



The College Spy® Podcast with Michelle McAnaney

Episode 8

How School Counseling differs from Independent Educational Consulting: An Interview with Piet Lammert of DiriGo College Consulting

Welcome to The College Spy podcast, a podcast for parents and students addressing all aspects of the college selection and admissions process. I'm Michelle McAnaney, the founder of The College Spy. We offer college planning services to students and families across the United States and internationally. We are a team of dedicated educators who are committed to helping students and families identify the right colleges to apply to and get accepted. We offer our guidance and expertise in a way that improves student performance, increases confidence and promotes college readiness and maturity. The College Spy works with all students including students interested in the STEM fields, students with learning differences, international students, and third culture kids. To learn more about The College Spy, visit our website at thecollegespy.com and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

Welcome to episode eight of The College Spy Podcast. This episode includes my interview with Piet Lammert, a school counselor and college consultant, The College Spy's tip of the day, and a college spotlight on Bowdoin College.

Piet Lammert is a veteran high school counselor with over 25 years of experience in public education. He established DiriGo College Consulting in 2021 and serves as its principal consultant. Piet earned his BA in Psychology from the University of Maine and his MA in counseling psychology from Boston College. Throughout his career, Piet has been dedicated to helping every student develop a personally meaningful post-secondary plan. He always keeps his eye on the prize, what is right for the student. Piet loves the possibilities of the college search, and truly enjoys the process of matching a student to an institution. The right fit can be life-changing. In the first segment of this podcast, Piet and I discussed the differences between a school counselor and private college consultant, how to use your school counselor more effectively, and why you might want to hire a private college consultant to help your child with the college admissions process. Let's get to it.

Michelle McAnaney:

Welcome to The College Spy Podcast. I'm so glad to have you here.

Piet Lammert:

Thank you. So glad to be here.



Michelle McAnaney:

Yeah. Let's tell listeners how we know each other because we have a history, a professional history.

Piet Lammert:

Yes, we do. I've been at the same high performing mid coast high school and I'm in my 24th year, my 25th year as a high school counselor. Back in the 2000s, 2010s. You were there as a school counseling director. I had gone to the dark side for about a decade. I became an administrator, so I was busy doing attendance and discipline for 10 years. And then some circumstances changed, and we may talk about, and I went back to being a school counselor. So when we worked together, it was in a very different context. It would've been, you would've been being a student advocate. I would've been there meting out discipline or whatever, you know, had to be managed in a particular situation. So we weren't colleagues in the same way that we are now.

Michelle McAnaney:

I actually thought of you as my boss. You were my assistant principal. So I looked at you and the principal as you're my boss and I can come to you for help, but I better get back to you quickly and do all those things you do to make sure that the boss is happy.

Piet Lammert:

You had my older son, you were the school counselor for my older son. So there's another me as in a context as a parent as well as professional colleague.

Michelle McAnaney:

And then I got in touch, I suppose when I started The College Spy. I kept in touch with you because you were also starting your own college consulting business.

Piet Lammert:

Yes. I think we connected a little bit before I actually started DiriGo. I'm trying to remember because I managed the Facebook page for Camden Hills for a while. And this College Spy kept showing up and I'm like, who's this College Spy? Because we hadn't talked. And eventually it came to that it was you. And because I just thought it was really cool that this national college consultant was following our little high school in Maine. But yeah. So it came to that you were doing this work, and as you said, I have always been planning to do this when I retire. It's been my long-term plan for a long time, even when I was not being a school counselor, my plan was to come back and do this work.

Michelle McAnaney:

So currently you're working as a school counselor in Maine?



Piet Lammert:

Yes.

Michelle McAnaney:

And as a side business or after school business, you are an independent educational consultant?

Piet Lammert:

Yes. My side hustle is an IEC, an independent educational consultant.

Michelle McAnaney:

A really good side hustle. So I wanted you to come on this podcast and have a conversation with me because I couldn't think of two better people to talk about the differences between a school counselor and an educational consultant since I've done that job and you are doing it and we're both educational consultants. And to really explain to people who are listening, what are the differences in the roles and why somebody might hire an IEC and not rely a hundred percent on their school counselor, and how to use your school counselor more effectively. So those are the things I'd love to talk about with you.

