

All roads lead to college

by Jared Johnson

(Note: This is the first of a two-part series on what it takes to be admitted to area colleges today.)

Of all the information Pam Hill has at her fingertips, one number means the most to Allen High School seniors: \$4,892,643. That's the total amount of scholarships awarded to the Class of '04. To make the math a little more meaningful, that's an average of \$5,637 in financial aid per graduate, or enough to cover 2-3 semesters of tuition at a majority of Texas colleges and universities.

This year's seniors hope the sum will only increase, and there's a favorable chance that it will happen thanks to all of the college-bound resources available at AHS. Hill, for one, stands ready to help. She manages a wealth of data at the school's College, Career and Scholarship Center (CCSC), a clearinghouse of brochures, catalogs, applications and scholarship postings. The relatively new facility is open before and after school and during lunch hours so students can get on track for admissions.

The need for the CCSC characterizes several shifts in college admissions from as recently as 5-10 years ago. Some trends are predictable; others are not. Among them are jumps in the number of applicants, lower acceptance rates, record-high qualifications among incoming freshmen, more first-generation students, younger parents,

more online resources, soaring tuition rates and greater options to make up for lower test scores. The greatest challenge is sifting through the rumors and finding correct information. At the time when the Class of '05 is ready to conquer the world, that world keeps changing.

So just what does it take to get into college today? Ten seniors answered that question in ten different ways. They credit their successful admissions to everything from attending volleyball camp to training themselves not to say the word "like" so frequently during interviews. Each of the many roads that start at AHS can lead to college; here are just a few.

Teisha Daniels decided during her junior year that film school was no longer the right place for her, leaving only a few short months to rewrite her top college picks. UCLA and USC got replaced at the top of her list with Purdue, the University of Oklahoma and the University of Texas-Austin. Her admissions strategy also changed. Instead of focusing on auditions, Daniels turned to some of the 64 extracurricular

clubs and youth organizations available at AHS. She joined student council and now serves as executive president. Besides teaching leadership skills that helped her win scholarships, student council gave her a forum in which she learned how to interact with adults.



Teisha Daniels (standing) says her grades got her into college while student council helped her earn scholarships and leadership experience.

"When you go into your interview for admission or a scholarship, you don't want to talk like a teenager. You want to act like an adult," she said.

In Daniels' case, that meant coaching herself not to use the word "like" so regularly in her speech. Apparently it worked. At the time this article went to press, she was weighing offers from Purdue and the University of Texas.

Marcella Young, senior class president, will take up her love for broadcast journalism at the University of Oklahoma this fall. Like Daniels, she credits student council with improving the way she presents herself, which has become an increasingly important factor to recruiters. Presentation skills are at the forefront of her planned major, and she has already honed them enough to win several top awards at national

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journalism contests. For both young women, extracurricular leadership activities became a road to showing their true selves to admissions officers.

Ask offensive lineman Jerrod Butler about admissions, and he'll likely draw a sigh of relief that the process is now essentially complete. On February 2 he officially signed to play football at the University of Houston. Recruiting was a new experience for Butler and his parents, and it came with plenty of question marks. On top of arranging a highlight tape and speaking with recruiters, he had to familiarize himself with a lengthy list of NCAA eligibility standards. It wasn't a simple matter of playing hard and waiting for someone to throw a scholarship at his feet. "At least it will be easier for my little brother!" he laughed, pointing out that the lessons learned by his family this time around should ease the process in the future.

Of course, the rules could change again before the younger Butler ever talks to scouts. Athletes have to meet GPA and test score requirements on a sliding scale to play in NCAA Division I. As of August 1, that scale will include grades from fourteen core courses instead of thirteen. The scale will also "slide" further up, meaning students can make up for lower test scores with a higher GPA. AHS conducts a college night each year to explain new rules and make sure athletes have the best chance of getting scholarship offers.

"Signing helps a young person get an education. And that's what we're in it for," said Terry Gambill, the Eagles' defensive coordinator.

Volleyball middle blocker Whitney Stare is on the other side of the equation. Her father and brother both played college sports, which simplified her application process. With their help, Stare was able to take a proactive approach to recruitment beginning in her sophomore year. Her father contacted schools and quizzed some of them about the amount of playing time she would likely see. She attended volleyball camps for five years and played on a club team during off-seasons. Her greatest challenge before signing with Southwest Baptist University was deciding what she wanted from the college experience.



