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The Best College Admissions Counselors

These top independent college admissions counselors offer everything from basic test prep and essay coaching to comprehensive academic and extracurricular planning and application vetting.

BY [NORMAN VANAMEE](#) PUBLISHED: SEP 22, 2025

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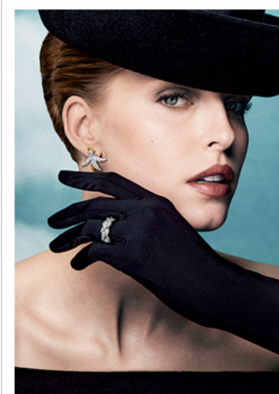
Business is booming for independent college admissions counselors, driven by plummeting acceptance rates, rising tuition, and a seemingly universal obsession with a short list of top schools everyone wants to attend. As a result, what was once an industry made up of small players has mushroomed into a **\$3 billion colossus** that now includes large consultancies that employ scores, sometimes hundreds, of advisers who work with national and international clients applying to schools in the U.S. and around the world.

And while small shops—typically an individual who knows their clients' local high schools and communities like the back of their hand—continue to serve as a primary resource for many families, some are turning to larger firms with more offerings.

The companies below include counselors who T&C has worked with in the past and who were recommended by our network of education-world experts. They offer a variety of services—everything from basic test prep and essay coaching to multi-year academic, extracurricular, and application planning—at a wide range of price points. Each has its own unique approach and philosophy; make sure to choose one that lines up with your student's personality and goals.

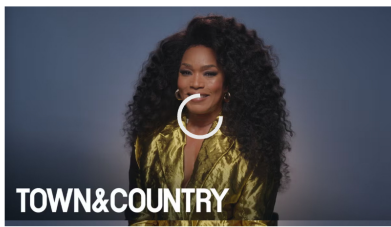
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Application Nation



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Sara Haberson worked both as a high school admissions counselor and in college admissions departments (including as an associate dean of admissions at University of Pennsylvania) before she created Application Nation in 2018. It offers college admissions

and transfer counseling in a virtual platform that includes monthly subscriptions for live talks, discussions, and Q&A sessions as well as a la carte services, including private counseling, essay coaching, application reviews, mock interviews, and more. **Signature Service:** Haberson and her team of counselors (many of whom worked in admission offices at top colleges and universities) work with students to assess their own strengths and passions and craft compelling personal statements, a process she described in her 2021 book, *Soundbite: The Admissions Secret That Gets You Into College and Beyond*. **Selling Point:** “What makes Application Nation different from other college counseling models is that it attracts families from all income levels. Some families only pay for the monthly membership and take advantage of the private forum to ask all of their questions and learn from other families’ questions and use all of the resources provided with the membership. Other families purchase every single add-on service.” **Fees:** Application Nation welcomes families as early as ninth grade. Monthly memberships start at \$69 per month and go up to \$99 per month (for families who join later). A la carte add-on services start at \$250 and go up to \$2,000. [Application Nation](#)



APPLICATION NATION

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The Butler Method International

Matt Butler began his advisory service in 2005 shortly after graduating from Harvard College and the London School of Economics. The company is named after a reading strategy he developed to help students navigate standardized tests. He and his 40-person team work to help students with college,

secondary school, graduate, business, and law school applications, as well as all levels of standardized test prep and subject-specific tutoring. The company works with an international clientele (remotely, in person, or a combination of both). **Signature Service:** Its MB360 program starts at the end of middle school and beginning of high school and assists families in formulating a comprehensive strategy for course selection, subject tutoring, test prep, and college applications. **Selling point:** “Through in-depth conversations and thoughtful exploration, we uncover the most authentic and compelling aspects of a student’s character. We then craft a narrative that showcases those qualities to admissions committees in essays that are both thought-provoking and engaging,” says Butler. **Fees:** An entry-level college admissions package—working personally with Matt Butler from junior through senior year—



BUTLER



starts at \$75,000. [The Butler Method International](#)