Piet Lammert:

All right, let's do it.

Michelle McAnaney:

Let's do it. So let's start with what are the differences between a school counselor and an IEC or an independent educational consultant. What are your thoughts on that?

Piet Lammert:

Yeah, so the independent educational consultant is, it's a narrower focus, so your focus is just more narrow. More purposeful, more singular. As a school counselor, we're responsible for three general areas: academics, social support, and career development. And we have, depending on where you are, could have a huge caseload. I'm actually really lucky. I have 202 kids right now, roughly dispersed over four grade levels. Our school thinks it's really, we think it's really important to see our kids through all four years. But if you're in Arizona, which has a 716 to 1 school counselor to student ratio or Michigan, which has a 638, like I, I don't know how a counselor would possibly work with that many kids, and often school counselors get assigned stuff that's off mission. Like they get assigned all the standardized testing or they have to do the home visits, or there's other duties assigned that get added on to the school counselor's plates. So you end up being a jack of all trades and a master of none. So you're good at a lot of things, but there's no real area where you focus.



Michelle McAnaney:

I remember for myself feeling very frustrated by all those extra duties. So, long time ago, I worked in middle school and I had a bus duty, and so in the afternoons where kids could stop by, I would be out with the buses.

Piet Lammert:

Right.

Michelle McAnaney:

And when I was at Camden Hills with you, I had lunch duty sometimes. Which in some ways was great because I got to see the kids a lot and I would go around to the different tables and say, “Hey, did you come and bring me your brag sheet for your letter of recommendation?”, or “I want to follow up with you on this or that.” But other times, there’d be somebody crying in my office and I would be at lunch duty going, this doesn’t make sense. It’s not what I signed up for.

Piet Lammert:

So we aren’t in a situation where the school counselors don’t ever have to do anything but school counseling. And the teachers have lunch duty and break duty and bus duty, and so we have to get along with our teaching colleagues.

Michelle McAnaney:

They definitely perceive that as unfair.

Piet Lammert:

Yeah.

Michelle McAnaney:

The other piece of this is that from the parent’s point of view and the student’s point of view, and this is the parent and student that doesn’t really have a lot of problems, doesn’t really need their school counselor for reactive things I’m thinking, but only proactive things like getting into college and figuring out the college admissions process and where they should apply. I think for that family, they’re the ones who are often saying, “what is the school counselor doing?” Because that kid gets less attention while the school counselor is dealing with the crisis and doing the lunch duty. And like you said, depending on the caseload, will get a no attention at all.

Piet Lammert:

School counselors, we need to differentiate the services that we provide to our kids. One student might need weekly touch base to make sure that they’re doing okay emotionally.



Advising about what classes they're going to take. And then you have well-resourced kids that have well-resourced parents that have the means and wherewithal to, you know, hire outside help, and they do so that you can let those kids just take care of themselves. We have to stay up on what they're doing to a degree because we're the ones that are, are writing the letter of recommendation. We're going to be shepherding them through the process. But in terms of actually sitting down and seeing a kid through the process doesn't happen a lot. But it's interesting. I had 57 seniors this year, so I had to write 57 letters of recommendation so that I can provide a little more service there than I would've have been able to in the past or with a different caseload.

Michelle McAnaney:

Can you share a little bit with listeners about what you do with seniors in terms of the letter of recommendation? I think a lot of my students don't realize the important role that their school counselor plays directly in the application, and they don't always know how to make the best of that. So I wonder if we could talk about that a little bit.

