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New college advisory business comes to Lamorinda

By Sora O'Doherty



Advantage College Planning staff, from left: Sunny Grewal, owner; Saumya Garg, consultant; Myrna Volpentest, community manager; Hayley Gabri, events coordinator; Cole Filipek, consultant; and Naomi Grewal, owner Photo Sora O'Doherty

Sunny Grewal has brought a new business to Lamorinda: Advantage College Planning. While the business has been around for about 18 years, Grewal and his partner and wife Naomi Grewal are bringing it to the East Bay. The couple lives in Orinda and have their business premises in Moraga, but hope to serve a wider geographical swath of the East Bay. Advantage College Planning opened in early September, and Grewal reports that things are going great.

"We have created a ton of free content," Grewal says, and are hosting workshops with groups of families. The business focuses on students from the eighth to the 12th grade and is, as Grewal expresses it, "student centered, not college centered." Counselors (currently the company employs five) work with students to do a better job of supporting them and understanding what makes them tick.

Advantage will offer fireside talks with admissions officers via Zoom and financial budgeting boot camps. For example, educating families about the Western Undergraduate Exchange, which can reduce tuition costs

for schools in the Western United States. Helping students acquire athletic scholarships will be offered in the future. In addition to helping students decide what they would like to pursue in their careers, Advantage wants to help them understand what is financially affordable, and what academic/social/environmental factors will be the best fit for them.

"Colleges want to see the true authentic selves" of applicants. Instead of trying to force students into particular schools, Grewal says, he wants to provide academic planning and goal setting to help students identify what they really want to do, and how to accomplish it. Grewal says that the company has access to a large number of admissions specialists to gain insight into the admissions process.

Grewal's goal is to take the stress out of college planning, using a process developed by industry experts. For example, he notes, you don't have to be a doctor to work in the medical field, you don't have to be an engineer to work in tech. The firm will host monthly career panels to acquaint students with different options. Grewal himself spent years working in the financial sector, before switching to health care technology. The company he founded went public and was acquired.

Advantage College Planning will offer individual counseling sessions, in addition to the group activities. Counselors will meet with students at the office, via Zoom, or wherever might be convenient for the student and family. Current staff includes Consultant Saumya Gang, Community Manager Myrna Volpentest, Events Coordinator Hayley Gabri, and Consultant Cole Filipek.

Grewal is Canadian and grew up in a small town. He attended Cornell University and earned a degree in economics, before attending business school at Columbia University, where he met his wife, a native of Piedmont, California. Co-owner Naomi Grewal holds a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology and in addition to being director of research at Workday, she is also a lecturer at the University of Southern California. They have three young children at home.

Find out more about Advantage College Planning on their website: <https://advcp.com/team/>

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