

Making a Confident Decision

When Jim and Joan Halquist took time away from their small business to help their oldest son, Peter, plan for college, they realized a lot had changed in the 30 years since they were college students themselves. Competition is tighter, admission requirements are more stringent and financial aid is more complex. On top of it all, the cost of colleges quickly made them realize it is easy to make an expensive mistake.

With the intention of saving time and making the right decision, the Halquists turned to College Connectors to guide them through the entire college planning process.

“It became obvious that we couldn’t afford to experiment with different colleges,” Jim said. “Valerie’s approach emphasized finding the right college fit from the start.”

Taking Action

The first step with College Connectors is to really understand the student. Peter had always been interested in art, especially architecture. He also enjoyed playing the cello. He wasn’t sure if he wanted to make a career out of those interests, but knew he wanted a college that offered them. A smaller learning environment was also important.

After learning more about Peter’s needs, interests and goals, Valerie selected the top 15 schools across the country that fit Peter’s “ideal college” profile. The Halquists visited several of those campuses and, with Valerie’s help, evaluated each financial aid package. The college that made their final cut was St. Olaf in Northfield.

“Peter was confident he found the right college for him,” Jim said. “Visiting other colleges really helped him identify what was important to him. He realized he was more comfortable attending a local college than going out of state, and he found the music program and pre-architecture courses he was looking for. I’m glad it was his decision rather than us saying, ‘Why don’t you go to this college?’”

Valerie also guided the Halquists through the financial aid process. She identified a little-known \$4,500 scholarship for musicians or pole vaulters, and Peter won it. She also explained how to apply for private school grants. “We started realizing that a private college was actually more affordable than we first thought,” Jim said.

The result

Peter is now in his third year at St. Olaf and is majoring in studio arts. As part of the college’s well-respected study abroad program, he will be traveling to Greece, Turkey, Morocco and Egypt this fall. “You could call us a success story,” Jim said. “The whole college planning process is pretty baffling for most parents today. Working with Valerie was a small investment compared to the value of finding the right college.”