Contents

Ackn	nowledgments	xi
Introduction		xiii
Part	1 What You Need to Know Before You Begin	1
1	Why Has College Admissions Become So Competitive?	3
2	What Do Colleges Look for in an Applicant?	20
3	How Do Colleges Make Their Decisions?	45
4	How Colleges (and Students) Differ: Finding What Fits	62
Part	2 Making the Right Choices for You	99
5	Where Should You Apply?	101
6	The Big Tests	127
7	Deciding About Early Decision and Other Early Options	150
8	Paying the Bill	164
Part	3 Tackling Your Applications	197
9	Applying Well, Part I: The Application and the Essay	199
	Applying Well, Part II: Recommendations, Interviews,	
	and Activities	219
11	Making the Most of Your Special Talents	242
12	Students with Special Circumstances	266
13	Advice for International Students	289

Part 4 Bringing the Process to a Close	
14 Making Your Decision After the Colleges Make Theirs	313
15 What Matters Most: Advice to Parents and Students	336
Appendixes	
A. College Research Worksheet	347
B. Essay Prompts, 2017–2018	351
C. Financial Aid Shopping Sheet	353
D. Cost of Attendance Worksheet	355
College Preparation Time Line	
Resources	
Notes	
About the Authors	
Index	