 12 semester credits can involve more than 40 hours per week of course attendance and outside work. It may also require enrollment in six courses.