Piet Lammert:

So this is actually one of my favorite parts of the job is writing the letter. So best case scenario, a student will come to me with a parent brag sheet. So mom and/or dad. We send home all the materials that we need our kids and families to do. So in that folder is the parent brag sheet. So hopefully at least one of the parents will have written back. I absolutely encourage both parents to do that because they sometimes have a different perspective. The student needs to do a brag sheet. At my high school we use forms, so senior feedback forms. So, any adult that the student has a good relationship with who would be able to speak to the qualities of the student is invited to give some feedback. The narrative is really important. So what I'm doing is an original piece of scholarship, every time; I never recycle. I have never recycled the letter or used parts for another. It's an original piece of scholarship with primary source documents. It's AP US history. Like you, you get the documents, you have to analyze, synthesize. I've never written the same letter, but I write the same letter every time. I would guess, all told easily five hours per letter over 57 times. That's a lot of letters. So resumes are a huge help to tell kids. Resumes are a huge help for your school counselor. So if your school counselor asks for a resume, or even if they don't, you provide them because it breaks it down.

Michelle McAnaney:

Sometimes I have students who have a similar process with their school counselor. They'll come to me and say, I have to fill out this brag sheet to give to my school counselor. Sometimes teachers as well, but usually it's the school counselor and they'll say, "can you help me with it." And having done a lot of letters of recommendation, I'm like, "oh, yeah, I can help you with that," because some kids will fill out their brag sheets very sparsely, and others will give



information that make the letter so easy to write. So I wonder if we could just spend a second telling students, “write this type of thing about you.”

Piet Lammert:

Yeah, those ones write themselves. Those are a beautiful thing.

Michelle McAnaney:

So much easier when the student is forthcoming, and I suppose not everybody’s going to want to communicate in writing so we can advise students that you can go meet with your counselor and let them know who you are verbally, if that’s better for you.

Piet Lammert:

We started talking before we recorded about introverts and extroverts. An extrovert’s going to come in and not have any trouble at all communicating what they want to say with a counselor, whereas introverts don’t say things until they’ve thought them through and have them all worked out. And so, a verbal interview with an introvert might go very differently because the kid wants time to think. I literally say, as I’m wrapping up, if you wake up at two o’clock in the morning and you’re like, wow, I really should have told him this, write me an email, fill me in on that. Because the challenge is we’re trying to create three dimensional people for the admissions people to see using just words. So the more we have to work with, the better.

Michelle McAnaney:

For students who feel their school counselor doesn’t know them that well, what I advise them to do with these brag sheets...because that’s why the counselor gave them the brag sheets, so they can write the letter because they don’t know them that well or they want to know them better, in your case...I tell them to look at their college application as a whole and think about what’s missing that the counselor might be able to put in there. So I don’t want them necessarily to repeat their activity section in the brag sheet to the counselor because that will make it easy for the counselor just to write up what it is that they do for extracurricular activities. It’s better to say, all right, how did I describe my activities? Is there something that’s missing and put into the brag sheet, please write about this. It’s not in the rest of my application, guiding the counselor to add value to the application as opposed to accidentally without knowing it, because they probably haven’t seen the application, repeat what’s already there. There’s a lot of strategy that students can use if they’re aware to do it, and I think most kids aren’t, which is why I’m sharing.

Piet Lammert:

Yeah, I think of it, it’s like each kid is a puzzle. If you’re missing important puzzle pieces because the kid didn’t tell you or you didn’t know, or it’s somehow something that’s really important about this particular kid gets left out. It’s like literally there are holes in that 3D picture that



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we're painting of the kid with our words. Yeah, so however the student would be comfortable sharing about themselves, you know whatever they can give us to work with, it's helpful. I have some that, I'm a music guy, so I am thinking in music and the song, "Making Love Out of Nothing At All," from Air Supply in like the 1982 or whatever. My phrase is, writing recs out of nothing at all. You get absolutely nothing. No help from the parent. No help from the student. You get a couple of real brief forms from a neighbor, rather than an employer, you know? So you just get this kind of tangential junk and you're supposed to spin it into gold, and it's just really hard. Like the more that I have to work with, the happier I am.

Michelle McAnaney:

Sure. And it's either because the student has given you all the information that you need, or they're the student that you've gotten to know a lot better throughout the years, which could be because they had difficulties and needed the counselor's help. And it also could be because the student and the parent took the initiative to get to know their counselor. And when I have a student start with me in ninth grade (and oh, I love that when they start with me early and I guide them), I say, "you need to go visit your counselor. Let's make up a list of things you can go and ask about and you can talk about." And what I tell them is that no school counselor went into this field because they like doing scheduling. Counselors love, I think, tell me if you agree, when students will come in and they don't have a major problem and they're just there saying "Hey, I want to update you on my college search", or "I want to ask you some questions about X, Y, and Z", or "just came to say hi." It's just the best day when that happens and I tell my students that. I'm like, get in there. They're going to be happy that you did.

