

# THE COLLEGE PROCESS: A HANDBOOK FOR BERKELEY CARROLL FAMILIES



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

*The college process can and should be really fun and rewarding, both a unique opportunity to choose your path and a right of passage. Alternatively, it can live up to its hype as an ordeal forged by demons in Dante's third level of hell. But know this: how you experience the process is almost entirely up to you.*



Dear Berkeley Carroll Families,

Choosing your best options from the 2500 four-year colleges and universities in the U.S. is a big task, and writing strong applications will demand discipline and hard work. But the process shouldn't be scary. It is, above all, an opportunity. The college process will allow you to think of yourself in all kinds of new ways, to think about who you are, who you want to be, and how you want to grow. And, this last point is so important. As you contemplate your college choices, also think about the settings and communities in which you have been successful as you anticipate what you will need to thrive.

For most students, the college process is their chance to make their first big "life decision." Yes, many people will offer advice and involve themselves in the discussions: your parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbor, friends, people on the subway, even your dentist. In fact, you will probably be sucked into more conversations about your college search than you'd like over the next several months. But you have control over what your next four years will look like, not to mention the next several months, and there's something profoundly exciting about that.

The process can also be really fun and rewarding. Alternatively, it can live up to its hype as an ordeal, overwhelming, stressful, and anxiety-producing. But know this: how you experience it is almost entirely up to you. Some perspective is in order: simply by virtue of being a Berkeley Carroll student, you are a competitive candidate for many of the nation's most desirable colleges and universities. The distinctions that invariably get drawn between schools are, at base, hair-splitting. It's not that the distinctions aren't real, but they're very often inflated and they are sometimes circumstantial.

Remind yourself at regular intervals, you will go to a good college! Understanding this is about 50% of keeping this process sane. The other 50%? Discipline and organization. We all battle procrastination. Complicating matters, your academic and extracurricular obligations at Berkeley Carroll take a lot of time and energy in junior and senior years. You have to find a way – and we can help you with this – to weave college research and applications into your busy schedule. There is no alternative.

In addition to the non-negotiable deadlines, like application due dates, there are many soft deadlines, like when you should submit the first draft of your essay and when you should begin filling out applications. Please, do yourself a favor and make a calendar. Make it big. Color-code it. Hang it in the kitchen or the living room, so your parents have some sense of what's going on without having to constantly ask you. It's amazing how a good calendar can help you stay on task.

## “College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.”

Because each student is different, we in the College Office feel strongly about taking an individualized approach to all aspects of the search and application processes. This handbook is intended to give you a big picture view of the college process as it unfolds at Berkeley Carroll, but bear in mind there isn't a one-size-fits-all way to research and apply to college. Timelines, priorities and strategies shift from student to student, depending on an infinite number of variables.

“College is a match to be made, not a prize to be won.” You have likely seen this message on the wall of our office. In a society that increasingly seeks objective measures of quality, the reliance upon magazine rankings and statistics alone to create a college list is troubling. Let “selectivity does not equal quality” become your mantra. Every student has different strengths, goals and interests, and there are different colleges - excellent colleges! - out there to correspond to these differences.

“Fit” is not a soft idea borne out of a fuzzy, nurturing philosophy. It depends on analysis of many intangible qualities, but it is as critical for the practical and rational student as for the pensive, emotional one. Please don't skim over the section on self-assessment in Chapter 3. It is perhaps the most important part of the process an equally fundamental for each of you.

Everyone has an opinion, not always informed, about some of the places you'll be considering. Try not to be upset by others' disapproval or ignorance. People can be shockingly insensitive about others' college choices in a way they would never be about, say, romantic relationships or choice of careers. Neither should you be swayed by people's overly impressed reactions to prestigious colleges you may be considering. Prestige isn't the same thing as fit. You have your own distinctive personality. It's reflected in the clothes you wear, the music you listen to, and the things you care about in life. Your college has to fit with your personality, too.

This may sound radical, but it's perfectly okay to keep your college search private. There have been many students in the past who decided to refrain from discussing where they were applying with those outside their immediate families and the college office. For most, it was a strategy designed to keep college from overwhelming friendships and the joys of senior year. High school is not simply a stepping-stone to college; your time at Berkeley Carroll, including senior year, has its own tremendous value. It's not healthy for the college process to eclipse your life during senior year. If making a deal with your friends and family to limit "college talk" helps you strike a better balance, then by all means do it!

