



## *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be* by Frank Bruni

### **Think you might want to read this book?**

If you have been caught up and confused by the college admissions mania as a parent, educator, or even as a friend, then Frank Bruni has some insights that you'll want to consider regarding whether or not the terror around college admissions makes any sense. In *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be*, Bruni takes the reader through examples that repeatedly debunk the idea that going to an elite college is the primary gateway to success. The examples he includes are owned by individuals such as Condaleeza Rice, as well as broader patterns provided by MacArthur Genius grants and Pulitzer prize winners. He argues that outside of the President of the United States and the United States Supreme Court, there is no profession where going to "elite" schools is a significant advantage. In the final analysis, Bruni argues that what you do when you get to college, and how you spend your time outside of class is infinitely more important than where you walk across the stage and receive your degree.

### **What would Socrates ask?**

- If we agree that each child is unique, why do we assume that a small number of elite schools is a good fit for all of them?
- What resources are out there to help students find right-fit colleges?
- Are there decision trees to help students find right-fit colleges?
- How necessary is a college tour to find a "right-fit" college?
- Should the Gallup-Purdue Index be a part of all college counseling?
- Why would we have students apply to "reach" schools when that unnecessarily promotes caste consciousness?
- Why would we have students apply to "safety" schools when that can cause emotional and psychological issues if they end up going to one?

### **Research**

- A "Platinum Study" interviewed 550 American leaders, including more than 250 Chief Executives of Corporations, over a hundred leaders of major non-profit groups, as well as a few former presidents and many government officials. Nearly two-thirds of the leaders interviewed attended schools that are not considered "elite" institutions. Top graduate programs on the other hand, are more closely linked to success in their respective fields.
- In the late 80s roughly 20% of Yale applicants were offered admission. In 2014, just over 6% were.
- *The Washington Post* reported in September of 2014, that "*The New York Times* wrote more about Harvard last year than about all community colleges combined".
- From a 2006 book by Daniel Golden, Duke University accepted at least one hundred non-alumni children each year due to family wealth or connections.

- 13.5% of the freshmen arriving at Yale in the fall of 2011 had a parent go there as an undergraduate or a graduate student.
- The acceptance rate for kindergarten at the Trinity School in Manhattan is 2.4% for those with no family connections to the school.

### Concepts

- There is no correlation between Ivy Leagues and business success in the Standard & Poor 500 Index.
- There is no correlation between an Ivy League education and Pulitzer Prize winners.
- There was no correlation between an Ivy League education and winners of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers in 2014.
- Analysis of the MacArthur Foundation genius grants from 2009 through 2014 indicated no correlation between an Ivy League education and those winners.
- There is no correlation between an Ivy League education and Forbes 30 under 30 honorees.
- Many high performing/routine expert university students who play the game of school well, and are unprepared for the adversity of the world, are referred to as “fragile thoroughbreds.”

### Quotes from the author

- “If you are a parent who's pushing your kids relentlessly and narrowly towards one of the most prized schools in the country and you think that you are doing them a favor, you're not.”
- “We know that where we go to college will have infinitely less bearing on a fulfillment in life than so much else: the wisdom with which we choose our romantic partners; our interactions with the communities that we inhabit; our generosity towards the families that we inherit and the families that we make. We know that no college can compete with getting any of those things right, let alone getting several or all of them right. Then the admissions process comes along, and it shoves all that knowledge to the side.”

### Quotes from others

- “College Ranking systems all take a far less thorough and scientific approach than Consumer Reports does when testing vacuum cleaners” - Jeffrey Brenzel, former Dean of Admissions at Yale
- “I understood it, there's nothing in there, directly, about the quality of education...” - Anthony Marx, former Amherst president referring to the *U.S. News & World Report* formula
- “I've had students who had transformative experiences at schools that nobody's ever heard of.” - Alece Kleeman, the College Counselor at Menlo-Atherton High School in California
- “Presidents, deans and professors rarely tell students simple truths, for example that the strategizing and diligence that got them in the college of their choice may not, if

followed thoughtlessly, lead to an adult life they will find worth living.” - Harry Lewis, Former Dean of Harvard College

**Implement tomorrow?**

- Stop using the idea of “safety school” during the admissions process, as it makes the transition for those who go to that school more difficult emotionally and psychologically.

**Organizations/schools working on answers (we research)**

- [Colleges That Change Lives](#)
- [Council of Independent Colleges](#)
- [The Education Conservancy](#)

**Referenced books with the potential to impact leading and learning in education**

Author(s) Last Name	Title
Lindsay	<i><u>A View From the Top</u></i>
Golden	<i><u>The Price of Admissions</u></i>
Jager-Hyman	<i><u>Fat Envelope Frenzy</u></i>
Lewis	<i><u>Excellence Without A Soul</u></i>
Deresiewicz	<i><u>Excellent Sheep</u></i>
Delbanco	<i><u>College</u></i>
Gladwell	<i><u>David and Goliath</u></i>

The applicability of this book to leading and/or learning is ....



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