Piet Lammert:

Yeah, you got to pull yourself off the floor first, because like you'd be so surprised that a kid would actually do that. Again, that's where I think with an extrovert has a leg up in that, whereas an introvert wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable doing that. You might have to engage an introvert in a side by side conversation or just through email and if that felt more comfortable to them, and then putting it all together in a letter. I think you emphasize in your work that hobbies count and matter for colleges, and especially with the significant change away from standardized testing, the holistic review is happening with the admissions folks. So we have to give them what they're looking for in terms of a holistic assessment of a student. We've got to provide them what they're looking for. So professionally, with my business, I like to start with sophomores because it gives them a year to do what I call Goldilocks in going out like Goldilocks... Sitting in the chair eating the porridge, like sleeping in the bed, before you have to make a decision about whether that school is going to go onto your list or not. You don't have to make a decision. You can just enjoy it. That's what I like about the sophomore year. Junior year, there's a lot to do. Senior year, there's a lot to do. If you jam that all together, it's a tremendous amount to get through. So I tell my ninth graders, "just work on being interesting. Try new things. Stay with the things that you love. Reject the things that you don't.



Go deep in the things that you're interested in. Don't be just surface level. Go deep. Really dig in and get into the meat of whatever it is that you're doing." Because colleges are not looking for well-rounded students. They're not looking for students that are a little good at a lot of things. They want kids that have really committed to, I'm a fencer. There's a difference between doing an activity and seeing that as part of your identity. And I think they want kids that see themselves as something: I'm a beekeeper, I'm a firefighter, I'm a scuba diver. It's not just things that I do, it's who I am.

Michelle McAnaney:

And I think selective colleges especially want that if you're well-rounded. Less selective colleges, it'll be okay. So I always give that advice, especially for the selective schools And that's really hard for kids, that they have to know their identity now. This is who I am. I'm a firefighter. I'm a beekeeper. Because the entire point of adolescence is to figure out who you are. You haven't already decided it in eighth grade, most of the time. Some kids have and they're ready for that, but not everybody has. It's sad and concerning. These great students, they do what they're supposed to do. They get excellent grades. They get involved in activities at school, and then they say, "what more do they want?" Why am I not getting in? And, talk about the pointy student versus the well-rounded student. They're not pointy, and that could be why. But forcing a point when the student isn't ready is not good for kids.

Piet Lammert:

Yeah. You don't want to pigeonhole a kid or encourage them to close off other options in terms of integrating things into their personality, because as you said, figuring out your identity is the work of adolescents and the kids that we're working with, 14 to 18, that's exactly their job: to be figuring out who they are.

Michelle McAnaney:

Yeah. One of the things that I used to struggle with when I made this transition from school counselor to educational consultant is which hat I was wearing. So I feel I need to tell families, even if they come to me when their kids are young and they're not ready to be pointy. This is how admissions works. If you want your child to go to a school that's highly selective, you hired me to tell you how it works and how to get in and I'm going to tell you pointy is a way to go. And then, what I've learned to do and why it's not a struggle anymore, is say, "if I put on my school counselor hat or a parenting hat, not the admissions hat that you hired me to do, I want to share with you that that's not always great for kids." So as an IEC, I give them great admissions advice, but I help guide families in understanding that they don't always need to and they shouldn't always take admissions advice, because that's not always the most important thing. I don't know if you struggle with that too, as you open your consulting practice, playing these two roles.



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Piet Lammert:

Yeah, and I'm literally, I'm a school counselor. I have two students that attend my high school that I'm working with as an independent educational consultant, but they're not my assigned students. You know, my 202 that I'm working with. But I also have a couple of others that are assigned to other counselors that I'm working with, and they're really happy because they know the kids are getting good service. They know sometimes we have situations where a private consultant just focuses on their process and they don't pay attention to our high school process. So roundabout November 1st, when you have two weeks to write the letter of recommendation, they come to that the kids should have turned this in by that time and get this in by that time, that in by that time. So having a consultant that knows very well the process that they're using has actually been helpful.

