



ACADEMY *of*  
NOTRE DAME  
*de* NAMUR

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INSPIRING YOUNG WOMEN  
SINCE 1856

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# College Counseling Handbook

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# ACADEMY OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR

## College Counseling Department

### MISSION

The Academy of Notre Dame de Namur commits itself to the education of young women of grades 6 through 12 for responsible living in a global society. The Academy, rooted in the faith tradition of the Catholic Church, and the charism of Saint Julie Billiart, provides its students with a challenging academic curriculum within a rich spiritual community in order to:

- inspire them to live the prophetic nature of the gospel, with a passion for justice & love for the poor,
- enable them to develop the skills & desire necessary for life-long learning,
- empower them to be honorable, compassionate leaders

### Belief Statements

We believe that

- each individual is a reflection of the good God, and deserves to be respected, loved, supported and encouraged
- the charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, in the tradition of their foundress, St. Julie, provides an enduring culture of simplicity, courage and hope
- single sex education empowers women for leadership in contemporary society
- the unique gifts of each individual, nurtured and celebrated, serve the community and the world
- individuals have an inherent responsibility to embrace the ideals of service and stewardship
- diversity in our faculty, staff and students enriches our community and challenges us to embrace the ideals of justice
- individuals thrive in a community of responsible freedom where they are encouraged to act with integrity and honor
- faculty and staff, both in and out of the classroom, are important role models of the school's mission for our students
- competent and confident young women emerge from a community that values individual worth and academic rigor

### Introduction

The College Counseling Program at the Academy of Notre Dame is committed to working together to support students and parents through the college exploration and application process. Students are encouraged to explore their interests and the many college options that are available to them by participating in a wide array of programs and meetings presented to them by the College Counseling Department. The purpose of this handbook is to provide ninth-twelfth grade students and their parents with valuable information about preparing for college.

The Counseling Department looks forward to working with students and their parents on this important decision-making process. We feel strongly that given reasonable involvement by us all, each student will have the necessary information to make an informed decision about her future.

**Accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools**

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# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## The Junior Year Timeline

*-This is an important year! Begin to identify the type of college you may wish to attend.-*

### Fall

- Stay involved in extracurricular activities. If you have a new interest, pursue it!
- Take the October PSAT. Review score results to determine what kind of help you need to perform well on the SAT.
- Plan college visits (formal or informal) over winter break. Attend college fairs in your area. Consider size, location, degrees offered, reputation, selectivity, family connections, majors, and extracurricular offerings to determine what type of school may be a good match.
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT. Visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and <http://www.actstudent.org/> to register for tests.
- Consider waiting to take the SAT and ACT until the spring, especially if you have not completed Algebra 2.
- Sign up for college rep visits at Notre Dame

### Winter

- Visit with friends coming home from college. Discuss their experiences.
- Start a file of college brochures.
- College Counseling Seminar begins in the second semester.
- Along with your parents schedule an individual counseling meeting with your counselor.
- Start thinking about summer: Look for Summer Opportunities online and in the College Counseling Newsletter
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT. Visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org) to register for tests.
- Due to College Counseling: **Initial Survey Form** and **Parent Brag Sheet**.

### Spring

- Continue attending College Counseling Seminar.
- Due to College Counseling: **Teacher Recommendation Contracts**.
- Schedule an individual counseling meeting with your counselor if you have not yet done so.
- Register for your senior year classes.
- Plan visits to colleges over Spring Break.
- Attend Spring College Fairs in your area or Junior Open Houses at colleges of interest.
- AP Exams administered. (Note: AP Scores will be available in July.)
- Plan for possible summer college visits.
- Complete and return the NCAA Clearinghouse form if you plan to participate in Division I or II athletics in college. Visit [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)
- Investigate college summer programs of interest, internships, jobs, service, or other activities.
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT.

### Pre-Senior Summer

- Refine your list of prospective colleges. Keep college list up to date.
- Attend Summer Enrichment Programs.
- Review the College Application Process.
- Begin your essays.
- Visit colleges.
- Continue preparing for the ACT/SAT.
- Attend summer Common App Workshop and Essay Workshop at the Academy of Notre Dame.

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## The Senior Year Timeline

*-Turn your college exploration into applications and college selection.-*

### All year

- Continually check in
  - Sign up for college rep visits.
  - Update your prospective college list.
- Visit colleges and universities of interest.
- Notify College Counseling Office of any admissions decisions.
- Submit a copy of any merit-based scholarships you've received to the College Counseling Office.

### Fall

- MEET WITH YOUR COUNSELOR!**
- Review college choices, application process, and application deadlines.
- Check in with the teachers who are writing your letters of recommendation. Provide any requested information (questionnaire, activities résumé, etc.) and inform them of your earliest known application deadlines.
- Encourage your parents to attend College Information Night for 12th Grade Parents in September at the Academy of Notre Dame.
- Continue to work on and finalize essays. Have at least two people proofread your essays.
- Consider re-testing (SAT Reasoning, SAT Subject Tests, ACT) if necessary. Check deadlines and register at [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org)
- Double check Early Decision/Early Action and Priority Deadlines!**
  - Some Priority Application deadlines are as early as October 15, and most deadlines are before January 1.
  - Transcript requests must be made a minimum of 10 school days prior to application deadline.
- Submit FAFSA as early as October. Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)
- Complete CSS/PROFILE if needed for a particular college. Visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)
- Complete your "final list" of colleges by Oct.1

### Winter

- Finish and submit final college applications.
- Write thank-you notes to teachers who have written you letters of recommendation.
- Mid-Year grade reports are submitted to the colleges to which students have applied.
- Visit with friends coming home from college. Discuss their experiences.