Jerrod Butler was all smiles on College Signing Day. The big payoff for enduring the athletic recruiting procedure.

"The hardest thing was choosing between a Division I school where I knew I wouldn't play until at least my junior year, and a Division II or III school where I'd be a lot more involved from the start," said Stare. "I had to decide what I really wanted – attending a school

for playing time or just because of its name."

Butler and Stare both noticed differences in the recruiting process between now and the time they first dreamed of signing day.

"The game is a different speed now than it was [three years ago]," said Butler. "Looking at my freshman tapes, there's no comparison. Back then it was just running around looking for somebody to hit. Now it takes more, mentally and physically. And it will be a different speed when I play college ball."

"It's harder to get in now than when I first started narrowing down schools. They want you to commit in the middle of your junior year," said Stare.

At least one thing will always stay the same: the road to college athletics gives young people an education long before they set foot on campus. ❖

Jared Johnson is a Public Information Specialist at Allen I.S.D.

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It's unfortunate that time will permit only a brief glimpse into the lives of this year's graduates when they walk across the stage on May 26. Each of the 962 seniors deserves more than a few




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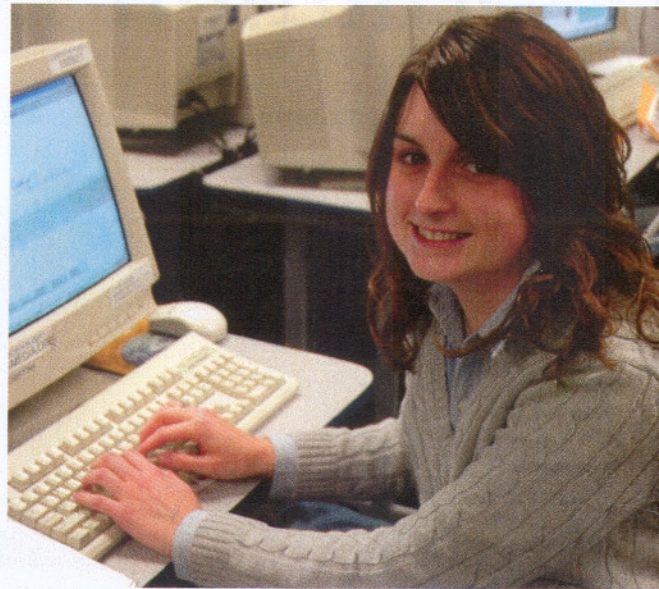
seconds in the spotlight for reaching this milestone. We recognize the immeasurable contributions of parents, family, teachers and staff members who have supported Allen High School students all along the way.

Every senior has had opportunities to discover his or her own road to college. Some have earned their moment of glory at Commencement by catching up on a new language. Others have spent time outside of class participating in one of Allen High School's 64 extracurricular clubs and activities. In each case, we salute their achievements and wish them luck in the future.

The following profiles represent merely a fraction of the Class of 2005.

Alice Shepherd - Valedictorian

Alice Shepherd doesn't plan to rest on her laurels after being named valedictorian. The British native plans to study international diplomacy in college, gain experience abroad and eventually work for a global aid organization such as UNICEF or the United Nations. She



Alice Shepherd

wants communities to share her passion for diplomatic problem solving, a skill she learned while serving as managing editor of the school newspaper. Two years on the Eagle Angle staff taught her how to frame a story in a way that motivates her peers.

In addition to journalism, Alice maintained the senior class' highest GPA while fulfilling the requirements to earn a prestigious IB full diploma. She was able to balance her academic studies while always looking for the scoop. If her high school career is any indication, Alice's story is only beginning to be written.

"In every class, I feel like I've had a teacher with a real passion for the subject. They've been incredible at encouraging us," said Shepherd.

Jenna Doss - Orchestra

Jenna Doss has always been dedicated to the violin outside of regular school hours. She was forced to spend extra time catching up



Jenna Doss

when she started in sixth grade—several years late by orchestra standards. Her dedication paid off in high school. She ultimately earned the title of concertmaster by becoming first-chair violinist. After school she taught elementary string students in the Cross Timbers Youth Orchestra and performed with the renowned New Conservatory of Dallas.

Jenna was a member of the AHS orchestra when it was named the sixth-best varsity ensemble in the state in 2004. She will take a piece of that success with her when she begins pursuing her music education degree at Texas Tech University this fall.

