Application ethics:
What students need to consider

In recent years, college admissions officers and college counselors have seen a growing number of students and parents who, in an attempt to manipulate the system in their favor, are crossing the boundary between helping ensure a desired outcome and taking inappropriate actions.

The admission process is not a game to be won at any cost. It is a complex process that demands a great deal of integrity on everyone's part, especially the school's. Here are some examples of what we consider crossing the boundary:

- Applying to binding Early Decision programs at more than one college or university. The whole point of a binding ED program is to make a contract: "If you accept me, I will withdraw all my other applications and attend your university." Many colleges now require that the college adviser sign the application along with the student and parents. The school will not send transcripts to more than one ED school or to any other schools once a student has been admitted under a binding ED program.

- Failing to withdraw your applications to other colleges when you have been admitted under a binding ED program. It isn't fair to those colleges or to the students who have applied to them for you to continue in the process just to see what happens.

- Attempting to gain release from an ED decision because you have changed your mind. The only acceptable reason for requesting release from your contract with your ED college is the inability to work out appropriate financial aid. You and your parents should discuss the cost factor when you are deciding whether to apply for ED in the first place.

- Having someone else write or heavily edit your essays. When you sign an application, you are indicating it is your work. If it is not, then you may be subject to the school's honor code.

- Submitting deposits to more than one college. If you are admitted to a college that requires a deposit by May 1 and wait-listed at your favorite college, call the college that admitted you and discuss the matter before you send your check. Your counselor can advise you how to conduct this conversation and what the appropriate behavior is.

- Stating an intended major that you have no intention of pursuing, because you think it might help your admission chances.

- Inaccurately describing your activities and accomplishments. Putting things in the best light is one thing; fabrication is something else.

- Stating to more than one college that it is your first choice.

Source: *Adapted from material provided by Cary Academy, North Carolina*

Handout 4F

Online application dos and don'ts

Do create user names, PIN numbers and passwords that you'll remember easily. Write them down and keep them in a safe place.

Don't treat an online application casually — it's an important document that reflects on you. So never use abbreviations as if you were text messaging.

Don't be too quick to click. Take your time, follow all directions and complete each step with care. Scroll each page from top to bottom and read every pop-up to be sure you don't miss any information.

Don't forget to periodically save your work. You might get "timed out" if you don't enter anything for a while (usually 30 minutes). If you need to take a break, use the save/log-out feature to store your application, then log back in.

Don't compose your essay or personal statement in the space allotted online. Draft (and redraft) these separately in a word-processing application, such as Microsoft Word, then copy and paste the final draft into the online application.

Do print and save a hard copy of the completed application. Proofread it before you hit the "send" button — sometimes your information in text boxes can get cut off.

Do ask someone else to review the application for errors before you send it. Two sets of eyes are always better than one.

Do print and save a copy of the confirmation page that should appear after you submit the application, so that you'll have a record of your application ID number.

Do tell your school counselor about every online application you submit. Better yet, give your counselor a hard copy printout. This is critical because your application won't be complete until your counselor forwards your transcript and any other material the college may require.

Don't apply online and then send a paper copy in the mail. That will just confuse things.

Do call or email the college if you haven't received an email confirmation of receipt within 48 hours. Online submissions do get lost occasionally (that's why it's so important to print and save).

Don't apply online the week before the application deadline. Because of high volume, application websites tend to get slow and cranky at this time. It's also the most likely time for a system failure. If you're up against the deadline, it's safer to apply through the mail.

Source: Get It Together for College, 2nd ed. *The College Board, 2011*

Handout 4H