



No Application to Hide Behind

Caroline Rosetti

2009 Graduate of Convent of the Sacred Heart School (CA)

According to Plato, 'The beginning is the most important part of the work.' The beginning of my college application process was one that did not include traditional steps such as essay-writing and application processing. My process started with phone calls and emails to various crew coaches around the country. In addition, my college application process began and ended nearly a year before most of my peers. When being recruited for college as an athlete with a learning difference, the process is more like applying for a job than applying for a spot in a freshman class.

One of the major differences was the amount of work I had to do on my own. From emailing coaches, sending test scores and creating a résumé-type document, I had to be the one that completed most of the communication. I really had to know what I wanted because I was often asked questions by coaches such as, "Why do you want to go to school here?" "What kind of emotions do you feel when you are on this campus?" and "Why do you want to wear our colors?" I had to have answers ready for those questions; I couldn't hide behind an application. I was talking to adults every day, having to explain directly to them why I wanted to go to their school.

Because I have dyslexia, I also had to be mindful to disclose my learning difference. I had to be sure that the school would be willing to provide the academic support that I needed once I arrived

Disclosing my learning profile during initial conversations was appreciated by many of the coaches with whom I came in contact. Although difficult to hear, a few coaches did not waste any time telling me that I did not qualify academically. In hindsight however, even though they were quick to judge me, I was able to eliminate those schools sooner rather than later making the process more efficient.

on campus so I could be as successful in the classroom as I am on the water. I created a document, similar to a résumé, that contained all of my crew stats in addition to my transcript, GPA, SAT scores and my learning profile so that coaches could be aware of who I am as a whole person, not just as an athlete.

For me, the fact that so much of the process depended directly on my ability to communicate effectively was thrilling. I loved the independence I found in the process. It was also very easy for me to sell myself as an athlete. However, the challenge resided in my ability to also sell myself as a student. Although my GPA was very competitive as compared to other crew athletes, my SAT scores were disproportionately lower than would be expected considering my GPA. I had to explain my learning profile to many coaches in order for them to understand who I was as a learner because who I was as an athlete needed no explanation. Disclosing my learning profile during initial conversations was appreciated by many of

the coaches with whom I came in contact. Although difficult to hear, a few coaches did not waste any time telling me that I did not qualify academically. In hindsight however, even though they were quick to judge me, I was able to eliminate those schools sooner rather than later making the process more efficient.

To take this step with such independence really helped me understand who I am, to become more confident in who I am as a learner, and to articulate to others most clearly about what I have to offer. Although being diagnosed with dyslexia was challenging in the beginning, that beginning wound up being the most important part of the work. It has allowed me to better understand who I am and what I need—all major contributors to a successful college application process.

Take a glimpse into what is important in your students' lives in the *Journal's* new department, Voices That Matter.

To suggest an interviewee, email the editor at journal@nacacnet.org.