### Spring

- Consider making final campus visits. Attend classes, stay overnight in a residence hall, eat the food, and meet current students and professors.
- AP Exams administered. Note: AP Scores will be available in July.
- Notify colleges of your decision to attend or not by May 1st, the Common Reply Date.
- Send in confirmation and housing deposits.
- Graduate from the Academy of Notre Dame de Namur!!!**

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## Understanding College Admissions Vocabulary

### Application Terminology

**Common Application** – An application form developed and widely accepted by over 500 participating institutions. See <http://www.commonapp.org/>

**Early Action (EA)** – EA programs permit students to apply to a college or university of their choice and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates. Although students hear earlier regarding admission, they are not committed to attend and may apply to other colleges. If denied admission, early action applicants may not reapply through regular decision.

**Single Choice Early Action or Restricted Early Action** – The above definition applies, but students may only apply early to one institution, and are not committed to enroll if admitted.

**Early Decision (ED)** – ED programs are recommended for students who have completed a thorough college search and find that one school stands above and beyond the others. ED requires the student to commit to a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, the student will enroll. Upon admission, the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1. If denied admission, early decision applicants may not reapply through regular decision.

**Rolling Admission** – Under this application process, an institution reviews applications as they are received and offers decisions to students soon after they are reviewed. Try to submit all rolling admission applications by October 1st.

**Priority Application** – Some colleges are offering students priority applications, which often mean the application fee is waived and sometimes an otherwise required essay is waived. The colleges usually review these applications on a rolling basis.

**Wait List** – This term is used by institutions to describe a process in which they may initially delay offering or denying admission, but rather extend the possibility of admission in the future. Colleges offer admission to wait list candidates if insufficient numbers of regularly admitted candidates accept offers of admission. Refer to the Statement of Students' Rights & Responsibilities for the rights which you are assured if placed on a waitlist.

**Deferred Decision** – Students who are neither accepted nor denied under Early Decision or Early Action programs may have their admission decision deferred until Regular Decision. Thus, their application will be reviewed with the full regular decision applicant pool. When an ED decision is deferred, the student is automatically released from her ED commitment.

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## Criteria Colleges Use for Acceptance

Admission officers are responsible for selecting students who will contribute to both the academic and social climate of their institution. Different colleges and universities place varying emphases on the criteria they use to admit students. However, the vast majority of colleges carefully consider the following:

### **1. Academic Record**

A strong academic record in challenging courses throughout the high school experience will be the factor most likely to influence an admission decision in your favor. The breadth and difficulty of the courses on your transcript are regarded as the best predictor of the kind of success you are likely to have in college. As a student at a college preparatory school, your curriculum generally meets the minimum requirements of most colleges, but students are responsible for ensuring they have taken the courses required by the colleges they are applying to. For example, a student who wants to major in nursing will likely need to complete chemistry in high school. Similarly, a student who intends to major in engineering will likely need physics and calculus in high school. The academic transcript that will be submitted to colleges will reflect marks from 9th grade through 11th grade GPA, as well as listing the courses to be taken in 12th grade, and attendance. Senior mid-year grades are sent to colleges once available.

### **2. College Admission Standardized Test Scores (ACT, SAT and SAT Subject Tests)**

As a rule, admission tests scores alone are not likely to result in either your acceptance or rejection. Admission officers usually view scores as a “snapshot” of the more complete person. One exception are large universities that uses test scores to reduce large numbers of applications down to a manageable number. Test scores may also be used for placement in some freshman classes. Some of the highly selective colleges may require or recommend two or three SAT Subject Tests, but may accept ACT scores in lieu of these. Students should have a plan for taking these standardized tests.

### **3. Extracurricular Activities and Work Experience**

These experiences present a picture of the student outside of the classroom. Participating in activities outside of school is important not only for your college application, but also for your own personal development. Colleges are not looking at the number of activities that you participate in, but rather that you are participating in activities that appeal to your interests.

### **4. Teacher and Counselor Recommendations**

These first hand observations by educators who have worked with you during your high school experience emphasize your abilities, aptitudes and interests. They often present information about your personality and motivation for learning.

### **5. Essays**

The colleges that require an essay consider this creative work to be an important part of their admission decision. Strong admission essays result from careful planning and allowing adequate time for writing and editing.

### **6. Interview**

Some colleges require or recommend an interview. The staff member or alumni representative conducting the interview will prepare a report that becomes an official part of the admission folder.

### **7. Special Talents and Characteristics**

A particular talent can be influential in gaining admission to a college. You will need to present those special skills to the appropriate people at the college level. Portfolios, video or audio tapes, and résumés are just a few ways to effectively showcase your talents. Colleges may also give added consideration to members of a particular ethnic group, children of alumni or individuals with other characteristics they hope to attract.

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## College Counseling Seminar & Individual Counseling

### **College Counseling Seminar**

This course meets once a cycle for the second semester of junior year and first semester of senior year. The course is designed to prepare students for the college application process. Junior students are encouraged to take ownership of the college search and prepare college applications. Students are also expected to turn in course materials on time and communicate with the counselors on a frequent basis.

Course Topics will include:

- College Search
  - Utilizing online resources for research (Ex. College Board, and College websites)
  - College Visits
- Course Selection
- Standardized Testing
  - Standardized testing plan
  - Tests recommended for admission (Ex. SAT, ACT, and SAT II Subject tests)
  - Test-optional policies
- Choosing a Major
- The College Application
  - Transcript
  - Activities Resume
  - Recommendations
  - Essay and Supplements
  - Interviews
- Applying to College
  - Rolling, Early Action, Early Decision, Priority applications
  - Common Application

### **Individual College Counseling Meetings**

Parents and students are encouraged to meet with their college counselor starting in the winter of their junior year. During these meetings, parents and students will collaborate with the college counselor to address college exploration and the college application process. Students and/or parents may contact the counselor at any time to schedule an appointment.

# PLANNING FOR COLLEGE

## Naviance Family Connection

### Naviance Family Connection

<https://student.naviance.com/ndapa>

Family Connection is a service designed especially for students and families. Family Connection is a comprehensive website that you can use to help in making plans about courses, colleges, and careers. Family Connection is linked with Naviance Succeed™, a service that we use in our office to track and analyze data about college and career plans, so it provides up-to-date information that's specific to our school.

