

News

"School agents" helping students, parents with college process

By:

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State College, Centre County, Pa. - High school students are spending a lot of time -- and money -- to find the perfect college. And with just over 20 million students currently attending American colleges and universities, there's a demand for some extra help.

Megan and Alex are fraternal twins -- but when it comes to their college decisions -- they couldn't be more different.

Megan Reese, said, "I really want to be an event planner."

"Political science and maybe a minor in journalism," Alex Reese said.

Scholarships -- financial aid -- resumes -- portfolios... the list is endless.

Megan's and Alex's father, John, said, "There's a lot more dynamics, a lot more decisions to be made than 20 years ago, 30 years ago."

Enter the college matchmaker: Dr. Heather Ricker-Gilbert. She's an independent college counselor who specializes in helping students find that perfect school.

"We're talking about a match, we're not talking about a name-brand school or schools that are highly ranked necessarily," Dr. Ricker-Gilbert said.

Her talents can help parents cut the cost of college --- and help teenagers get serious about their future.

"She brought opportunities or possibilities to our attention that we would never have, have recognized before," said John.

Alex said, "She doesn't just kind of fit, just kind of like try to mold one student into this perfect thing for college, but instead looks at your own personality and your own hobbies and stuff and that way helps you, mold you to the person that you want to be and not what colleges want to be."

That individualized attention is what draws so many students to her program -- college gateways.

"That's really helped me throughout this whole process...is just feeling like I know where I'm going, I know what I'm doing," Megan said.

Hannah Finton, also a high school senior, said, "A lot of my friends feel really lost in this whole process."

Dr. Ricker-Gilbert has her doctorate in higher education. She encourages students to start early, so they're not scrambling at the last minute.

"This whole process should be enjoyable, it should be fun, it should be really an experience in self-growth for students and in understanding that this is an adult decision that he or she is going to make that will make a difference in their lives," said Dr. Ricker-Gilbert.

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