

COURSE OVERVIEW

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PREP CAMP is taught by Eric Cohen, Mercer Education's director, and intended for high school students entering their senior year. Over the course of four weeks, students will cover an extensive range of college selection and admissions assignments and materials addressing all aspects of the application process including essay writing, interviewing, strategic planning and communications, school lists and professional resumes. The components build on each other and will be covered in a logical, chronological order. Time spent in each area may vary depending on the needs of the class, and there will be some overlap as components are revisited and student work is revised and resubmitted.

EMPHASIS ON POWERFUL WRITING

Of all the elements that go into a successful school application, none is more important than a *persuasive story*. Good or even great transcripts are not enough. Admissions officers at selective colleges routinely testify to the harsh reality that they could have rejected their entire entering freshman class and replaced them several times over with candidates of equally strong academic profiles. In such a competitive environment, how does one stand out? More than anything, an inspired personal statement can make a strong impression and tip the scales. The drudgery of getting through a crush of forgettable essays riddled with clichés and top heavy with plot summary is a sad fact of life for this small team of university employees for several months every year, and they long for good, insightful writing. As one Cornell admissions officer nicely put it, "we want to catch students in the act of thinking."

Eric has spent close to three decades helping students to tell their stories. His approach entails a simultaneous push to brainstorm ideas, dive into the writing process, and familiarize students with a type of writing (most often narrative) that differs substantially from what they have been doing (expository and analytic) in high school. He provides close guidance and feedback of student work, "getting in the trenches" with students to refine their writing and map out topics and approaches when they encounter writer's block. Students working with Eric will examine a wide range of sample essays, both to spark ideas about possible approaches and to learn what constitutes a "good" or not-so-good essay. Providing encouragement and humor each step of the way, Eric methodically breaks down the process into manageable steps and helps students to elevate their writing.

CLASS SIZE AND SCHEDULE

Mercer Education's *COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PREP CAMP* meets* for 2.5 hours per day from 3:30-6pm, twice a week (Tuesdays and Fridays) for four weeks for a total of approximately 20 hours of focused college counseling and admissions preparation. The class size is limited to six (6) students total so that students can benefit from each other's experiences while still receiving personalized attention. If there is adequate enrollment (which there usually is), we expect to

open an additional Wednesday/Saturday group (3:30pm/9:30am). Unlike our other camps, this 4-week course is only offered in Session II of our camp program. As spaces are extremely limited (capped at six students), it tends to fill up, so please contact us early if you wish to participate.

** Depending upon student preference and other factors, we may hold this **remotely via Zoom** or **in person**, though with the pandemic behind us, the default preference is in person. Be sure to indicate your preference on page 1 of the camp application.*

DETAILS

A major focus of the course is to encourage students to take charge of the application process immediately. For example, to “hit the ground running,” students will receive an application writing assignment to complete and bring with them to the first day of classes. Assignments are designed to engage students, to push them to identify criteria for schools of interest, improve their understanding of what constitutes an impressive application essay, and provide direction and encouragement as they attend to multiple tasks. Over the course of four weeks, students follow an accelerated schedule that provides a comprehensive look at the process and the requirements leading to successful college admissions.

Because many seniors are not fully prepared to meet the deadlines that they will soon be facing, this camp is designed to follow a fast-paced curriculum that instructs students in making informed decisions regarding college selection and in working on all the necessary components of the application process within a compressed period of time. The course objective is to enhance the likelihood that students will select colleges best-suited to them and that they will gain admission through thorough preparation and quality work that will impress admissions counselors, selection committees, and alumni interviewers—anyone who reviews and must choose from the thousands of applicants each year those students whose applications stand out from the crowd.

COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ **OVERVIEW** – Taking ownership of the application process, pinpointing tasks and deadlines.
- ▶ **APPLICATION ESSAYS** – Special focus on application essays in order to complete multiple polished personal statements and supplemental essays with extensive feedback.
- ▶ **COLLEGE SELECTION** – Developing a list of schools to best fit each student’s objectives.
- ▶ **PROFESSIONAL RESUME** – Thinking through goals and preparing necessary documentation for academic advisors and recommenders.
- ▶ **INTERVIEWING** – Learning what interviewers are looking for and conducting mock interviews.
- ▶ **OTHER** – Exploring long-term career considerations in relation to the application process.

Note: This is a selective program that assumes a degree of writing competence on the part of the participating students. Prior to acceptance for enrollment, Mercer Education may request that students submit a writing sample based on an assignment we will provide. Those students who do not quite meet this level of writing proficiency will be encouraged to work directly with teachers in private (one-on-one) classes.