

NEED FINDING

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OUR TEAM



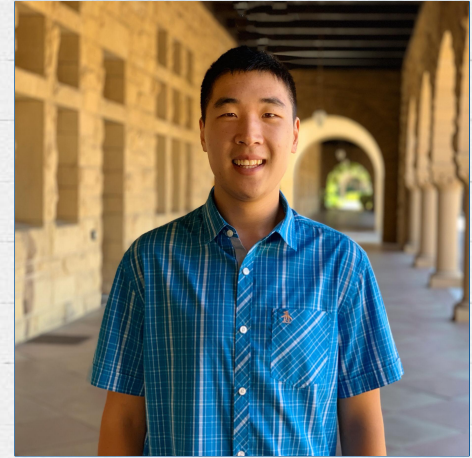
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Helping bridge the gap
between high school and
college, and making that
process equitable





Needfinding
Methodology

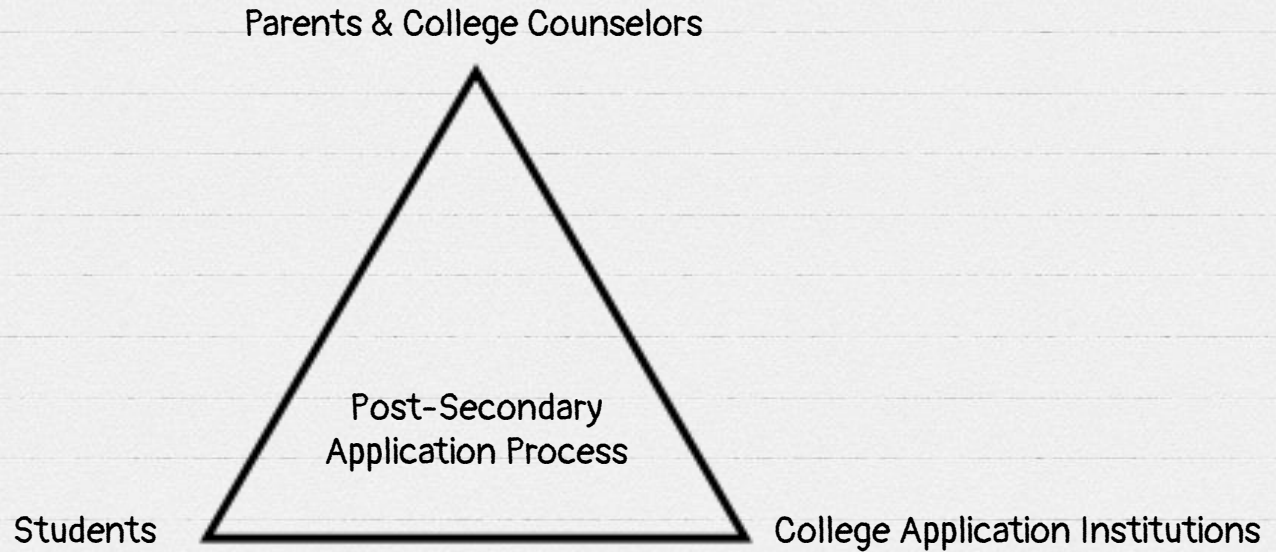


who?

why?

how?

Who we interviewed



Questions We Asked

What tools did you use to help you with the college application process?

What did you wish you knew about the process before applying to college?

How did you decide to apply to the schools that you did?

How did you choose the colleges you wanted to apply to?

Who/what did you turn to for help when you were confused about the process?

What was your high and low during the college application season?

Why did you decide to apply to college (or why didn't you)?

Were finances ever an issue? If so, can you elaborate?

When did you start thinking about what you were going to do after high school?

When did you start thinking about what your child might do after high school?

How active were you in your child's college application process?

What measures do you take to make your platform equitable?



Interview
Results

Grace

“It was just surprising how much you need to know about each school and how hard the information could be to find sometimes.”



HS senior from Colorado

Mick

“It was great just having that designated person as the source of information.

She pretty much knew everything about applying to any school in the US.”



College Frosh @ CU Boulder

Anna

“As a parent I just want to create a peaceful environment for my children, away from stress at school.”



Parent of current college student and college graduate

Martin

“My favorite thing about college admissions is reading students’ breathtaking stories.”



College Counselor at The Harker School
Former Assistant Dean of Admissions at
Stanford

Adam

“Working at the Common App allows me to leverage untapped scale to make institutional change to the college application process”



Associate Director, The Common App
Former McKinsey Consultant, Higher Ed

Empathy Map

"No one really knew anything, so of course the people at [my high school] **weren't exactly the best resources.**"

"I definitely felt like **everyone else knew something that I didn't** when it came to these applications."

"As an immigrant parent, I had **no idea how to help** with college apps in the U.S."

"We need **more examples** of what applications look like on the Internet."

"It's frustrating that applying to college is **harder than filing tax returns**"

Say



Avoided talking to her **peers** about the process because it was awkward

Showed us **many Excel sheets** he used to keep track of which colleges he wanted to apply to

Kept reflecting on how the college process is so **different in China**

Frequently brought up **personal experiences** with students

Sat up straighter when talking about **improving equity for students**

Do



I wish I had **more resources** to turn to for help

I wish I had prepared **more ahead of time**

Think



I wish my child knew more about college admissions **early** on.