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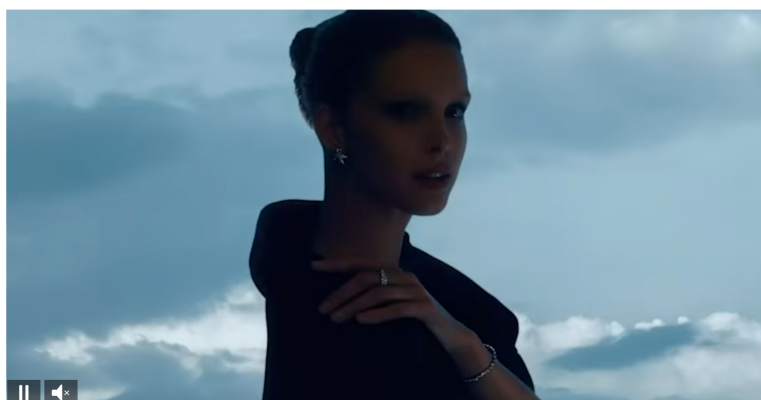
The Duchess of Gloucester's Honeysuckle Tiara

Crimson Education

Co-founded in 2013 by Jamie Beaton and Fangzhou Jiang, Crimson focuses primarily on college admissions but also works with families preparing for private school applications, as well as individuals looking to pursue graduate and professional degrees. Its nearly 400-person team works with clients in 27 countries who are applying mostly to elite American universities. Crimson clients are supported by a team of experts, including a dedicated strategist (their lead admissions counselor), a former admissions officer from a top U.S. university, and a range of specialist mentors. **Signature Service:** Crimson offers programs for students who want to focus on capstone and research projects, academic competitions, and work experience. For students looking to boost their academic profile, Crimson's online high school—Crimson Global Academy—offers full-time enrollment and part-time courses, including APs or A-levels, that are fully accredited and recognized by top colleges. **Selling Point:** "Every part of the Crimson experience is managed in-house to ensure quality," says Beaton. "At the end of each admissions cycle, Crimson analyzes the trends driving success across its graduating class and uses insights to evolve its programs and strategies." **Fees:** Crimson builds each program from the ground up, as a rough guide, a program starting in junior year would begin at \$12,000. For families seeking multi-year, high-touch support, programs can range from \$100,000 to \$200,000 [Crimson Education](#)



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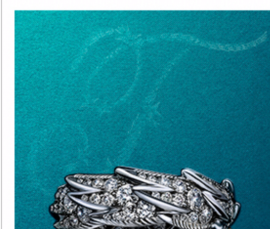


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Great Expectations College Prep

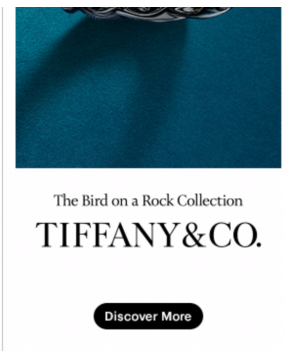
Jen Kaifesh has been advising high schoolers on college admissions since she was an undergraduate at Northwestern University. She



founded Great Expectations College Prep (GECP) in 2006 and now employs a team of 35 counselors and tutors who work with a global clientele. GECP offers K-12, college, and graduate school application counseling as well as academic tutoring and standardized test prep. It also offers athletic recruitment counseling. **Signature Service:** GECP offers families the choice between packages of hours (for those who prefer a more self-directed approach) and flat-rate, grade-specific programs that provide action items and deliverables. **Selling Point:** "At the end of the day, colleges want strong students, but they also want real people with real commitment to their interests, and we have helped thousands of students excel in high school while also creating a narrative that is both authentic and unique—all while ensuring the journey is as stress-free and seamless as possible," says Kaifesh. **Fees:** Flat-rate programs are grade-specific, and the prices vary by grade. Ninth grade programs start at \$3,250. [Great Expectations College Prep](#)

**GREAT
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GREAT EXPECTATIONS



IvyWise

Kat Cohen received a Ph.D. from Yale and served as a reader for its admissions office before she founded IvyWise in 1998. Her company now has 40 counselors who work with students across the U.S. and in countries around the world, offering K-8, college, and graduate school admissions counseling as well as tutoring, test prep, and research mentorship. **Signature service:** Starting in August of their senior year, each student has their entire application, including transcripts, scores, extracurriculars, college lists, essays, and recommendations, reviewed by a "Roundtable" team of IvyWise counselors who have served as admissions officers at top colleges and universities. Recently added services include bespoke guided college tours and an unlimited-access advisory plan, which allows clients to reach out to their counselors at any time. **Selling point:** "Students get the individual relationship of working one-on-one with their own counselor but also have access to the whole IvyWise team," says IvyWise's Katie Burns. **Fees:** IvyWise programs that include unlimited access to Roundtable start at \$14,000. A comprehensive, multi-year college admissions counseling program is about \$50,000. The IvyWise Initial Consultation, a detailed service that includes an in-depth pre-screen of the student's profile followed by a 90-minute meeting, starts at around \$1,500. [IvyWise](#)