In counseling classes, each student creates and manages her personal portfolio in Naviance Succeed, which is shared with parents and counselors. The student information posted in Naviance includes My Resume, Do What You Are personality type, Learning Styles Inventory, Career Interest Profiler, College Search, and College Applications.

Family Connection will allow you to:

- **Get involved in the planning and advising process**- Build a resume, complete online surveys, and manage timelines and deadlines for making decisions about colleges and careers.
- **Research colleges** – Compare GPA, standardized test scores, and other statistics to actual historical data from our school for students who have applied and been admitted in the past. College Search features include: SuperMatch, College Match, College Compare, College Lookup, College Maps, Scattergrams
- **Research careers** – Research hundreds of careers and career clusters, and take career assessments like the Do What You Are™ test.
- **Create plans for the future** – Build course plans, create goals and to-dos, and complete tasks assigned to you by the school to better prepare yourself for your future college and career goals.

Family Connection also lets us share information with you about upcoming meetings and events, local scholarship opportunities, and other resources for college and career information.

# COLLEGE EXPLORATION

## College Resources & College Search Engines

There are more than three thousand four-year colleges in the United States from which you have the opportunity of choosing one to attend.

### College Resources

When it comes to gathering information about colleges, students will find an array of sources. College guides and directories, videos, websites, virtual tours, viewbooks and catalogs are a sample of the numerous resources available to students.

Ratings and rankings publications often lack specificity and objectivity required for effective explorations. It is important that students are sensitive to the evaluation criteria used to create the “best” list of colleges.

All of these resources can provide information that will contribute to quality exploration and sound decision-making. Keep in mind resources should be accurate, current, and unbiased.

### College Search Engines

College search engines can be a very useful tool to help in exploring your college options. When using college search engines, do not narrow your criteria too much. The purpose of search engines is to expand your awareness about the numerous institutions that may be of interest to you.

**Naviance** – <http://connection.naviance.com/fc/signin.php?hsid=ndapa>

Academy of Notre Dame college search engine available to freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

**National Catholic Colleges** – <http://www.catholiccollegesonline.org>

The National Catholic College Admission Association is your gateway to Catholic colleges and universities on the Web.

**College Board** – [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

**American Education Services** – [www.educationplanner.org](http://www.educationplanner.org)

**Peterson's Guide** – [www.petersons.com](http://www.petersons.com)

### College Mailing Lists

As you identify colleges that interest you, consider registering on each college's website as a prospective student. The profile you create will provide the college with information about you and, in turn, the college can provide you with information specific to your needs and interests. By email or mail you may receive a viewbook, a brochure describing your potential major, or notification of open houses or other events, scholarship opportunities or new programs. Admissions representatives often contact prospective students alerting them to the timing of their visits to your school or to events in your area. Many colleges have an inquiry form for athletes that usually goes to the coach of the sport(s) you show interest in. This form can usually be found on the college's athletics webpage. So, getting on the college's mailing list is an important step in establishing the lines of communication between you and the college.

# COLLEGE EXPLORATION

## Important Factors to Consider for College Exploration

*-Students should begin the exploration process by identifying their educational needs.-*

### **About You**

1. Know yourself
  - Aptitudes
  - Achievements
  - Interests
  - Personality traits
  - Values and goals
2. Academics
  - Academic fit should be your number one criteria in selection of a college. Place yourself in an environment where you will be challenged academically, yet where you are also able to meet that challenge.

### **About the Institution** – Refer to College Profile

1. School Type
  - Public, Private, Religious Affiliation
  - Co-Ed, Single-Sex
  - Urban, Suburban, Rural
2. Location
  - New England
  - Middle Atlantic
  - Mid-West
  - Southeast
  - Rocky Mountain States
  - Far West
  - Southwest
  - International
3. Undergraduate Enrollment
  - Small (Less than 2000)
  - Medium (2000-7500)
  - Large (More than 7500)
4. Selectivity
  - Selectivity or competitiveness of an institution is usually noted by the percentage of applicants accepted.
5. Extra-Curricular Involvement
  - Intercollegiate Sports
  - Activities
  - Study Abroad Programs
6. Majors
  - If you are pursuing a specific major, such as nursing, education or engineering, this may drive your search and will limit your possibilities.
7. Costs
  - In-state Tuition, Out-of-state Tuition
  - Room & Board, Books, Transportation, Other costs/fees
  - Need-based aid, Merit-based aid

# COLLEGE EXPLORATION

## College Visits

The purpose of visiting a college campus is for a student and her parents to get a first-hand view of that particular college or university. Visiting a college campus is a key component in the college exploration process! Each student begins to decipher her likes and dislikes as she ventures from one campus to another. Use the following guidelines to help you make the most of “Campus Visits.”

### **Start Local**

The Philadelphia area has numerous colleges and universities that meet every criteria. Urban/Suburban/Rural, Large/Small, Private/Public, etc. Check out some of the schools in our area and discover what you “like” and what you “dislike.”

### **Plan Ahead**

Look at upcoming holiday breaks or three-day weekends and plan accordingly. Make sure to visit when college students are on campus. Contact the colleges and universities ahead of time to inquire about campus tours, classroom visits, and other campus events that you may find interesting. Schedule an interview if possible. Information about visiting a college can often be found on the college’s website, usually under “Visits.” Some colleges do require you to make a reservation even to attend an information session or to take a tour. So, be sure to check beforehand. Additionally, some colleges will offer application fee waivers to all students who make an “official” visit.

### **Do an Overnight and/or Attend a Class**

If you are visiting during the spring of your junior year or the summer before your senior year, you may not have the opportunity to spend an overnight with a current student or to attend a class. When visiting in the fall of your senior year, you should consider adding these facets to your visit. Arrangements should be made in advance with the admissions office. Be sure to make your needs known, but understand that all of your needs may not be able to be met. If you spend a night with a friend, make sure the admissions office knows you are visiting. That’s another contact.

