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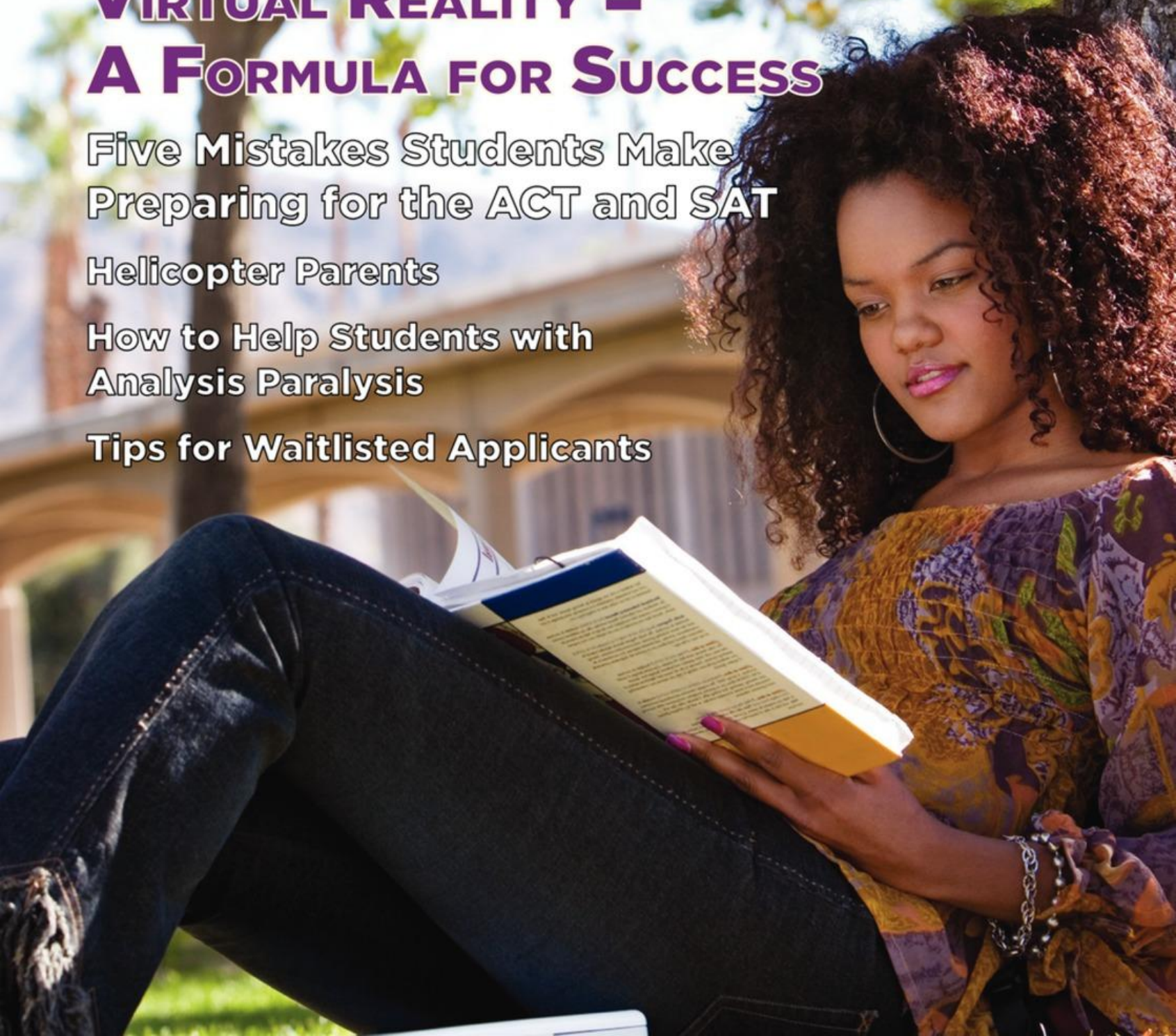
SCHOOL COUNSELORS + VIRTUAL REALITY = A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Five Mistakes Students Make
Preparing for the ACT and SAT