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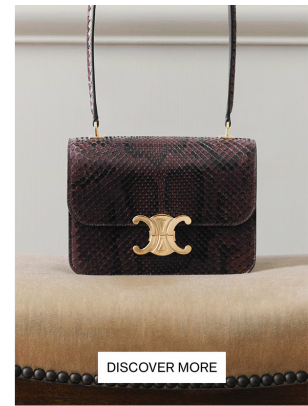
Lindsay Tanne founded LogicPrep in 2008 while she was an English major at Harvard. What began as a personal mission to help high

LOGICPREP



school students articulate their stories through their college essays evolved into a full-service firm with 60 experts and advisors who work with students around the globe. Along with college admissions counseling (starting as early as seventh grade and going through 12th), it offers subject matter tutoring, test preparation, and more. For those interested in attending school abroad, its global advisors bring deep knowledge of the admissions landscapes in Europe, the U.K., and Canada. **Signature Service:** All of LogicPrep's programs blend a structured framework with highly personalized guidance. It operates as a one-stop shop, with college advisors, essay coaches, and tutors working in close collaboration to maximize each student's potential. **Selling Point:** "We take the time to truly understand each student's strengths and help them build a high school journey and a college list that fits who they are and where they'll thrive, long after the acceptance letter arrives," says Tanne. **Fees:** College advising packages start in the low \$20,000s for a comprehensive, multi-year experience and can increase depending on a variety of factors, including the number of schools on the student's list and the scope of services. [LogicPrep](#)

LOGICPREP



Rhodes Educational Consulting

Alexandra Dumas Rhodes, who has a master's in English from Stanford, established her consultancy in 2004 and now leads a small team that works with national and international clients virtually from an office in Beverly Hills, California. It offers four years of high school academic coaching and college admissions prep, including counseling on essay and supplement writing, interview technique, and strategies for admission and college selection. Rhodes also advises college transfer students and assists with personal statements for other higher education applications, including post-baccalaureate programs, graduate school, medical school, and law school. Another specialty is helping student-athletes and artists who are navigating the college recruitment process. **Signature service:** Clients can work with one counselor at Rhodes throughout the application process and add specialists (e.g. an essay coach) as needed. Or they can opt for Rhodes's hybrid model, which pairs two specialists with each student. **Selling Point:** "We believe that the college application process is a journey towards more than just finding the best-match colleges; it is a chance for a student to become his or her most authentic self during high school," says Rhodes. "Our motto is: 'Helping maximize options while minimizing anxiety.'" **Fees:** Rhodes works on a per-hour basis (with a minimum commitment of four hours) with rates ranging from \$200 to \$550 per hour, depending on the counselor and the service. [Rhodes Educational Consulting](#)



RHODES

Top Tier Admissions

Co-founded in 2005 by Dr. Michele Hernández, a former assistant director of admissions at Dartmouth, and Mimi Doe, who received a master's degree in education from Harvard, Top Tier offers grades 4 through 8, college, transfer, and graduate school admissions counseling as well as test prep, tutoring, and interview coaching. **Signature Service:** The company got its start by hosting an Application Boot Camp, a four-day intensive program held in August for high school students entering their senior year. The Boot Camp is still going strong, though most clients today start college admissions much earlier than senior year. **Selling Point:** The company's focus is: "cultivating a love of learning and helping foster authentic interests so kids get excited about what they want to learn about and that they



TOPTIER

understand these different areas that they could pursue in college," says company CEO (and a daughter of one of the co-founders) Elizabeth Doe Stone. **Fees:** Top Tier Admissions offers programs and products that range from the mid-four figures for essay coaching to multi-year, six-figure packages that provide comprehensive support for students and their families. [Top Tier Admissions](#)



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Norman Vanamee is the articles director of Town & Country.

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