### **Research the College Before You Visit**

It is important to have some background information prior to your visit. Make a notecard of three things you “must do” while visiting that particular college. If you find a campus map online, print it out and take it with you. You’ll be ready to go as soon as you step out of your car.

### **Go on a Scheduled Tour**

Tours allow you to see the cafeteria, library, residence halls, and classrooms. It also provides an opportunity to ask questions.

### **Information Gather**

Gather brochures, business cards, school newspapers, and any other pertinent information. You may also want to inquire about the campus security profile.

### **Keep Notes, Take Pictures and Reflect On What You’ve Seen**

Once you get home sort through all of your information and notes and file it according to your interest level (1 = Not Interested thru 5 = Very Interested).

### **Send Thank-You Notes to Colleges**

While visiting the college, try to identify the admissions representative who covers ND. A few colleges will not be organized regionally, but most colleges have assigned geographic regions to each representative. When there is not a regional representative, determine the name of the director of admissions. When you return home (or during your continued travels), write a thank-you note to your admissions representative or the director (or anyone else with whom you had significant interaction, e.g., the presenter at the information session, a coach or a professor). This short note should thank the individual for making your visit a valuable one. It should tie you to the college, so you might mention something specific about the college that impressed you or matched your needs.

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### **Helpful Resources on The Campus Visit:**

National Survey of Student Engagement- A downloadable pocket guide to help you ask the right questions on a college campus visit. [http://nsse.iub.edu/html/pocket\\_guide\\_intro.cfm](http://nsse.iub.edu/html/pocket_guide_intro.cfm)

# COLLEGE EXPLORATION

## Questions to Ask on the College Visit

*- Be sure to take good notes for each visit!-*

It is important to get a range of views about a college during your campus visit. Ask the same questions of different people to get a clear picture!

### Questions to ask college students

- What are the more popular extracurricular activities (or ask specifically about the activity you are interested in)?
- Are you able to study in your room? Where do students study?
- Are there socializing areas/living rooms in the residence halls?
- Does the social life revolve around the campus or do many students go home or away on weekends?
- How available are the professors to talk to outside of class?
- Are campus jobs available?
- Were you able to register for all the classes you wanted?
- If you were to do it again, would you choose this college?
- Did you receive financial aid?
- What is the social life like at this school? Does the college provide planned cultural and social activities?
- Where are the cafeterias? What do they look like?
- What are the facilities for socializing, such as the student center?
- How important are fraternities and sororities to social life? What percentage of students belong? Would you call this a "Greek school?"
- What do you think are the best/most popular departments?

### Questions to ask an Admissions Officer

- What are your most popular/distinguished programs?
- How many students will be in my first year courses? Are those courses taught by full-time faculty or by graduate assistants?
- Describe the college's resources for first-year students: computers, library, access to special equipment in labs, etc.
- What kinds of work-study jobs are available?
- Am I likely to be admitted?
- What percentage of students receive financial aid and what does the typical package provide?
- Are there academic/talent scholarships available?
- Is housing guaranteed? Freshman year? All four years?

### Questions to ask yourself on campus

- Could I live in one of the residence halls I visit?
- Are the buildings on campus in good shape? How are the facilities that support your interests? (i.e., art studios, science labs, athletic facilities)
- Are the computers and lab equipment plentiful and new?
- Are common areas of residence halls comfortable and do the facilities meet demand?
- Are the grounds attractive? What is the general condition of campus?
- Is the campus close enough - or far enough away - from the city for me?
- How is it getting around campus? Can I walk to class or do I need a bike or shuttle?

### Questions to ask yourself in the classroom

- Do students appear to be interested in the material?
- Do students participate in discussion?
- Do the students seem to have a relationship with the professor?
- Would I feel comfortable as a student in this setting?
- Is the material challenging enough for me?

# COLLEGE EXPLORATION

## College Representatives and College Fairs

### **College Representatives visiting Notre Dame**

College representatives visit students at Notre Dame in the fall. We welcomed over 100 college representatives this fall. Representatives provide valuable information to students about their colleges, as well as their application process. Seniors are encouraged to attend these visits to Notre Dame; freshman, sophomores, and juniors may attend if in a free period or lunch. Students should sign up for visits in advance and have a Hall Pass signed by your teacher. A complete and up-to-date listing of visiting colleges and universities can be found on Naviance. College representative visits are advertised on Naviance, the College Counseling bulletin board, in the College Counseling Newsletter, and to the students through announcements and meetings.

### **College Fairs**

College fairs provide a unique opportunity for students to talk directly with admissions officers, alumni, or student representatives who assist the college in its admission efforts. A bit of preparation on your part will allow you to gain more from the experience.

When attending a College Fair, consider the following:

**Do your homework:** Study the roster of participating colleges (if available) and prepare a list of questions. Take your list to the fair and don't be shy about asking your questions.

**Be prepared to complete student inquiry cards.** To expedite this process, you can prepare pre-addressed labels that can be affixed to the colleges' card with your name, address and contact information (i.e., email, phone), and academic interest. This will provide more time to talk to the representative by spending less time filling in your information.

**Allow sufficient time to talk with as many college representatives as possible.** If you are undecided about where to apply, use the fair to continue your exploration. While many colleges will be familiar to you, others will not. If you have narrowed your list of colleges, the fair will permit you to be more directive in your information quest, but you may wish to engage in discussion with some colleges that are not on your list.

Bring pencils, paper or a notebook and **take time to write down the answers** to your questions and other information that you deem important.

Note the name or take the business card of the admissions representative with whom you spoke. Find out if they will be the one to evaluate your application. **Take some time after the fair to write personal follow-up notes, letters, or emails** to those colleges you met and continue to be interested in.

