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The College Applicant's Best Friend

A dozen frazzled high school seniors sat around large tables piled high with all the materials they would need for the “Jam Session,” an afternoon of filling out college applications. Suzanne Luse strode around the room, adjusting her glasses and conferring with each student individually. Her calm demeanor soothed their anxiety-ridden expressions, while the rainbow of school pennants tacked to the wall behind her reminded clients why they were there. Luse’s moniker “The College Expert” is well deserved; in her ten years as a private educational consultant, she has worked with over 500 students, helping them identify their academic goals and get admitted to the college of their dreams.

Luse’s height, professional attire, and high expectations made her an authority figure in her time as a high school guidance counselor. After ten years, she decided to pursue her true passion in the form of a new career: college counseling. “I love seeing students succeed in high school, enjoy the college application process, and get into the school of their choice,” she enthused. Her company, Suzanne Luse and Associates, helps a diverse group of clients with every step of the college application process, including making an appropriate final choice of school. As of November 2011, Luse has visited over 200 college campuses around the country, making her exceptionally knowledgeable about every school and what makes them as unique as the students with whom she works. She caters to the needs of each individual, providing test preparation, résumé building, interview practices, essay editing, and anything else needed to have teens reach their goal.

The basement of Luse’s Eagan home, an expansive space filled with information and void of distractions, serves as a home office where she can meet with clients either one-on-one or

in a large group setting at a monthly “Jam Session.” Luse looks around the photos of past clients scattered around the room and remarks, “I didn’t expect to get so attached to my student clients and their families ... Once you work with the same family for years, you become attached to them, and then, once they graduate, they’re just gone and it’s very sad.” Luse employs a variety of people who specialize in specific areas of the application process, including four professional editors for essays, a business partner, and a campus visit coordinator. Luse and her employees share a similar emotional investment in each student’s applications, resulting in a close relationship between client and counselor, as well as between counselor and coworker.

In addition to college counseling, an equally important aspect of Luse’s career is simply the running of her business. She says “I am an entrepreneur at heart ... [My business] has been challenging, yet extremely interesting. Being in charge of my own schedule and being able to meet individually with clients in order to achieve a good outcome has been an added bonus ... I’ve been doing this for a decade and still learn new things every day.” Without the help of any formal advertising, Luse’s consulting firm has become one of the most successful in the country, drawing clients from around the nation over the course of the past decade.

For Luse, the college application process is an exceedingly personal one: “I treat each student as if they were my own child and take them under my wing ... I make sure to get to know them personally, take what is interesting and unique about them, and use it to help make a post-secondary plan for them. I find their strengths, whether they be academic, artistic, musical, athletic, or otherwise, and do my best to make their dream happen.”

Luse’s passion for her business is obvious to all who watch her at work; her cool confidence and raw energy are infectious to the teens she works with, constantly motivating them to work towards higher goals. She says, “It may sound cliché, but I truly feel this way: I

wake up every morning, and I cannot wait to come down to my office to see who is on the schedule, what emails have come in, who has submitted what. I really enjoy this job because every day is so different and every student is so different.” At the end of the afternoon’s “Jam Session,” she asks about each senior’s progress. She beams as they report their successes. Her support for the teens in their triumphs and zeal for the clients and the application process prove yet again Luse’s right to be called “The College Expert.