Michelle McAnaney:

I know that's the case. So I work with students around the whole country and internationally and I always did. Even before the pandemic, I was always working on Zoom and a lot of consultants who work more locally, they say that the benefit of hiring somebody local is they're going to know your school and know the process. For me, though, I haven't had a problem because I know there is a process because I used to be a school counselor and all I have to do is find out what it is and then make sure the kid doesn't avoid it. So, when my parents get the emails from the school counseling office, forward it to me. I need to know what's going on in that office, or I can't help them as much as I want to because that is a really important piece of it. And those students that you have, they're lucky that you're there at the school and know exactly what's going on.

Tell us a little bit about your IEC practice.

Piet Lammert:

I've decided to confine my practice, at least for now, to Maine students. Maine kids don't tend to have access to independent educational consultants the way that other kids might in other areas. I think there are maybe a half dozen independent consultants in Maine, at least that I'm aware of. So I'm not a Mainer because I was not born in Maine.

Michelle McAnaney:

I did not know that.

Piet Lammert:

My parents moved to New Hampshire. So like my great-grandfather was born in the farmhouse of the family farm. My grandmother was born in the farmhouse of the family farm. This is in



West Bath, Maine. Then, my mom was born in Louisiana and my dad in Massachusetts. I have generations of history in Maine. I wasn't born in Maine.

Michelle McAnaney:

Well, wait a minute. First of all, I think we should explain to everybody, you might not know if you're not from Maine, and I lived in Maine for eight years, that it's a big thing to be "from away" and "from Maine." So even if you've lived in Maine eight years, you never tell anybody you are from Maine. But I thought that in order to be a Mainer or a Main-ah, that you needed family in the ground. It sounds like you have family in the ground.

Piet Lammert:

I have family in the ground and I did my K-16 education in Maine, but I was not born here. So I can't claim that pedigree.

Michelle McAnaney:

No, you can't.

Piet Lammert:

So, yeah, it's kind of a point of contention, but I live with it. So, I have this affinity for Maine kids. They're honest and authentic and hardworking and just, I really appreciate working with kids from Maine. So that's where I've confined my practice. So starting my business from scratch, and like you, wanting to visit as many colleges as I can, it's easier to start it in the Northeast where I can do my visits relatively easily. It's a budding practice. I'm not naturally entrepreneurial. I wasn't the kind of kid that started lemonade stands on the side of the road. And, I also have this thing about just doing things for people out of kindness. When I was a kid, if you asked me to shovel the neighbor's driveway, like I would shovel in the neighbor's driveway because it was the right thing to do, because it was a neighborly thing. And if they tried to give me money, I would actually refuse it because it changes the nature of the interaction if somebody pays you to do something that you would've been happy to do on your own. So, starting this business where I would be happy to just give my services away to people. In a perfect world, I would just do the work and not have people pay me. But now people are paying me to do this and there's a little bit of imposter syndrome going on. I can't tell you how much better a school counselor I am having this experience as an independent educational consultant.

Michelle McAnaney:

That's interesting.

Piet Lammert:



I'm so much better at that aspect of my job. I'm also much more certain about what I'm looking for or how I want to direct my kids and families. Like I'm making all my sophomores take the assessments and Naviance that we have. So like coming into their sophomore visit, they have their Holland codes determined and they have their Myers-Briggs done so we can have a conversation about those things. I've also, this year, started sending home emails, directed to all grade levels. And anything I send home to kids, I send home to parents because I know that kids don't read email. So I write to the parents and that has brought them into the process. If there's a scholarship that the kid can apply for, I send that home and mom and dad are like, "Hey, have you seen this scholarship? You can apply for." So what I'm learning through my role as an IEC... is absolutely being integrated into my job as a school counselor and just for my own self, I feel like I'm doing a much better job than I ever have because like that aspect of the job, I'm getting better at it.