**Talk with your fellow students after the fair and compare notes regarding the information you received and the impressions that were created.** Comparing your insights and experiences with others may generate perspectives that were not apparent before.

**Present yourself in the best possible manner.** The college fair is an opportunity for you to interact face-to-face with college admissions representatives, individuals who eventually may be involved in reviewing your application and contributing to the admissions decision. Make the most of the very first impression you make with this individual.

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

## An Overview and Definitions

### **An Overview of College Admissions Tests**

Admissions requirements vary from school to school, and students should check with the individual colleges to determine the policy of each school in which they have a serious interest. The College Counseling Office can be of assistance to students in determining which examinations should be taken for each particular college or university. Some form of college admissions testing is usually required.

### **College Admissions Testing Definitions**

**ACT** – A college entrance exam that measures students’ general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The test covers English, mathematics, reading, and science with an optional Writing Test. We recommend you take the optional writing section at least once. The ACT with Writing takes 3 hours and 25 minutes to complete. The ACT may be taken in place of or in addition to the SAT Reasoning/SAT Subject tests. See [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

**AP Tests (Advanced Placement)** – These three-hour college-level exams are offered in more than 30 subjects, are given in May, and are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. A high score may earn a student advanced placement in college or course credit. Scores earned at the end of the junior year may be taken into consideration by colleges in their evaluation of a student’s candidacy.

**PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test)** – This test is an abbreviated form of the SAT Reasoning Test and is designed to give sophomores and juniors an opportunity to practice taking a test which is similar but shorter than the SAT Reasoning. This test measures critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills, and writing skills. It also gives students a chance to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. It is given in October and results become available in December. See <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html>

**SAT Reasoning Test** – The SAT is 3 hours long, plus an additional 50 minutes for the optional writing section and measures skills in three areas: critical reading, math, and writing. The SAT Reasoning Test may be taken in place of or in addition to the ACT. See [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

**SAT Subject Tests** – The SAT Subject Tests are one-hour, mostly multiple-choice tests in specific subjects. These tests measure knowledge of particular subjects and the ability to apply that knowledge. Some colleges require or recommend one or more of these tests for admission or placement purposes. These tests are offered in subjects such as English, foreign languages, science, history, and mathematics. See [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)

**TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)** – This test is given to students for whom English is not their native language and, in some cases, to American citizens whose families do not speak English in the home. For non-native English speakers, it is an admissions requirements for those colleges and universities where instruction is in English.

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS TESTING

Timelines • Registering • Reporting • Non-Standard Testing • Non-Report Options

## College Admissions Testing Timelines

### Sophomore Year

The PSAT (Preliminary Scholastic Assessment Test) is given in the fall of sophomore year. This test is only given once a year. The PSAT is not used for college admissions.

### Junior Year

The PSAT is given the fall of junior year. The junior score is the basis for selection for the National Merit and several other scholarships. The PSAT is not used for college admissions.

The ACT, SAT Reasoning, and SAT Subject Tests are administered throughout the fall, spring, and summer. It is important for students to take all tests at the time when they are most prepared.

### Senior Year

Seniors may retake the ACT, SAT Reasoning, and/or SAT Subject Tests in the fall of her senior year. (Note: You cannot take the SAT Reasoning and the SAT Subject Tests on the same day. Plan ahead!)

## Registering For Tests

- You can register for the SAT and ACT online or by paper form.
- To register online, use these links:
  - SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject Tests: [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)
  - ACT: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)
- Academy of Notre Dame School CEEB Code is 395000
- Use your full, legal name when registering for all tests.
- It is the responsibility of the student to register for the appropriate tests and to submit her scores to the necessary colleges by the application deadlines.

## Reporting Scores to Colleges

- Students are expected to keep records concerning their own testing results.
- Students are responsible for reporting their scores directly to the colleges.
- Test scores do not appear on the transcript.
- Note: When students request scores be sent to the colleges, they need to follow the colleges' policies related to Score Choice.

## Non-Standard Testing

For questions concerning nonstandard testing for students with learning differences please contact the Learning Specialist. (Note: This is a very detailed and lengthy process. Plan ahead!)

## Non-Report Testing Options

Over 800 four-year colleges and universities de-emphasize the use of standardized tests in making admissions decisions by offering waiver or non-report options. Some schools do not require standardized testing for any students, whereas others exempt those students meeting a particular GPA or use the scores only for research purposes. Always check with the Admissions Office at universities of interest to learn their policies.

For a complete listing of schools with Non-Report Testing Options, go to [www.fairtest.org/university/optional](http://www.fairtest.org/university/optional)

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Constructing Your College List

Each student is encouraged to begin constructing her college list in the spring of her junior year. Based on the information gathered through college exploration, students should have a preliminary list of colleges and universities that match her desired interests. During college counseling courses in the spring of the junior year, each student will create her “my colleges” list in Naviance. Keep in mind it is important to have at least two colleges in each category and find schools in each category that would be a good match for the student. Students will use Naviance to construct and maintain their list. Students should only keep colleges on the list that they are really interested in attending.

**Likely Schools** are colleges where you easily reach or exceed the standards for admission to that college. Acceptance rate is 60 percent.

**Target Schools** are colleges where you will find yourself very competitive in the admission pool. Your SAT/ACT scores and GPA are within the mid-50% scores from previous applicants. Acceptance rate is 30-60 percent.

**Reach Schools** are schools where your GPA and standardized scores may be less than most other applicants. These are also schools that accept a small percentage of its applicants. At a highly competitive college, many qualified applicants are denied or waitlisted even when they meet the admissions standards. Acceptance rate is below 30% percent.