## "Selectivity does not equal quality."

One of the reasons the college process is so stressful is the misconception, exaggerated by the media, that there is a significant amount of randomness built into the admission process. The process may be flawed, but it isn't random. Even at Barnard College, where I worked for several years, admission decisions made sense from where we sat, with a view of the whole applicant pool. Does that mean we were able to admit all the students we felt were outstanding and deserving and who we knew could do the work? No. But we always felt we were approving the applications that represented the best fit for the institution within the parameters we were given.

From where we sit at Berkeley Carroll, however, we don't have the perspective of a college's entire applicant pool, only our tiny portion of it. This means we can't predict outcomes with 100% accuracy, nor can we always explain the decisions that are ultimately rendered. But we do have access to how Berkeley Carroll applicants have fared in the application process at hundreds of colleges across the nation.

Mr. Almonte, Ms. Chen, and I also know from our years of admissions experience that your application will be read thoroughly and thoughtfully by professionals who, just as you are trying to find the colleges that best fit you, are trying to find students who are the best fit for their colleges. As Lee Coffin, current Dean of Admission at Dartmouth, likes to point out, it's called the Office of Admission, not the Office of Denial. Even at the most selective institutions, admission officers are actually looking for reasons to support your candidacy, not eliminate it.

We will always be honest with you about what we think your chances are at the schools you're considering. That means sometimes we have to tell you things you don't want to hear. It's important that you not confuse this honesty with a lack of support. The statistics may indicate your chances at a particular university are slim, but know that when we write your letter of recommendation or talk with an admission officer on the phone or via email, our focus is on your strengths and the ways in which we think the school is a good match for you.



The better we know you and your experiences with school and the process, the more helpful we can be. Spend some time hanging out in our offices. Ask questions about college, certainly, but feel free to drop by even if you don't have something specific to talk about. It's amazing how a conversation about a summer internship, a favorite book or personal experience can give us interesting insights and find their way into letters of recommendation.

Between your parents, advisor, dean and the College Office, you're going to have a lot of support in the coming year. Ultimately, though, you're the one who has to get yourself to first-year orientation. It'll be a challenging trip, to be sure, but the pursuit of happiness is always worth revolutionary effort. We are excited to embark on the process with you.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Middleton, Director of College Counseling  
On behalf of the Berkeley Carroll College Counseling Office  
With support and wisdom from Brandon Clarke

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# CHAPTER 2

## COLLEGE COUNSELING AT BERKELEY CARROLL

*We will do what we can to guide, support and cheer from the sidelines, but at the end of the day, the one who has to do the work of researching and applying is you: no one can choose the right schools for you, nobody else can take your tests for you, write your personal essay better than you, and no one can play “you” better than you in an interview.*

### **IN THIS CHAPTER:**

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## WHAT DOES THE COLLEGE OFFICE DO?

Think of us as your campaign managers, with occasional turns as editors, career counselors, life and team coaches, travel agents, teachers and attorneys. Our job is to get to know you and your strengths, to help you to navigate the admissions process, to give you our best, most informed advice and to coordinate Berkeley Carroll's portion of your college applications.

We are not, however, placement officers: We don't get students into college. Students do the work that gets them into college. There's a misconception out there that a college counselor at an independent school can pull strings to get a student into college. College admissions haven't worked this way since the Johnson administration. While it's true we have phone conversations with many admission officers, those conversations are about making sure students' files are complete and confirming that institutions are seeing the same terrific strengths in you that we at Berkeley Carroll see.

We can (and will) do all we can from the sidelines, but at the end of the day, the one who has to do the work of researching and applying is you: no one can choose the right schools for you. Nobody can take your tests for you, should write your personal essay for you or better than you, and no one can play "you" better than you in an interview.

Here are things we will do to help you:

- Arrange college visitors, information sessions, "boot camps," speakers, joint programs, panels, a college fair, and other events to help teach you about colleges and the college process.

- Coordinate [optional] opportunities for standardized test preparation. Provide resources for further preparation.
- Help craft your initial college list, and introduce you to schools you might not have considered.
- Get to know you, answer your (and your parents') questions, and be available for conversations throughout the whole college process.
- Be honest with you and your family about your chances of admission to the schools on your list.
- Advise you as you craft a well-balanced college list with a couple reaches, some middles, and a few foundations.
- Help you manage your time throughout the application process by helping you come up with a plan – sticking to the plan, of course, is up to you!
- Give you constructive criticism on your essays, from the point of view of experienced admissions officers. Be vigilant about accepting too much help from family and tutors--it is your voice colleges want to hear.
- Write a detailed letter to colleges highlighting, with a floodlight view, your academic and extracurricular strengths.
- Submit supporting documents – transcript, school profile, teacher letters, secondary school report – to colleges.

