Chapter 24

Entering the i–World of Teens: An ACS Athens Advisory Model for College Applications

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ABSTRACT

In an ever-evolving digital world, it is imperative to guide students in best fit choices by allowing them to self-reflect in meaningful ways. This chapter addresses this Holistic, Meaningful and Harmonious process (Gialamas & Pelonis, 2009) of applying to college through the digital world and caters to such audience as guidance counselors, principals, teachers and parents interested in making the college application process a meaningful journey through which students will obtain skills and tools to use when life calls for them. The implementation of the i²Flex Model methodology to college guidance is discussed within this context.

INTRODUCTION

Social Media has become essential in the lives of teens and social networking is continuously on the rise (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). While technology is incessantly evolving and social interactions become exceedingly popular ‘hang outs’, in reality some things never seem to change, namely, the need for teens to belong and to be accepted within a particular group (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1990; Osterman, 2000). Specific social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, MySpace and Twitter, are places where teens ‘hang out’ and connect with peers and friends just as they do at the mall. In this sense, such gathering places supplement personal encounters. Entering the “i-World” of

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teens, that is, understanding how the current digital era has infiltrated and shaped the everyday lives of adolescents, thus becomes a necessity for any adult hoping to connect with and reach the minds and hearts of these soon to be adults.

In addition to being socially savvy, teens have the responsibility of preparing for their future and making optimal choices regarding higher education. They are asked to make decisions about future careers and further studies in a short amount of time, somewhere between junior and senior year. They are called on to assimilate an enormous amount of information derived from the internet, college websites, advice from counselors, conversations with admissions officers and, of course, parental desires. Decisions about where to apply for college become a juggling act along with exams, final projects, community service and keeping an active social life. Yet the college application process can be rewarding and satisfying when students are given time to assimilate information about themselves, when they are engaged in the process each step of the way and when they have time to reflect on who they are, what strengths they possess and where they would like to ultimately go. The college application process then becomes a journey of discovery, a sharing of self and an exciting road, with twists and turns, no doubt; a holistic view of self that allows students the opportunity to navigate the world of higher education by sorting through information via the filter of who they are and which direction they ultimately want to go.

This chapter addresses this Holistic, Meaningful and Harmonious process (Gialamas & Pelonis, 2009) of applying to college through the digital world and caterers to such audiences as guidance counselors, principals, teachers and parents. Emphasis will be given on how the i2Flex methodology is integral in making the college application process a meaningful journey through which students will obtain skills and tools to use when life calls for them. The i2Flex methodology is comprised of several key components:

- **Independent-Student Learning:** Where the student assumes an autonomous role during designated times within the process,
- **Inquiry-Based Student Learning:** Where the student is no longer a sponge absorbing information but rather an intellectually curious student whose progression is seen through constant questioning and researching,
- **The Flex Aspect:** Where guided-student learning takes place through face-to-face time in a flexible manner.

The methodology as a whole is supported by technology (Avgerinou & Gialamas, 2014). Each component of i2Flex, will be analyzed and connected to the ACS Athens university/college application process.

**DIGITIZATION AND EDUCATION: THE i2FLEX MODEL IN LIFE CHOICES**

The ACS Athens university/college guidance philosophy has its foundation in the Best Fit model: an originally statistical concept adapted to Human Resource Management to provide efficiency and optimal services (Baird & Meshoulam, 1988). Within the guidance process, i2Flex is defined as providing the young inquirer, through contemporary scaffolded learning, with necessary skills to promote self-reflection, self-awareness and morphosis while materializing Best Fit higher education goals in the current world. Guidance at ACS Athens, which encompasses Academic Advising, Social-Emotional Counseling, the Advisory Program and the Digital Portfolio, utilizes the i2Flex components to provide students and parents with a comprehensive university/college advising process. The individuality and uniqueness