I wish students would plan **finances** earlier.

I wish the process of applying to college was more **streamlined**

Frustrated when information was not all in one place

Stressed and uncertain about getting all of the information he needed


Feel



Confused when her child would come to her for help

Sad when students realize too late how big finances play in applying to colleges

Concerned that students don't always finish their applications



Needs, Insights,
and Analysis

For Students

Insight

There was contradiction between wanting in-person interaction yet feeling awkward talking to peers about the process.

Need

Someone to comfortably talk to about concerns and advice on the process.

“It was really unrelatable and uncomfortable talking about it”

For Students

Insight

It is surprisingly difficult to find the information you are looking for in one place, which can frustrate and overwhelm students.

Need

Consolidated, updated, and easy-to-use resources on how to navigate the process.

“It was really difficult to assess everything.”

“Very unreliable guides, tended to be outdated.”

For Parents

Insight

Parents want their children to independently take initiative of the college application process.

Need

More transparency of the college application process and early insight of how it works.

“I don’t know much about colleges in the U.S., and I want my daughters to be independent and make their own decisions.”

For Counselors

Insight

Students need to learn more about financing for college early on and plan better if that is their plan.

Need

More communication from colleges about how financial aid works and available scholarships.

“Colleges don’t give a fair and honest picture of the admissions process.”

For Common App

Insight

Many students do not have access to a computer at home to fill out their applications

Need

More innovative technological solutions to allow students to apply for college easier

“Over a third of students still don't have a computer at home to apply to colleges”

Summary

People need:

- X Someone to comfortably talk to about the process**
- X A simpler way to apply to colleges**
- X More transparency about the college admissions process**
- X Consolidated, easy-to-use resources**
- X More early-on guidance about the college application process**
- X A more accessible way to apply to colleges**

QUESTIONS?



APPENDIX



Empathy Map - Grace

Empathy Map for Grace

Raeesa Moktader | January 20, 2021

SAY

"There weren't a lot of people to turn to for help"

"Really difficult to assess everything"

"It was really unreliable and uncomfortable talking about it"

"I think all of us staying at home, like no interactions with other people, just made it worse"

"I asked him about college and I started crying. It was really bad. I've never done that before..."

"It was just surprising how much you need to know about each school and how hard the information could be to find sometimes"

"I felt like I still didn't really know what was going on"

"No one really knew anything, so of course the people at [my high school] weren't exactly the best resources"

"It wasn't very good, to be honest" talking about the way she kept track of deadlines

"You already had to come in with your essay almost basically done"

THINK

I am drawn to organized, simple, consolidated resources

I did not expect to have to dedicate this much energy into researching

I wish I could talk to people that are applying/have applied to similar or the same schools as me to understand the process better

Getting others' input on my writing was helpful if the person knew me well

I wish I had prepared and researched more ahead of time

I wish I had more resources to turn to for help

I would tell other students to talk to teachers ahead of time

I wish it was less awkward to talk to my friends about the process

The application process is both a very time- and emotionally-intensive process

I wish I had a better way of keeping track of deadlines

DO

Had a teacher she was close to review some of her essay responses

Made a checklist of questions she needs to answer

When college admission results were coming in during mid-December, one day when she was at one of her teachers' OH and began to cry from the built-up stress she felt and the thought of how much more work she would have to do if she didn't get into any of the schools she applied to

Reached out to people she knew outside of school to help review her essays

Changed her college list quite often as she continued to do research

Did not really talk to her peers about the process; her friends were applying to 'completely' different schools and it was unreliable/uncomfortable to talk about

Did not really talk to her counselor about resources and when she did, did not receive many tools/resources to help with the process

Answers essay questions school by school, which ones she felt were important or had deadlines first

Only kept track of 2 major deadlines: November 1st and January 1st (even though apps might have been due before/after)

FEEL

Discouraged from applying when a college rep from a school did not visit her high school

Pressured by deadlines

Uncertain about how she was approaching the process

Disoriented by lack of resources/people to turn to for help

Frustrated when she was not able to find information all in one place or the tools that she used did not function properly or had unhelpful data