Just to be clear, here are a few things we can't do:

- Research colleges' programs and requirements for you. We have a lot of information in our heads, and we are happy to share, but colleges add programs and change policies regularly. You need to dig into the details to assess fit.
- Guarantee your acceptance to a particular college. We make estimates based on professional experience and years of Berkeley Carroll application statistics, but even admission deans cannot predict an upcoming cycle's application numbers.
- Guarantee a financial aid package your family can afford, though we will advise you on which colleges meet full need, provide information on forms and deadlines, and we will caution you to have open financial conversations early on in the process.
- Make sure your applications, test scores, and financial aid forms are submitted on time and are complete. That's your job!
- Violate the National Association for College Admission Counseling's Code of Ethics and Professional Practice.

## HOW IT ALL WORKS

Over the course of the junior and senior years, we will have a lot of interaction. We will conduct college counseling meetings, make announcements, you'll see us formally and informally, and we will use Google classroom for some assignments.

There will be certain milestones your whole grade will hit at the same time, and other times when each of you will work at your own pace. There will also be times when we track you down with questions or reminders, and other times when we count on you to find us if you need us. Use email judiciously: the complexity of your process often deserves more thought and nuance than email allows, so in some cases it's worth it to make an appointment or drop by to discuss your questions more thoroughly.

One of the most important ways we'll interact is new to you: through a web-based tool called SCOIR. SCOIR helps you research and keep track of the schools you're interested in, keeps a record of your grades and standardized test scores, includes questionnaires that help us get to know you better and calendars that track when college representatives will visit Berkeley Carroll as well as sign up for their visits...the list goes on.

SCOIR is also the tool that the college office uses to submit your transcript, teacher recommendations, school profile, and other materials to the colleges on your applying list. Basically, it helps us keep track of the several hundred application documents our office sends out every year...so it is very important that you get used to using SCOIR, and get in the habit of keeping it up-to-date!

We'll officially introduce you to SCOIR in December, when each of you (and your parents) will be given your own SCOIR account and login. After that, we'll start to give you some "SCOIR homework" and will expect you to log on regularly. We will begin to hold junior counseling meetings in December/January, followed by individual family meetings in January/February. By then we'll have your first semester grades and some preliminary test results, so we'll be prepared to begin some substantive conversations with you. But we're getting ahead of ourselves!

Here's a (brief) outline of what lies ahead...

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## SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR COLLEGE PROCESS AT BERKELEY CARROLL

### JUNIOR YEAR

- ☐ The months ahead will be full of tests, planning, research, self-analysis and hard work!  
Stay focused on your classes, volunteer work, sports and activities.

- **September** Prepare for the PSAT given in October using the practice materials distributed at a class meeting this month. Begin thinking about the learning environment and campus culture where you can be your best and grow the most.
- **October** Take the PSAT. During junior year, this exam is still a practice exam for the SAT. These scores are not shared with colleges, though very high scorers (a small percentage of test takers) may be eligible for National Merit Scholarships. Attend Junior College Night.
- **October/November** Attend the three sessions the College Office has arranged during community time to help prepare you for the choices ahead. Listen, think, and participate.
- **November/December** Counselor assignments are made and SCOIR will be introduced to the Junior class. Receive results of your PSAT/NMSQT. Consider additional preparation for the SAT Reasoning Test and the ACT Assessment Test. Plan when you will take your first SAT or ACT.
- **December/January** Begin to determine your college criteria; consider location, setting, interests, and size. Make use of your break to touch base with freshmen returning from college. Begin an SAT or ACT review course, if appropriate. Attend Junior College Night with your parents and complete your Junior Questionnaire on SCOIR.
- **January/February** Students will be scheduled for their first college counseling appointment. Sign up for the March SAT if appropriate. Think about summer plans: athletic camps, summer jobs, pre-college programs, service or academic programs abroad. A follow up family meeting will be scheduled with your parent(s) or guardian.
- **February** Attend Curriculum Night. Select courses for next year after consulting with your counselor, dean, and teachers. Use this year and next to prove that you are a hard working student. **An upward trend in the junior/senior year can matter significantly!**
- **March** Visit colleges during spring break. Research, research, research! Continue to broaden and narrow your college criteria. Meet with your College Counselor. Take the March SAT, if appropriate. Register for the April ACT, if appropriate.
- **April** Sign up for the May/June SAT Reasoning Test, if appropriate. Take the ACT if appropriate. Continue to evaluate colleges and Meet with your College Counselor. Plan to visit colleges during the summer. Register for the June ACT, if appropriate. Take the SAT Reasoning Test, if appropriate.
- **May** Attend the Brooklyn/Staten Island Independent Schools College Fair with your classmates. Learn more about colleges that interest you most. Meet with your College Counselor. Research, research!