"Everyone's excited because something that basically came from nowhere is really important now, and I feel like I had something to do with it," she said.

Hector Luna - LULAC

Hector Luna's classmates and teachers at Curtis Middle School drove him to learn English quickly after he moved from Monterrey, México in seventh grade. By his sophomore year, he had mastered the language enough

Serving as vice president for the AHS chapter of LULAC helped Hector gain the confidence to communicate effectively. He plans to use that confidence to eventually become a business owner. He also hopes to continue his relationship with LULAC, planning to run for the organization's state director position next year while attending CCCC.

"LULAC taught me how to talk in front of people," said Luna. "To be successful you have to learn to be responsible."

Amy Woodard - Advanced Placement

It was easy for Amy Woodard to choose advanced classes that suited her interests this year. Allen High School offers 22 of the available 27 Advanced Placement (AP) courses, enabling her to pick three in which she could excel. In addition, Amy completed concurrent-enrollment English that earned dual credit at CCCC.

In her case, the fast-paced curriculum required her to learn more quickly than previous classes. Amy

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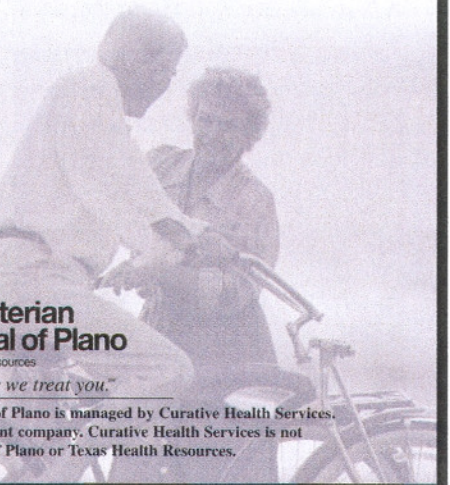
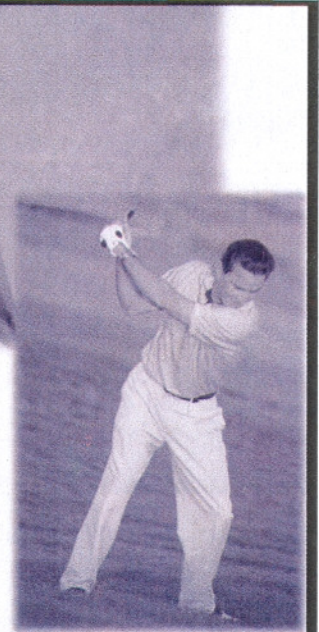
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Hector Luna

to begin tutoring recent immigrants who faced the same struggle. Hector began volunteering two nights a week in the district's Family Literacy Program along with other members of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).





Amy Woodard

secured a position among the top ranks of her graduating class by gaining a strong grasp of social skills and time management. The honors programs at the University of Oklahoma and Texas Tech University looked particularly inviting as she weighed college options.

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"I feel like I achieved more because of the advanced classes," said Woodard. "I've always had the classes I need."

Alex Soto - Hospitality Services

A love of cooking eventually gave Alex Soto new career options. He participated in the hospitality services internship program for two years, which required him to spend two mornings a week at the Hilton Garden Inn and Southfork Hotel. As he spoke with hotel managers and spent time behind the front desk, he learned about economics. In the kitchen, he was able to accommodate guests from behind the scenes and perfect new entrées.

Now Alex lists hotel management and economics as potential career options. He plans on studying at CCCC before transferring to Texas Tech University. He'll carry away from high school the keys to customer service as well as the secret to grilling a succulent filet mignon.

"I think I've learned everything I possibly could at school," said Soto. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Kyndell Upton - Art

Although Kyndell Upton has always wanted to be an artist, she never knew how far it could take her until her senior year. Kyndell won a nationwide art contest for a digitally created

masterpiece that was originally an assignment for International Baccalaureate (IB) art class. She won over 452 other entrées using graphics programs that she had learned just a few months earlier. Her teachers and classmates became resources as she designed a montage of song lyrics, newspaper text and photographs.

Kyndell's next magnum opus is a degree in graphic design or



Alex Soto

advertising. Her three years at Allen High School and a natural talent have given her the ability to draw up an illustrious career.

"Teachers are such an immense source of information. You have to have someone start you and put you in a direction," said Upton. ❖

Jared Johnson is a public information specialist for the Allen Independent School District.



Kyndell Upton