Michelle McAnaney:

I had the same experience when I switched from school counselor to IEC, where I started taking a lot of courses. So I took a seven course certificate program in educational consulting through the University of California, Irvine, and really spent a lot of time with that and conferences, reading, visiting colleges, and expertizing myself. And if you had asked me when I was a school counselor, how good I was at doing the college admissions process, I probably would have said, "I'm good at it. I know what I'm doing." I would've been aware that my students went to school working in Maine, in the Northeast, and that the other colleges around the country at the time, I wasn't that familiar with. But what I learned through these courses that I was taking is that the school counselors spent approximately 20% of their time on college admissions. And when I think about what I was busy doing, I'd say, yeah, that's probably true. Maybe there were certain times of the year it felt like more. But there was, the role was, so you say "a jack of all trades, a master of none," I think of it as the job of a school counselor as "a mile wide and an inch deep." And having expertized myself around the college admissions process, I know now if I went back into the school counseling role, I would be dynamite at that 20% of the job. And I also, what I've learned about myself is I like this. I like being really good and really knowing well, this one thing, and then being able to help others with it. Where, as a school counselor, I didn't always feel that I was effective. I thought I was doing a good job at what I was being asked to do, but I think I wanted to do more. Yeah, it's been a very interesting journey to make that switch, and I think you're having a similar one, but in a slightly different way, because I left school counseling and went into being an IEC. You're doing both at the same time.

Piet Lammert:

I'm much better able to guide people and I feel more certain in what I expect of people. Maybe I'll suggest this or maybe I'll suggest that and I'll be like, no, this is how it needs to be in order for me to help you get what you want. It's just made me more sure of myself in terms of what



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I'm focusing on that work. And frankly, I just, I think I'm doing a lot better job having this experience. Cause you spoke to it. It feels good to be good at something.

Michelle McAnaney:

Yes, it does.

Piet Lammert:

When you're doing a suicide assessment for a student and then you get a call from a parent who just found out that their partner is leaving them and they're despondent, and that's coming down to the kid, or you're the one that's assigned to do the SAT testing for your school, or you have to be there for an IEP or 504 meeting first thing in the morning, work your full day, end your day with a 504 IEP meeting. The doing nothing. School counselors are on screech all day. They're lucky to have time to eat, and in a diverse and dispersed job description, it's really hard to focus on one thing.

Michelle McAnaney:

It's a really hard job to be a school counselor. The job is so difficult. It's very tiring. You never know when somebody comes to your door, is this an emergency or is this nothing? You know? Is this like an easy schedule change and fix the lunch hour and that's it, or the lunch 20 minutes, that's really all they get. But it's not an easy job.

Piet Lammert:

It's mentally taxing. Just the stamina that you need to have to make it through the day. The emotion that we sit with in the course of a day.

Michelle McAnaney:

Yes.

Piet Lammert:

That trying to be empathic but not take it on as your own so that it depletes you. Like, you're navigating this all day, every day, and you just, this is one of the parts that's really great about the job is you never know what you're going to do in any given day.

Michelle McAnaney:

No, you don't. And in some ways that's why it's exciting and you have to be really flexible too, right? You have to be willing to kind of say, "I thought I was going to do that, but I am not, because this is the higher need." So, yeah, in some ways I miss it. Can I confess? In some ways I miss it.

Piet Lammert:



Yeah. It's where hiring an IEC would make a lot of sense if a family has the means to do that. Because they've got somebody that can just be focused on their kid. I was thinking about doing this podcast. I was working with my private clients and working through the college search process with them. I'm doing research. I'm pointing them in directions to do research. I don't have the time to do that for the public school kids that I have. I have to make suggestions or say, you should do this or you could do that, and I don't have the time to join in with them to do that. So it's a more directive and less participatory model because 57 seniors, like, how am I possibly going to give that level of service to 57 seniors? It can't happen.

