

ADMISSION TO HIGHLY SELECTIVE AND COMPETITIVE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

Admission officers at highly selective and competitive colleges say that unless candidates can distinguish themselves—through their high school records, teacher recommendations, applications and essays—“numbers” alone will not get them admitted. Admission decisions hinge on the interplay of the following seven factors—numbers one and two being the most significant:

1. The rigor of a candidate’s academic program
2. Academic performance
3. Letters of recommendation from teachers and counselors
4. Evidence of “distinguishing excellence” beyond the classroom (leadership, special talent, significant contribution in one or two extracurricular areas)
5. The quality of thought and clarity of expression evident in a candidate’s personal essay
6. Standardized test scores
7. Special considerations (legacies and athletics, as well as geographic, ethnic, and economic factors)

It is important to keep in mind that while colleges want bright students, they also want to build a student body that is diverse in interests, outlooks, and special talents. In other words, highly selective and competitive colleges seek a “well-rounded” freshman class, not necessarily a well-rounded freshman! Each application is considered both individually and in the context of a very large and very talented applicant pool.

In addition to their top selective school choices, all seniors should also apply to a “safe” school—one to which they will definitely be admitted and one that is affordable. You may wish to investigate the honors programs offered by the state universities in Ohio. These programs vary from school to school, are well respected and moderately priced—and admission criteria are often clearly defined.

TESTING

Some colleges require or recommend that students take several SAT Subject Tests as well as the SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT. Students should check specific college catalogs for admission requirements. Keep in mind that students may register for **either** the SAT Reasoning Test **or** up to three SAT Subject Tests on one test date. The SAT Subject Tests are listed and explained in the SAT Registration Bulletin available in the Guidance office and on the College Board web site. It is recommended that students take these subject tests when a particular course terminates. For example, students who are currently enrolled in Chemistry may want to take the Chemistry SAT Subject Test at the end of the school year.

TIPS FOR COLLEGE PLANNING

- Start as early as possible. Do not procrastinate.
- Develop a timeline and stick to it.
- Keep an open mind.
- Do your research. Visit websites such as, www.collegeboard.com.
- Review applications carefully so that you understand what each college requires.
- Familiarize yourself with the Common Application, www.commonapp.org.
- Give teachers and counselors sufficient time to write letters of recommendation.
- Learn about financial aid and be mindful of deadlines—apply for scholarships as early as possible.
- Be sure to check deadlines for scholarships and college applications. Timelines may be different for each scholarship opportunity as well as for college application/admission procedures. Websites are valuable resources for up-to-date information.
- Draft college essays the summer before senior year. Use a resource such as *The College Application Essay* by Sarah Myers McGinty.
- Carefully proofread applications and essays. Present yourself in a thoughtful, truthful manner.
- Keep copies of everything you send out.
- Avoid “senior slump”—maintain a rigorous course of study in senior year.