- It is recommended that students diversify their list of colleges, applying to schools ranging from most likely to be accepted to those that are a reach.
- Every college to which you apply should be a place where you want to go and is a good match. Applying “just to see if I get in” is discouraged.
- Statistics from the previous year’s admission pool for that college are good measures to compare your credentials. (i.e., average SAT/ACT scores, average GPA, percentage of applicants admitted)
- Refer to Naviance College Profiles and “Compare Me” charts to assess the category in which your colleges of interest fall.
- Whenever possible, visit those colleges and universities on your college list before applying to assess whether it is a good fit.
- The most accurate source of information is the Admissions Office of the school to which you are applying. Contact the college’s Admissions Office with questions or concerns and for admissions information specific to their school.
- Be sure to demonstrate interest in those schools to which you apply and would like to enroll. Communicate your interest in a school through campus visits, tours, interviews, overnights, and correspondence with admissions representatives.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Application Options and Deadlines

### **Early Decision (ED) - Phase I and Phase II**

- ED programs are recommended for students who have completed a thorough college search and find that one school stands above and beyond the others.
- ED policy requires a student to commit to a college or university at the time of application that, if admitted, the student will enroll.
- Students **MAY NOT** apply to more than one college under the Early Decision plan.
- Upon admission, the institution will require a nonrefundable deposit well before May 1. If denied admission, students may not reapply through regular decision.
- Some colleges may defer your decision to the regular decision pool of applicants. This means you will be released from your ED commitment.
- The deadlines for completing Early Decision applications are in the fall of your senior year, usually no later than November 15. The college will usually notify you of its decision before December 15. The same information applies for ED Phase II, however the application deadline for ED Phase II is usually January. The college will usually notify you of its decision by the end of February.

### **Early Action (EA)**

- EA permits students to apply to a college or university of their choice and receive a decision early in the senior year, well in advance of the normal spring response dates.
- Though students will hear earlier regarding your admission, they are not committed to attend and they may apply to other colleges. If denied admission, they may not reapply through regular decision.
- Restrictive Early Action (REA) - Above definition applies. Students may be restricted from applying ED or EA or REA to other institutions, but are not committed to enroll if admitted.

### **Rolling Admissions**

- Colleges that offer rolling admission continuously evaluate applicants and notify the applicants regarding acceptance on an ongoing basis. It is recommended that you have your application submitted by October 1, for your best chance of acceptance.

### **Regular Admissions**

- Most colleges require that applications for regular admissions be submitted by December 31. Check the web sites of the specific colleges you select to obtain their deadlines.
- Most colleges will inform you of their decision by April 1 and require that you make your decision about whether to matriculate by May 1.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## The ND College Application Checklist

### Senior Student:

It is the STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY to prepare, submit, and/or arrange:

- Application, Application fee
- Standardized test scores (are not released to colleges by ND)
- Essay
- Teacher recommendations (2 teacher minimum from academic subjects)
  - Sign Teacher Recommendation Contract with teacher and return to the College Counseling Office
  - Provide teacher with helpful information about you
  - Follow-up. Inform about deadlines. Provide teacher forms from applications when necessary.
  - Thank them!!
- Activities résumé
- Any supplements required by the college (particularly when using the Common Application)
- Any recommendations from people outside of ND
- Financial Aid forms (FAFSA and CSS Profile)
- Interview, Portfolio, or Audition (when required)
- Scholarship applications (when separate from admission application)
- Photocopies of everything you submit to the college
- Complete Transcript Request Form in ND College Counseling Office at least 10 school days before application deadline (Note: Transcript Request Forms will be made available only upon receipt of completed Student Information Sheet, Parent Brag Sheet, Teacher Recommendation Contract, and Transcript Release Form)
- Early Decision transcript requests/applications to College Counseling Office by mid-October (see College Counseling Office for official deadline)
- Regular Decision transcript requests/applications to College Counseling Office by late-November (see College Counseling Office for official deadline)

### ND Teachers Will:

- Teachers confirm that they are willing and able to write a letter of recommendation by signing the Teacher Recommendation Contract
- Teachers submit your completed letter and recommendation form to ND College Counseling Office no later than October 1

### Honor Code Statement:

Honor Code violations resulting in suspension or expulsion will be reported to colleges on the counselor secondary school report. If an honor code violation occurs after the school report has been submitted, ND's college counseling office will report the infraction to all active college applications within two weeks of the suspension or expulsion. Students are strongly encouraged to disclose any serious disciplinary infractions that may occur before, during, or after the college application process.

### ND College Counseling Office:

Once a Transcript Request Form is received, ND College Counseling Office will provide and submit to colleges:

- Secondary School Report
- Transcript
- Counselor letter of recommendation
- Teacher letters of recommendation
- ND school profile
- Mid-Year grades (sent automatically once available)
- Final transcript/graduation confirmation (sent automatically once available)

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## **Counselor Calls:**

ND college counselors will advocate for all of our students through phone calls with college representatives. The content of these calls are confidential and will not be shared with students or their families.

## Student Timeline & Completing Applications

### **Student Timeline**

All students are responsible for completing the following tasks by the indicated due date:

#### **Due Spring of Junior Year (see College Counseling Office for official deadline):**

- Teacher Recommendation Contract completed and signed by student and a minimum of two academic teachers and submitted to College Counseling Office
- Release Authorization Forms completed and submitted to College Counseling Office
- Initial Survey Form submitted to College Counseling Office
- Parent Brag Sheet submitted to College Counseling Office

#### **Due by October 1 of Senior Year (see College Counseling Office for official deadline):**

- Final List Form and all Transcript Request Forms

### **Information for Completing Applications**

When completing the application, remember:

- Complete all applications thoroughly. Remember that legibility is important.
- Before submitting applications, make sure all sections are completed and proofread all essays.
- Compile and submit all remaining materials and information to the college's Admissions Office. (i.e. application fee, résumé/activity sheet, supplemental application, etc.)
- Complete supplements for all Common Application colleges that have one.
- **Students are responsible to submit all required test scores directly to colleges from the College Board/ACT.**
- **Allow 10 school days for processing of transcripts before October 1.** After we receive your final list, college materials will be sent according to the deadline listed. Transcript requests must be made a minimum of 10 school days before the college's application deadline.
- Mid-year grade reports will automatically be sent to all colleges and universities. If a college or university requires an additional grade report, it is your responsibility to contact the College Counseling Office.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Application Process Worksheet

All students are responsible for completing the following tasks by the indicated due date and submitted to the College Counseling Office.