Michelle McAnaney:

One of the things that I've started doing for families who perhaps don't see themselves as somebody who hires for their child one-on-one, an educational consultant, or can't afford it, is I have these group offerings, I suppose, so workshops, boot camps, courses. So for example, starting in February, I have a College Admissions 101 that I'm teaching. It's for parents and students will come with their parent as well. It's four sessions and they're just listening to me talk and asking (and then I'm answering) the questions that they have about all the different topics: financial aid, how to build a list, SAT, ACT, or test optional, things like that. And then in the summertime, I have camps for students to fill out the application and we focus on the five parts of the Common App that require strategy, although I do walk them through the easier parts and the more busy work parts just to get it done and off their plate. And then in the Fall, I've offered essay workshops, so putting things out there in groups. It's not as high touch of a service, but it's more than they might be able to get from their school counselor because it's really not the school counselor's role to sit down and write essays with students. So I'm really happy to be able to offer those things in a group format for families, and it's much more affordable and therefore more accessible.

Piet Lammert:

The stuff that you give away for free is amazing. It is like you could totally be charging for the stuff that you're doing, but you don't.

Michelle McAnaney:

Yes, I will be in the future. If you don't know, I do a lot of webinars. I have one next week on extracurricular activities. I have almost 600 people signed up, so for next week, by next week, I'll probably have 700, because people like to sign up late and you can watch it on demand. I'll actually put it in the show notes for this. I'll put a link so that people can just click and watch. You just type in your email and then the video pops up. But I think, about the one for extracurricular activities, it is so good and it's for grades eight through 11. So I'm going through what colleges are really looking for, how do you look, college by college, how important extracurricular activities are. I'm going through that whole thing about the introvert and the kid who's maybe only involved in one or two things, or not too much...that they can do hobbies and



really giving a lot of information about why that's okay. When I say do hobbies, I mean put hobbies on their application. And really explaining to families what admissions wants to know about you, and therefore they'll feel comfortable putting these things on. And then, I'm going to be going through how do you fill out the application effectively? So students often write what they do, not the impact that they have, and giving examples around that. It's a great webinar and I'm like, "this is a lot of good information. you should charge for this." But I'm doing it for free anyway because I want people to know, and I want people to feel less stressed about the admissions process because I see it as so exciting and so interesting and the student gets a chance to think about and plan their super bright future. It's so cool. And so, if I can help families reframe the process where they feel, "I have the information that I need, I'm going to be okay. This is going to go fine," then I feel like I've done a good job.

Piet Lammert:

Yeah, it's a very particular and rewarding type of matchmaking. Help a kid find the right fit and when they find the right fit and all that work is worth it. And I had a student get into Dartmouth this year for the first one I've ever had get into Dartmouth for 25 years people, and my first Dartmouth kid. That's amazing. And working with him through the process, I can't speak too particularly about it because I might identify him by mistake, but he had a really interesting high school career and you know, COVID, and just what he has experienced over the past three years and to help him through that process of figuring out where he wanted to be. He was looking really closely at Bowdoin and it's an amazing feeling. I had a student who, a special ed student, who has significant processing issues. There was one school that she wanted to get in to because there's one thing that she wants to do, and she applied to that one school early decision, like all the eggs were in that one basket, and damned if she didn't get in. It was amazing. Like, that is such a good feeling when you can help a kid make it to something that they want so badly. I had another this year that had a significant mental health issue that like, it really looked like it was going to torpedo her high school career a couple years ago, but she's really fought her way back from it and she was able to get into a little ivy despite all the challenges that she faced. It's so rewarding to help kids get something that they really want.

Michelle McAnaney:

It is really rewarding and when I work with students like the one you described with mental illness, I just am so grateful for my school counseling background. So we talked about how being an IEC helps you be a good school counselor, but it's in reverse as opposed to if I came to this from maybe an admissions background, not that they don't do fantastic job also, but there are times where things come up and I think, "I'm okay with this conversation because I've done the suicide assessment and I've talked to kids about child abuse and all of that" because you're helping students as an IEC get into college and figure out which college is a good fit, but they're still people and you're still joining them on this journey. And so if I can bring that school counselor hat with me, I am glad to have it.



Piet Lammert:

Yeah, and you might be in a situation where you're like, you're listening to a kid and you're like, this kid is sounding suicidal. And know that you have to ask the question, even though that's not what you signed on for as a consultant. Like in order to meet that kid's needs, you've got to address that issue.

