

Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions

BY [NEWSEditor \(/TAXONOMY/TERM/31\)](#) ON JANUARY 20, 2016 11:53 AM

In first comprehensive effort of its kind, leading colleges and universities join together to reshape the college admissions process and promote concern for others and the common good.

The Launch of the Turning the Tide Report Marks the First Step in Efforts of Coalition to Inspire Concern for Others in High School Students, Reduce Achievement Pressure, and Create Greater Equity for Economically Diverse Students

New York, NY – Today, admissions deans and other leaders from the nation’s top colleges and universities joined together to announce the launch of *Turning the Tide: Inspiring Concern for Others and the Common Good through College Admissions* (<http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/collegeadmissions>), a report with concrete recommendations to reshape the college admissions process and promote greater ethical engagement among aspiring students, reduce excessive achievement pressure, and level the playing field for economically disadvantaged students.

“Too often, today’s culture sends young people messages that emphasize personal success rather than concern for others and the common good,” said [Richard Weissbourd](#) (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/faculty/richard-weissbourd>), senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and co-director of the Making Caring Common Project. “As a rite of passage, college admissions plays a powerful role in shaping student attitudes and behaviors. Admissions deans are stepping up collectively to underscore the importance of meaningful engagement in communities and greater equity for economically diverse students.”

Turning the Tide is the first step in a two-year campaign that seeks to substantially reshape the existing college admissions process. The report stems from an exploratory meeting at the Harvard Graduate School of Education hosted by [Making Caring Common](#) (<http://goo.gl/ijbpEB>) (MCC), a project that helps educators, parents, and communities raise children who are caring, responsible to their communities, and committed to justice. It was written by Richard Weissbourd in collaboration with Lloyd Thacker, Director of The Education Conservancy, and based on a meeting of college admissions deans and other stakeholders in the college admissions process. The goals of the report are to harness the

collective influence of college admissions to send a unified message that both ethical engagement *and* intellectual engagement are highly important and to more fairly capture the strengths of students across race, class and culture.

"Escalating achievement pressure is not healthy for our youth. Young people are suffering from higher rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse as they juggle the demands of their lives. Many students, especially those from low-income families, are often discouraged due to limited access to the resources perceived as necessary for selective college admissions. It's a double-edged sword," said Kedra Ishop, associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of Michigan. "*Turning the Tide* offers recommendations to tackle both of these issues simultaneously by promoting the *quality* of academic engagement over the *quantity* of achievements in college admissions."

As of today, *Turning the Tide* has been endorsed by a growing list of 85 stakeholders across college admissions and education. Many endorsers have already committed to implementing changes consistent with the report recommendations – from revised essay questions and marketing materials, to the development of entirely new recruitment, scholarship and high school programs focused on community engagement and caring for others.

"*Turning the Tide* does a tremendous job articulating many of the things we have looked at for a long time at Yale," said Jeremiah Quinlan, dean of undergraduate admissions at Yale University. "In response to the report, Yale has agreed to add a question on next year's application asking students to reflect on their contribution to family, community, and/or the public good. We will also advocate for more flexibility in the extracurricular forms on both the Common Application and Coalition Application so that schools can more easily control how they ask students to list and reflect on their extracurricular involvement."

"This report communicates our expectations much more clearly to applicants. We don't want students who do things just because they think they have to in order to get into college. To the contrary: we want students who lead balanced lives, who pursue their interests with energy and enthusiasm, and who work cooperatively with others, all of which will help them be successful in and after college," said Stuart Schmill, dean of admissions, interim executive director of student financial services, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"*Turning the Tide* is the kind of essential collaborative effort that I dreamed about while establishing The Education Conservancy. Not only will it help students, but it will enable colleges to align practices with the values they espouse and demonstrate how collaboration among colleges can help them serve their common public interest charge," said Lloyd Thacker, founder and executive director, The Education Conservancy.

“With this initiative, we are turning our attention to a critical developmental time in our children’s lives. Clearly, our current admissions landscape emphasizes extremely important traits, aptitudes, and achievements. And yet we owe our students a paradigm that goes beyond our current schema,” said Diane Anci, vice president for enrollment – dean of admission and financial aid, Kenyon College. “In *Turning the Tide*, we are granting our children permission, space, and time to develop their analytical strength, their empathic and generative selves, and their inner lives of reflection, values, and aspirations. We will reward them by emphasizing depth of commitment over breadth of resume, strength of purpose over multiple application fillers. In shifting our focus, we hope to inspire students to use their high school years as truly formative. We aspire to the goal of matriculating students who have an internal clarity and drive that will propel them forward through their college years and beyond.”

Making Caring Common will host a summit in summer 2016 convening admissions leaders and high school and parent representatives from across the country with the goal of developing a two-year plan to implement key elements of *Turning the Tide* nationwide.

For the full report and additional information, visit Making Caring Common online: www.makingcaringcommon.org (<http://www.makingcaringcommon.org>).

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Yolanda Ramirez Lagos · Head of Technology and Innovation at Atlanta International School

Very pleased to see this happening. New opportunity to re-thinking k-12.

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Hong Wang · Newport High School

Yeah. How about these Ivy schools get rid of exams for all the classes?

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Qin Yu · The Ohio State University

If so, Intel and Siemens competitions should be cancelled as well. At least candidates should be banned from conducting a research in the same field as their parents. Many winners' parents are university professors or scientists. How can other kids to compete with university professors?

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Joshua Greene

Sorry to be cynical about this, but there are elements in the Yale and MIT quotes that seem highly revealing:

"This report communicates our expectations much more clearly to applicants. We don't want students *WHO* do things just because they think they have to in order to get into college." Dean Schmill (MIT)

Saying "who" instead of "to" seems to say that elite colleges want the same things they've been getting, but now they also want to look deeply into the applicants' hearts and assess intent: did you do those things for love (right answer) or just to get into our school (wrong answer)?

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Seth Bykofsky · Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

Pressure cooker of college admissions? The Turning The Tide charade, taking it from whence it comes, is more akin to a crock pot. Kindness? From the folks who are loathe to part with one thin dime of their multi-billion dollar, tax sheltered