- Teacher Recommendation Contract**      **Due: Spring of Junior Year**
- Release Authorization Form**      **Due: February of Junior Year**
- Initial Survey Form**      **Due: Spring of Junior Year**
- Parent Brag Sheet**      **Due: February of Junior Year**
- Copy of Essays Submitted to College Counseling Office** (Optional: Please note "COPY" on essay)

### Important Dates

College/ University	Deadline ED=Early Decision EA=Early Action R=Rolling	Transcript Request Submitted to College Counseling Office	SAT/ACT Scores Submitted	Application Submitted to College	Supplemental Application Submitted to College

### Financial Aid and Scholarships

Seniors are responsible for completing the necessary financial aid information by the indicated due date.

- CSS/Profile – Required by certain colleges and universities (Recommended Due Date: October)
- FAFSA – Required for students to be eligible for government aid; grants, work-study, loans
- Search for available scholarships.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Recommendations & Résumés

### **Counselor Recommendations and Teacher Recommendations**

A recommendation is an extremely important part of your application. College admissions counselors value a teacher's perspective and enjoy reading what type of student you are and what you contribute to a classroom. It is vital that you give teachers enough time to generate a great letter that reflects all of the wonderful qualities you have to offer.

#### **Ask Early**

- Begin asking teachers in the spring of your Junior Year.
- Completed and signed Teacher Recommendation Contracts are due to the College Counseling Office in the Spring of Junior Year.

#### **When a teacher agrees to write a letter for you, provide the teacher with the following information:**

- Due dates for the application(s), if known.
- Any specific requirements for the letter.

**Teachers will submit the letters directly to the College Counseling Office.** The College Counseling Office will submit teacher recommendations and counselor recommendations directly to the colleges.

**Periodic reminders up until the due date may be helpful!!!**

**Write a thank you note to your teachers.**

### **Résumés and Activities Sheets**

On college applications, students will need to indicate the extracurricular, volunteer, and work related activities that they have participated in throughout their high school experience. In addition to indicating this information on the application, colleges may ask students to submit a résumé. This is one more opportunity to showcase your talents, honors, awards, and participation in activities. Many applications will not give you adequate space to list all activities, awards, and honors. Consider uploading or sending a resume as an additional document so the college will see a fuller picture of your time outside of the classroom.

Keep in mind that the résumé should be clear and concise. The résumé should reflect your strengths!

Your résumé should include your full name, address, phone number, and email address.

Consider these categories as a guide to writing your résumé:

- Academic Activities, Honors, Awards, and Achievements
- Extracurricular Activities
- Work Experience
- Volunteer Experience

Within each category describe the activity, position you held, and length of time of participation.

Resume templates are available on your Naviance account in the Document Library.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Writing Essays

Like most other admission criteria, the weight given to the essay will vary from institution to institution. However, if the college requires an essay, you must treat it with importance and use it as an opportunity to strengthen your application for admission. While the essay is first a measure of your writing abilities, it also provides insight into your intelligence, expressiveness, and thinking skills. Like the interview, the essay provides you with an opportunity to answer unasked questions and to communicate directly with the educators and officials who have a voice in your admission.

### Starting Your Essay

1. Make certain you understand the question or the topic. Your essay should answer the question or speak directly to the given topic.
2. List all ideas. Be creative. Brainstorm without censoring.
3. Sort through ideas and prioritize. You cannot tell them everything, so be selective.
4. Choose information and ideas that are not reflected in other parts of your application. This is your chance to supplement your application with information you want them to know.
5. Be persuasive in showing the reader you are deserving of admission. Remember your audience.

### Writing the Draft – Apply what you have learned in English class

1. Develop paragraphs, one idea at a time, with topic sentences, using examples or giving convincing reasons.
2. Make transitions between paragraphs.
3. Select action verbs and avoid the passive voice.
4. Use concrete examples. Often examples of behavior demonstrate an idea better than an adjective.
6. Develop exact, concrete language.

### Editing Your Draft

1. Does your introduction capture the reader's attention?
2. Are you consistent in your verb tense?
3. Are you clear and coherent?
4. Are you concise enough to adhere to the limits in length?
5. Have you checked for grammatical and spelling errors?
7. Does the essay present you as you wish to be seen?
8. Did another person review your essay for possible mistakes?
9. Would you remember your essay if you read one hundred others?
10. Does your closing paragraph present you as you wish to be remembered?

### Completing Your Essay

1. Some applications list a preference for typed or handwritten work. Regardless of the preference, the application should be neat and legible.
2. Keep a copy for your records.

# APPLYING TO COLLEGES

## Interviews

A college interview provides students with the opportunity to learn more about the college, while the college learns more about the students. An interview may last anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour. The person conducting the interview may be an admission officer, a student, or an alumnus. A less formal interview may be conducted in a group setting. Use these tips to assist you with the interview process.

- Act Natural! Be yourself!
- Start and end your interview with a firm handshake.
- Don't be afraid to make eye contact.
- Bring information to share (i.e., transcript, résumé).
- Dress appropriately.
- Arrive ten minutes early.
- Research the institution before the interview and come prepared to ask questions.
- Don't ask questions that can easily be answered by looking on the college's website.
- Be positive about yourself!

Questions an admissions representative might ask you:

### Academic

- What classes are you taking?
- Are you pleased with your high school record?
- Do you enjoy studying?
- What do you like/dislike about your school? If you could change any aspect of your high school, what would it be and why?
- What is your favorite/least favorite class? Why?
- How has your high school experience prepared you for college?

