

AT TOP SCHOOLS, ONE IN TEN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICERS VISITS APPLICANTS' SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

NEW YORK, NY (September 18, 2008) -- A word of caution to college applicants: be careful what you post online. A Kaplan survey of 320 admissions officers from the nation's top colleges and universities* revealed that one out of ten admissions officers has visited an applicant's social networking Web site as part of the admissions decision-making process.

The good news: a quarter of those who report viewing applicants' sites say that these viewings have generally had a positive impact on their evaluation. The bad news: a greater percentage (38 percent) report that applicants' social networking sites have generally had a negative impact on their admissions evaluation. In one instance, an admissions officer was looking at a student community web site for feedback on their school. One applicant submitted a review, and the officer tracked down that student's social network profile. On the profile, the student bragged that he felt that he had aced the application process for that school, and also that he didn't feel that he wanted to attend that school. This led the officer to reject the applicant.

"The social networking frontier is a bit like the Wild West for colleges and universities -- everyone is trying to figure out how to navigate it," said Jeff Olson, Executive Director of Research for Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions. "The vast majority of schools we surveyed said they have no official policies or guidelines in place regarding visiting applicants' social networking web sites — nor are they considering plans to develop them." For schools who reported having a policy, generally the policy is not to look at or factor these sites into the evaluation. One admissions officer reported, "Staff can visit them for narrowly defined reasons, but can't go on a fishing expedition." Another noted, "We use [social networking sites] to contact students but do not consider them as part of the application process."

Sandra Starke, vice provost for enrollment management at Binghamton University, State University of New York, said, "Using social networking sites in the admissions process is somewhat of a sticky wicket! Looking into a site that a 16 or 17 year-old sees as somewhat private (even though it is quite public) is challenging. In many cases, students post things that are not true and cannot be validated in any way. We only look at a social networking site if and when invited to by a student. And since we tend to have a holistic approach to our admissions process...the sites had a minimal impact on the final decision. But we are very aware of the trend and will continue to monitor it."

Separate research from Kaplan showed that most parents of high school students think the practice of colleges and universities looking at social networking sites when evaluating applicants is unfair.

The evolving intersection between social networking sites and the college admissions process has spawned a host of online sites that allow students to post Facebook-like profiles to send to universities. About a quarter of survey respondents (26 percent) say their schools subscribe to one or more of these sites.

Kaplan conducted similar surveys of admissions officers at business, law and medical schools, with similar results. Admissions officers at 9 percent of business schools, 15 percent of law schools and 14 percent of medical schools surveyed report having visited applicants' social networking sites during the admissions decision-making process.

The results are part of Kaplan's fifth annual college admissions officers survey. Kaplan has been surveying admissions officers from the nation's top colleges and universities on topical issues since 2004, in an effort to ensure that students receive accurate insight on key trends and issues to help guide them through the admissions process. Past topics have included: participation in college rankings, rise of parental involvement in the admissions process, plans for dropping early admission policies, plans for making the standardized test requirement optional, and use of the SAT Writing section. Kaplan also conducts similar surveys among admissions officers at law,

medical and business schools on admissions topics relevant to pre-law, pre-med, and pre-MBA students.

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**About the survey methodology: for the 2008 survey, 320 admissions officers from the nation's top 500 schools – as compiled from U.S. News & World Report's "Ultimate College Directory" and Barron's Profiles of American Colleges – were surveyed by telephone between July-Aug 2008.*

About Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions

Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions (www.kaptest.com), a division of Kaplan, Inc., is a premier provider of educational and career services for individuals, schools and businesses. Established in 1938, Kaplan is the world leader in the test prep industry. With a comprehensive menu of online offerings and a complete array of books and software, Kaplan offers preparation for more than 90 standardized tests, including entrance exams for secondary school, college and graduate school, as well as English language and professional licensing exams. Kaplan also provides private tutoring and college and graduate admissions consulting services.

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