Helicopter Parents

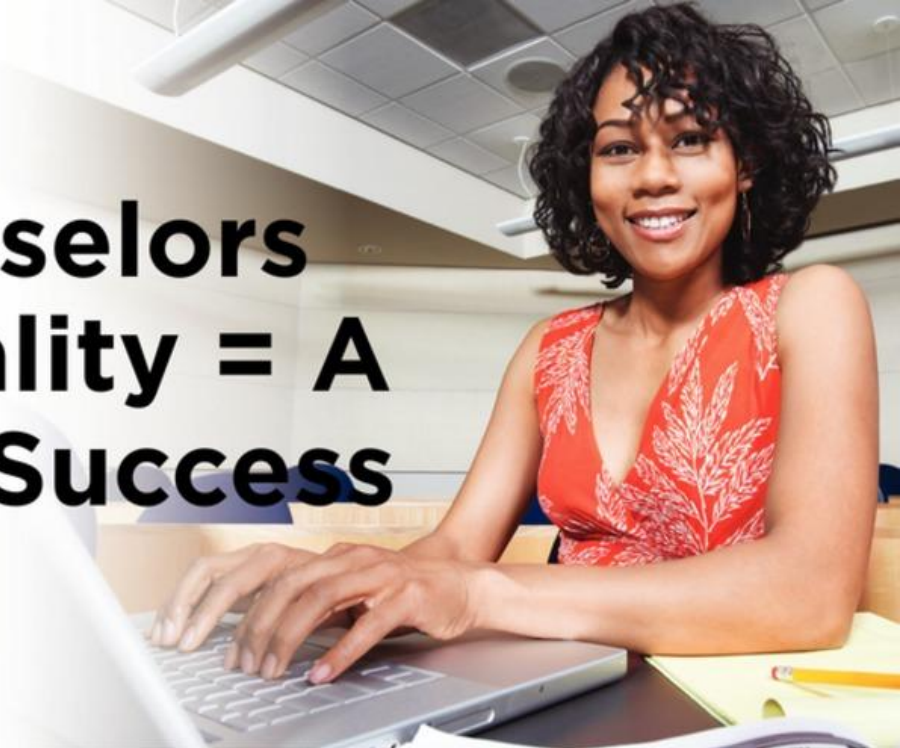
How to Help Students with
Analysis Paralysis

Tips for Waitlisted Applicants



School Counselors + Virtual Reality = A Formula for Success

By Angela Cleveland and Bobbi-Jo Wathen



Did you know that school counselors across the nation are quickly becoming influential advocates for using virtual reality in education? School counselors are in the unique role of implementing virtual reality across the K-12 spectrum to address a variety of distinct needs. They support students as they enter the school, when selecting courses, and helping them to find post-secondary success. School counselors are discovering that a full spectrum of student needs can be met with the support of virtual reality apps.

Building Understanding of Students' Backgrounds

When new students who have a unique background enroll in a school, it can be difficult for some staff and students to fully understand what their worlds were like prior to moving to the district. These differences can involve moving from a rural to an urban community or entering a school district as refugees from a war-torn country of origin.

School counselors strive to build empathy and understanding so students and staff understand new students' life experiences and can be sensitive to their needs. Virtual reality provides a platform to have an immersive experience that leads to an understanding of the lives of others. One popular app school counselors are using is Global Nomads Group (GNG VR Lab), which shows the lives of three young people from different parts of the globe. This VR lab is compatible with the affordable, widely available Google Cardboard viewer.

GNG VR Lab offers free curated VR content and accompanying lesson plans. According to Global

Nomads Group, "The real benefit of VR as an educational tool lies in its ability to promote active learning. Research has shown that while we only remember about 20% of what we hear and 30% of what we see, we are able to remember up to 90% of what we do or simulate, which tells us that that teaching through VR is considerably more effective than many conventional methods."

Adapting to a New School

Transitioning to a new school can be stressful for students. Whether students are transitioning to the next grade level or are new to the district, change about the unknown can cause some students (and families) to worry. School counselors are using Cardboard Camera, which is compatible with the Google Cardboard viewer, to take free 360-degree photographs of classrooms. Sharing these photos is easy and allows students and families to not just view but to have an immersive experience in the setting.

School counselors report that families and students feel more comfortable and confident starting the school year, transitioning to a new grade level, and managing other school-based changes when they are given a thoughtful introduction and know what to expect. Virtual reality platforms like Cardboard Camera provide the ease and versatility for counselors to support students and families during these transitional times. If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a virtual reality experience must be worth 10,000 words!

College Visits at Your Fingertips

The college application process has become increasingly streamlined due to innovations like The CommonApp, Naviance, Coalition for Access, Affordability, and Success, and Common Black College Application. Technological advances have allowed colleges to expand their geographic applicant pools. In fact, your student's geographic diversity is a growing topic among college admissions counselors. The Ivy Coach writes about it in this article.

Students who previously might have limited their post-secondary options to local schools are being encouraged by their counselors to cast a wider net to consider options beyond their backyard. Organizations like Accepted to School provide a free platform for school counselors to connect students in middle and high school with college admissions officers across the nation. The demand for information about lesser known universities is increasing. How can school counselors be expected to know everything about all these universities? How can they help students with limited financial means know what the campus is like? How can students and families know if the college is the right fit?

One answer to all these questions comes in the form of Virtual Reality (VR). Many colleges have VR tours on their websites and on various applications such as YouVisit , Campus Tours, and ECampus-Tours. Universities have teamed up with Google CardBoard and other low-cost VR players to up the ante and give students and families a realistic view of their campus. Some schools are even sending students and counselors VR players with a QR code linked to their VR content. Counselors are using VR-compatible Google Street View to provide information about what the community surrounding the school is like. This immersive experience can make a big difference in where a student applies.

Students are applying to more and more colleges each year. It's not always possible to tour each one. School counselors often report that the greatest benefit of using VR in the post-secondary selection process is that it provides students and families with financial limitations the opportunity to experience no-cost college visits. VR is expanding options and increasing opportunities for a cost-efficient college degree.

Are you interested in learning more about how school counselors are using virtual reality? Are you looking for some free resources? Check out Counselors for Computing!

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