

Student Views

This week we asked the new Student Alliance officers what their goals are for next year. Here's what they said...



Jacob Shaw, President

"I plan to leverage existing and new technology to creatively problem solve, shortly rolling out our automated Club Finder database."



Annabel Walsh, Vice Pres.

"I want to hold a forum where all the candidates running to be an officer of Student Alliance may be questioned by New Trier students."



Ilana Nazari, Secretary

"I can't wait to effectively communicate suggestions and help to improve both Student Alliance and the school at large."



Erica Diaz, Treasurer

"As Treasurer, it will be my job to allocate club funds... and financially help them achieve all they want with their clubs."

Legacy gives you undeserved leg up

by Georgia Caras

No matter which college someone is applying to, they should not be able to get in off of their parent's connections.

It is no secret that New Trier is home to a bounty of affluent and successful families. It is also no secret that New Trier students are, almost unanimously, college bound.

According to the school's website, "Approximately 98 percent of the Class of 2014 enrolled in college." This number is impressive, but some of the reasoning behind it is not.

With money and power comes connections, which is perhaps what many New Trier parents use to assist their kids in getting into their preferred college when they fail to meet the school's academic requirements.

Max Nisen, a reporter for the business insider said, "A 2011 study of 30 elite institutions found that the children of undergraduate alumni ("primary legacies") were, on average, 45.1% more likely to get in."

Nisen went on to explain, "An earlier study by Princeton's Thomas Espenshade found that the legacy advantage was equivalent to a 160-point swing on an SAT score. That's not a tiebreaker between equally qualified applicants... It's a massive advantage."

The reasoning behind this advantage is simple. "Despite what [colleges] might say about tradition and close alumni relationships, [the advantage] is clearly about money. An alum who encourages their child to apply to their alma mater likely had a good experience, and if their child gets into the school, they're even more likely to donate. Wealthy families or heavy donors are likely to get additional preference."

Rick Kahlenberg of the Century Foundation said legacy admission is a, "special privilege for the advantaged," and I agree.

Legacy preference means two main things. The first is that you come from a family that has had access to high-level education for at least a generation, and the second is that your family has the money to fund its members to attend the same school they have for generations, even when those members don't meet the criteria to be accepted into that given school on their own.



The steps of U of M's Angell Hall is filled with students socializing | umich.edu

This means that so-called "legacy kids" are more often than not coming from wealthy families. So, legacy preference is essentially going to rich children.

Kahlenberg said that "this is fundamentally unfair. Selective college admissions is a zero sum game: every applicant admitted takes a space which could have gone to another student. Preferring a student whose parents attended a college not only takes away a spot from an equal or better student, it specifically takes away a spot from an equal or better student who overcame more by not having the advantages [built up] by prior generations."

I will admit that I have some bias on the issue, but I believe that this bias is fair. It comes from my familial situation, which is one that doesn't have enough money to donate to whichever school I wish to attend in order for me to receive an acceptance letter. I have to work hard to get where I want, as many other students do, and it's hard for me to get past that I could get denied by my dream school as someone who's significantly less qualified gets in because of their parents' money and legacy.

We are taught from a young age that we have to work hard to accomplish our goals. A New Trier senior, who wishes to remain anonymous, worked extremely hard during high school. He took high-level class-

es while managing being a varsity athlete, and applied for a number of scholarship programs so that his parents wouldn't have to pay as much for his college and could focus on supporting his three younger siblings throughout their college processes.

Although he was extremely qualified and worked incredibly hard, he got deferred from University of Michigan, his top school, while he watched at least 5 of his peers with legacy receive their acceptance letters. He alleges these peers were not as academically qualified as he was, yet got in over him because of the hard work and money their parents put into the school for them.

Although most schools place value on legacy, MIT is one of the few that doesn't. By doing so, they are placing value where it matters and where it should be placed.

Chris Peterson, in an article for MIT admissions, said, "I personally would not work for a college which had legacy admission because I am not interested in simply reproducing a multi-generational lineage of educated elite. If you got into MIT, it's because you got into MIT. Simple as that."

I strongly believe that this is the approach every college should take. It's incomprehensible to me that someone's parents' hard work and money can get them into a school over a student that did the hard work themselves.

Not just pharmacists sell drugs anymore

by George Zervas

The anxieties that come along with being a student could be listed like the side effects at the end of a drug commercial.

You commonly hear the tired moans of someone going through their college applications or the highly energetic rants against two plus hours of homework. What you don't hear (at least not very loudly) is how some students tend to cope with these stresses.

There are the usual suspects, marijuana and alcohol, but also some of the lesser known coping methods like pharmaceuticals.

Abusing pills always seemed like an adult problem to me but as it turns out a few of my peers have picked it up as well. However, it's not like teenagers are lining up at doctors' offices and mulling over phony problems just to get a prescription.

Being out of my element I talked with Kristine Hummel. She is a social worker at New Trier who works with kids who have been caught in possession/under the influence of any illicit substances. "Kids are telling me that they are getting it from one another" Hummel said.

The drug(s) commonly used fall under Benzodiazepines or "benzos." These are generally prescribed to patients who suffer from severe anxiety, insomnia, and seizure. They're also known as muscle relaxers or "happy pills." Xanax is the most well known of this particular class of psychoactive drugs and goes by the nickname "bars."

One of the many issues with this sort of self medication is kids aren't taking a doctor's prescribed dose of these pills. "What happens is they [aren't] getting it from a doctor and it is three times the dose of Xanax," Hummel explains.

Xanax comes with a long list of concerning side effects. Dizziness and drowsiness are the most common of these side effects. Mood changes, memory problems, and suicidal thoughts are amongst the more serious possible side effects listed on the drug's website.

Another group of commonly abused pharmaceutical drugs are brands like Adderall and Ritalin.

These are used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. In conversations with students, the most frequent response for why they use them is: "it helps me focus." It seems that the abuse of these specific drugs aren't for recreational use, but, instead, as a study aid.

Freshman year, a friend of mine sold his medication to kids during his lunch period in order to buy an Xbox. It made me realize that drug abuse exists in other forms aside from just consumption.

The initial punishment, or first offense, for students "peddling" these pills, is a seven day suspension. It turns into three if students agree to attend a program. If it wasn't already clear that having loose pills on your person is not acceptable, the administration will determine whether suspension, or the possibility of expulsion, is necessary.

Abuse with analgesics, or painkillers, happens significantly less amongst high school students, while alcohol and marijuana are currently the most prevalent.

Between 2010 and 2013, five Wilmette residents passed away due to drug overdoses, a majority of them in their early twenties. At New Trier, the abuse of opioids, those in the "opium family," are more common in upperclassmen. The North Shore heroin epidemic has created quite the stir in the media, but bringing direct attention to the increase of drug abuse among high school students, deserves more publicity.

New Trier High School and the neighboring police departments work closely together when any illegal activity happens at school. Instead of the punishments adults receive when dealing with narcotics, students will be given a warning first, then a citation, are taken down to the police station and finally are placed in front of a peer jury.

While this may seem like a tedious process, all of this is to prevent students from getting records before getting off to college. Usually, the official punishment consists of writing a paper or doing community service. This is a luxury that many other students in the Chicago public area lack simply don't have.