



The Coalition Application and What it Means for You

An entirely new application platform is about to change the college application process for many students graduating from high school in 2017. While nearly 700 American colleges and universities will still use the Common Application, approximately 90 schools, some but not all of which are also on the Common Application, have joined to form the Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success. So far only three schools have announced that they will use the Coalition application exclusively: the University of Florida, University of Maryland, and University of Washington. The others will offer it as an option.

The Coalition, which includes all the Ivies as well as other private schools and some state universities, arose from an effort to increase college access for worthy students of all backgrounds. To be in the Coalition, schools must graduate at least 70% of their students within six years (thereby ensuring that they are a worthwhile investment) and maintain affordability either by offering low in-state tuition or making a commitment to meet 100% of the demonstrated need of all their admitted domestic students.

It has not yet been decided whether the Coalition application will enable students to write a single personal statement (as the essay is called) for all their schools the way they do for the Common Application (where individual schools may also require additional essays in response to their unique prompts).

What we do know for sure about the Coalition Application is that it will have a virtual "Locker" and a "Collaboration Space," both of which were conceived as a means to help students and counselors in underrepresented communities begin to engage with the college process right from the beginning of high school. To facilitate the process for students without financial means, the Coalition Application will be made available free of charge to students, school counselors and a number of community based organizations, but everyone can log in at MyCoalition.org to begin using the locker in April 2016. The portal for rising seniors will be ready in July 2016.

The locker is a place for students to store a variety of materials reflecting their proudest moments. These may include graded essays and research papers, videos of competitions they participated in, a few photographs of a service project, a personal journal, a list of jobs they've held or a resume still in the making. They may also use the locker to store sealed recommendations from anyone who knows them well. Ultimately their academic recommendations will be stored there too.

When it comes time to submit their actual individual college applications, the students alone will be able to select whichever items from the locker they wish to upload for each school they apply to. Instructional materials for counselors put out by the Coalition provide the following examples:

- *A student applying to Yale might have the chance to replace the second essay with an item from their locker. The “item” is **NOT** a highly polished HD video shot and edited by a professional – that will NOT help a student. Rather it could be a taped interview by an inspiring journalist, or an abstract of an extended essay, or a rough draft of their first college application essay with comments and reflections about the editing process, or a video of a slam poetry contest, or schematics of their FIRST robotics team effort.*
- *A student applying to Pomona might have to upload a graded assignment that introduces or highlights an aspect of their candidacy instead of an extra essay.*

The Collaboration Space will enable high school counselors and mentors of the student’s choosing (for example clergy, coaches or independent counselors) access to the locker in order to comment on its contents and provide guidance based on what they see there. The mentors will not be able to alter or edit anything within it.

The Coalition maintains that in addition to enhancing college access, another of their goals is to make the college preparation process an opportunity for students to “develop aspirations, self-awareness, and habits of reflection.”

They also aim to provide a platform that is easy for everyone to use even from a cell phone, and by the second year it should be integrated with the high schools’ Naviance programs as the Common Application generally is now.

Since it is possible to utilize the locker without the Coalition application (as well as the Coalition application without the locker), all 9th, 10th, and 11th graders might benefit from creating a locker and beginning to populate it. There really is no down side to doing so, and it just might spare them from having to write multiple essays in the fall of their senior year.