Stressed out by the amount of work and lack of resources

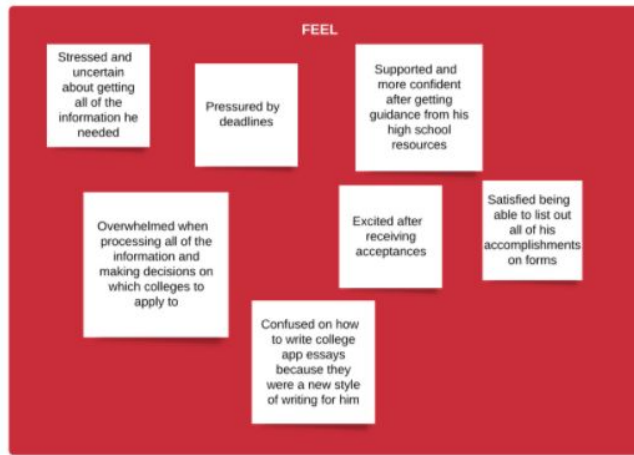
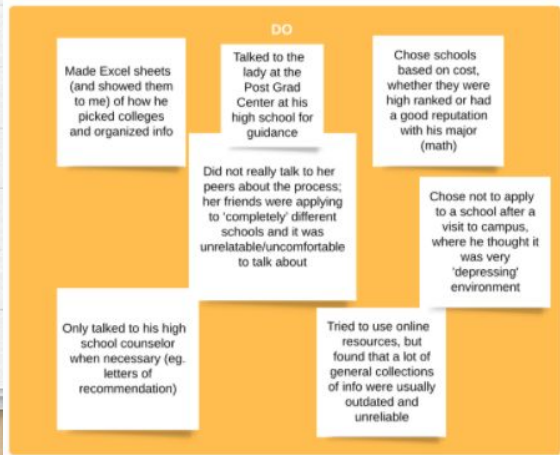
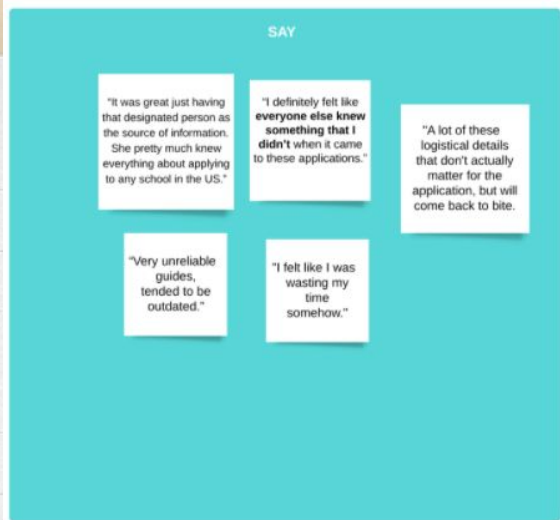
Excited after receiving an acceptance after an earlier rejection

Relieved after the process was over

Overwhelmed by the idea that finding information was mostly an individual responsibility

Panicked when decisions started coming out

Empathy Map - Mick



Empathy Map - Adam



Empathy Map - Martin

SAYS "testing should be free"

"favorite thing about admissions is the storytelling"

"schools should be about people not numbers"

"college admissions is like a pinball machine"

"the engine that drives most college admissions is the supplemental question"

"focus on finding stories in each student"

"high schools don't want too much out of their minorities"

"colleges don't give a fair/honest picture of the admissions process"

"need more examples of applications (colleges) on the internet"

"technology has forced kids to do more"

THINKS - how he would want to reform the college application process

- his own high school - college process (including transferring!)

- how his students would want to reform the college app process

- how colleges have veered away from content and to #s and campus appearances

- how much the secondary education environment changed

i.e. the growth of the # of college campuses

- the unhealthy obsession w/ college name brands

- how it continues to play a larger & larger role in the college application process

- how many colleges don't set aside that much for student financial aid

- how immigrant families have a warped perception of the college admission process

DOES - related all his examples of colleges to me - i.e. "Coline... blah blah"

- joked around a lot

- brought up his time in different schools a lot

- very charming - extremely personable

- protected me from a college admissions standpoint + used that as an example throughout

- went on many rambling stories - talked more as the interview progressed

- smiled throughout every conversation

- spoke very casually + was very easy to relate to

FEELS - excited when thinking about all the college applications + tech in the college admissions process

- nostalgic when talking about his previous experiences in education

- reflective of his work + job

- curious about this project + class

- comfortable telling his stories + giving advice to a young student

- helpful with his many resources

- happy to talk to hear about like updates about his previous studies

- upset + angry with the lack of transparency in the college side of admissions

- passionate when thinking about his students' stories + their amazing essays

Empathy Map - Anna

SAY "give my daughter peaceful environment"
"so many essays"

"^{kids} had more fun before high school"

"kids need to make their own decisions w/ college"

"I affected 20% of my daughter's decision in attending college"

"US ranking is the best"

"compared to other countries, us, ethics in education is better"

"tests here should be deemphasized"

THINK - why use technology to build these products

- about her time in China as a college student

- about her daughters

- about her time taking exams in China

- about how to make the application system more equitable

- thinking about secondary education @ America

- thinking how education = success

DO = not much bc phone call

- mentioned her daughters a lot to relate to me (same age)

- asked about how I was doing initially

- took kind of long to open up — took 15 min or so to get her comfortable + in the moment w/ me

- referenced her experiences in China + Korea a lot

- talked about how fellow parents saw college when I asked about her thoughts — graphitic?

FEEL

- feels nostalgic → think about time daughter was home

- stressed — thinking about a stressful time

- helpful — was very happy each time I phoned her

- regretful — daughters were very stressful

- excited — talking to someone new in this case to ^{lonely} ^{guarantee}

- glad — to talk to someone she hasn't talked to in a while

- relieved — sharing questions about college app process w/

- confused — haven't spoken to someone else to her in ages