### Extracurricular

- What activities are you involved in?
- What are your other interests?
- What have you learned/gained from participation in these activities?

Questions to ask an admission representative:

### Academic

- How large are your classes?
- Do you have teaching assistants?
- Is there an advising system?
- Do you have a required core curriculum?

### Other Questions

- What are your housing options?
- How do you match roommates?
- What are the student graduation rates?
- What types of safety and security do you have?
- How many students come from in state vs. out of state?
- How many students are international?
- What do students have to do on weekends? Do students stay on campus?
- How has this college changed in the last five years?

# FINANCIAL AID & SCHOLARSHIPS

## CSS/Profile, FAFSA, & Scholarship Searches

### **CSS/Profile**

The PROFILE is the financial aid application service of the College Board. Many of the member colleges, universities, graduate and professional schools, and scholarship programs use the information collected on PROFILE to help them award nonfederal student aid funds.

Visit [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) for more information, a list of participating colleges and universities, and important deadlines.

### **FAFSA (Free Application For Federal Student Aid)**

What is this application for?

Use this application to apply for federal student grants, work-study aid, and loans. You may also use this application to apply for most state and some private aid.

What methods are available for completing the FAFSA?

Several methods are available for completing your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). They are:

- Paper FAFSA
- Paper Renewal FAFSA
- FAFSA on the Web
- Renewal FAFSA on the Web

The FAFSA is available for completion beginning October 1.

Visit <http://fafsa.ed.gov> for more information.

### **Scholarship**

There are numerous scholarships available to students. The trick is finding them. Notre Dame receives information about scholarship each year that we promote to students and parents. Students may also consider inquiring about scholarships at the colleges and universities to which they are applying.

Additionally, there are scholarship search engines that may be useful to students and parents. Check out the list of websites below.

[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)  
[www.college-scholarships.com](http://www.college-scholarships.com)  
[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

[www.cappex.com](http://www.cappex.com)  
[www.collegenet.com](http://www.collegenet.com)  
[www.raise.me](http://www.raise.me)  
[www.fastaid.com](http://www.fastaid.com)

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STATUS & MAKING THE "FINAL" DECISION

## College Update Form

Seniors will receive a "College Update Form" in January of their senior year. The form asks for information regarding each student's application status (i.e., Deferred, denied, accepted, etc). Please note, as students continue to hear from colleges, they should update their form with their college counselor.

## Withdrawing your Application

If a student has decided NOT to apply to a college but has already submitted the application and/or transcript request, she should contact the college or university via email as soon as possible. The email or letter should include name, social security number or college admissions number, contact information and one sentence stating the request to withdraw the application.

## Deferred or Waitlisted

1. Read the deferral or waitlist letter very carefully. Follow their directions and deadlines.
2. Get the Scoop. According to NACAC's 2015 State of College Admission Report, nearly 39% of colleges and universities use wait lists. The most "selective" colleges (defined as accepting fewer than 50% of applicants) use wait lists at a much higher rate than those that admit more than half of their applicants. The number of colleges using wait lists has remained relatively steady over the past ten years, but the number of students placed on wait lists has increased. Different colleges use wait lists differently. To assess your chances of acceptance from the wait list, call the admission office. Ask what your position is on the list (if the list is ranked). Another important piece of information is the percentage of students that have been accepted from the wait list in recent years. If a college hardly ever uses its wait list, or accepted only a few wait-listed applicants last year, that trend is unlikely to change this year. But you can ask if the admission officer knows yet if the college will go to the wait list this year. The goal in gathering this information is to determine your chances of eventually being accepted.
3. Confirm your Interest. If the college is still your number one choice, make sure you state your definite interest! It is important that you contact the college rather than have a parent or college counselor make the contact. In a letter and/or an email, state your interest and provide the college with any new, additional, and/or pertinent information. For example, it would be beneficial to submit recent awards or honors, a new leadership position, strong writing sample or paper, and perhaps even an additional letter of recommendation.
4. Mid Year Grades are important. The College Counseling Office will submit your mid-year grades. Make sure you notify your counselor of any recent additions to your résumé! Also note, all students who wish to remain on a waitlist throughout the spring must notify their counselor.
5. Restate your interest! In early March, it is important to once again contact the colleges to restate your interest. In a letter and/or an email, emphasize your desire to attend that college. Be detailed, but do not repeat prior information.

# COLLEGE ADMISSIONS STATUS & MAKING THE "FINAL" DECISION

## Notifying Colleges of your Final Decision

It is very important to notify colleges of your final decision (Accepting or Declining) by the stated deadline.

- You must notify each college that accepts you whether you are accepting (only one college) or rejecting (all the other colleges) its offer of admission. You should make these notifications as soon as you have made a final decision as to the college that you wish to attend, but no later than May 1. It is understood that May 1 will be the postmark date.
- You should confirm your intention to enroll and, if required, submit a deposit to only one college or university.
- If you are put on a wait list by one or more colleges, you should contact them to let them know if you want to remain on their wait list or not. If you do not let the college know you want to remain active on its wait list, you may not be considered for admission. If you are later admitted to an institution off the wait list, you may accept the offer and send a deposit. You must, however, immediately notify your first college to inform that college of your intention not to enroll.
- If you are accepted under an early decision plan, you must promptly withdraw the applications submitted to other colleges and make no additional applications. If you are an early decision candidate and are seeking financial aid, you need not withdraw other applications until you have received notification about financial aid.

If you think that your rights have been denied, you should contact the college or university immediately to request additional information or the extension of a reply date. In addition, you should ask your counselor to notify the president of the state or regional affiliate of the National Association for College Admission Counseling. If you need further assistance, send a copy of any correspondence you have had with the college or university and a copy of your letter of admission to:

NACAC  
1631 Prince Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314-2818

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR COLLEGE ADMISSION COUNSELING

This information is provided by National Association of College Admission Counseling "Students' Rights and Responsibilities in the College Admission Process."

Good Luck!