Michelle McAnaney:

You do. Or the other thing that I'm seeing is undiagnosed learning differences. So, I just had a conversation with a parent this week and I said, "have you ever had so-and-so assessed for ADHD? I don't diagnose that, but I see some consistencies between my students who do have ADHD and some of the behaviors of your student." And she's going to follow up with the doctor. I would not be saying that if I didn't have the experiences that I've had in the past as a school counselor.

Piet Lammert:

Having that school counseling background is definitely super helpful. It was absolutely essential when I was assistant principal. I would never have wanted to do that work without having had the counseling background. And I think it's sustaining.

Michelle McAnaney:

You know what, Piet? I believe the assistant principal job is the hardest one in the school. Would you agree? Here's my chance to ask.

Piet Lammert:

Absolutely. Hands down.

Michelle McAnaney:

That's a hard job.

Piet Lammert:

It's constant conflict from the moment you step through the door until the end. Somebody's always pissed at you. You're always at odds with somebody. You're always carrying the weight to the world.

Michelle McAnaney:

And you're middle management too.

Piet Lammert:



If the assistant principal is doing their job, or their collective job...we had two in our school, certain stuff doesn't rise to the principal's level. You want the principal to be able to be at the helm, steering the ship, setting the course, the vision, and working towards that. And all of the scut work, all of the dirty work falls to the assistant principals. It really, it wore me out. I'm so glad to be back to being a school counselor. I'm so grateful just to be able to focus on my kids. I do feel like there are still plenty of leadership opportunities that I can take in the building in part because I've been there for so long. At the end of the day, I don't have to be the one that suspends a kid. I'm the one that goes to visit the kid that was suspended and talk about what went down and how they can learn from it and all of that stuff. But it's a rough job.

Michelle McAnaney:

Thank you so much for coming on The College Spy Podcast. I so appreciate it and I'm glad to catch up with you and chat.

Piet Lammert:

It's been fun. I could talk another hour.

Michelle McAnaney:

I know. We should do that. We could do it another time. We could do part two. I'll see what the response is from this podcast and maybe there's another topic that we can grab. So thank you.

Piet Lammert:

You're welcome. Thanks so much, Michelle.

I regularly speak with groups of parents and students about many admissions topics, including a general overview of admissions, the admissions timeline, what colleges are looking for, strategies for admission success, and financial aid. If you are interested in learning more about a presentation at your school, either virtual or live, please contact me at atmichelle@thecollegespy.com. I'd love to be a speaker for your next College Night, Financial Aid Night, or other event.

The College Spy's Tip of the Day:

Today's tip has to do with estimating the amount of financial aid you will receive from a college. Colleges are required by law to have a net price calculator on their websites. You enter information about yourself and a financial aid award estimate is given. The more detailed the questions you are asked, the better the estimate. Parents often make the mistake of assuming a college is too expensive based on the advertised sticker price, when in fact most students do not pay that sticker price. Use net price calculators to estimate the cost for you.



Today's college spotlight is on Bowdoin College.

Bowdoin College is a highly selective, small liberal arts college in mid-coast Maine, about 30 minutes north of the city of Portland. Bowdoin attracts enthusiastic learners who are passionate about their interests. 70% of students choose to create independent studies while at Bowdoin. Students are required to fulfill distribution requirements in five areas. The purpose of these requirements is to encourage students to sample courses they aren't familiar with, to expose them to new topics. The Common Good is a theme running through the student experience at Bowdoin, which stresses the importance of giving back. Not surprisingly, Bowdoin offers many service-based classes. Although Bowdoin is highly selective and the students who attend are very intelligent, I was told on my college tour that academically, students check their egos at the door. It's not a competitive environment. Students don't compare grades. In fact, they are more likely to brag about their friends' accomplishments than their own.

Areas of study not found at every small liberal arts college are: arctic studies, classics, coastal studies, Arabic, neuroscience, and urban studies. Famous alumni from Bowdoin include Franklin Pierce, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Robert E Peary, and Katie Benner.

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