- ☐ **June** Attend the Essay Writing Workshop held after classes end to be ready to go for your summer assignment: THE COLLEGE ESSAY! After school ends, get on the road to visit some colleges (locally, too!) Take the SAT or ACT if appropriate. Continue to meet with your College Counselor. Research, research, research!
- ☐ **Summer** Visit colleges, take tours, have interviews, and refine your college list. Contact colleges to get on their mailing lists. Research Scholarship opportunities on [www.fastweb.org](http://www.fastweb.org). Continue to review for the SAT and ACT exams. Begin writing your college essays. Research, research, research! Continue to meet with your College Counselor in June and July.
- ☐ **End of Summer** Narrow your college list. Work on ideas for your college essays. Research, research, research! Meet with your College Counselor.

## SENIOR YEAR

- ☐ **September/October** Meet with College Representatives visiting the BC campus after requesting permission at least two working days in advance from your teacher; sign up using SCOIR. Continue to work on your essays and application forms. Essays for November deadlines are due for editing feedback. Attend Senior College Night with your parents/guardians. Register for October and November SAT. Register for October ACT. Meet with your College Counselor.
- ☐ **October** Early October, confirm if you are applying to a school with an early deadline. File that application well before the deadline. Late October, confirm your final college list. Don't miss too much school visiting colleges. Financial aid applicants can file the CSS Profile and FAFSA forms beginning this month. Essays for November deadlines are due for editing feedback. Meet with your College Counselor.
- ☐ **November** Many early action or early decision applications are due November 1 or November 15. Take the November SAT. Register for the December ACT. Send appropriate test scores. Remember: these scores will need to be sent directly from the College Board or ACT **BY YOU** in order for schools to consider them as "official." Essays for December/January deadlines are due for editing feedback. All applications with a January deadline should be filed by mid-December. Meet with your College Counselor.
- ☐ **December** January 1 and 15 are application deadlines for many schools. All applications with a January deadline should be filed by mid-December. Send appropriate test scores. Meet with your College Counselor, as necessary. If appropriate, take the December SAT/ACT.
- ☐ **January** All January applications should have been sent by mid-December. If you have not submitted yours, please remember, these deadlines are normally postmark or submission dates (verify time zones!). Continue to note scholarship deadlines and requirements.



- ☐ **February** A few schools have application deadlines this month. These applications should have been submitted in December! Some decisions will be received this month. Send written updates to schools that are high on your list.
- ☐ **March** More campuses begin to send notification of admission decisions. Stay focused on school. Don't give in to "Senioritis." Remember, colleges will expect to see final grades that are "commensurate with previous work evaluated." Colleges can (and have) revoked offers of admission from students who have had poor senior year performance.
- ☐ **April** All notifications should be received by April 15th. Respond to schools that you choose not to attend in deference to Wait List candidates. Begin your decision making process in earnest by visiting schools and continuing with your research.
- ☐ **May** National Reply Date is May 1st. All decisions must be made by this date. Send in final Financial Aid replies and reply to offers of admission. Reply to those schools where you do not choose to attend.
- ☐ **May** GRADUATION! Congratulations!



# CHAPTER 3

## THE PROCESS

*Because the process of selecting a college is very personal, it must begin with self-reflection. The college process is an opportunity to think about your goals and values, your education thus far, your interests and points of view, in addition to the ways in which you would like to grow and be challenged.*

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# JUNIOR YEAR

## BEGINNING THE PROCESS

### SELF-ASSESSMENT

Because the process of selecting a college is very personal, it must begin with lots of reflection on the educational environment that may fit you best. The questions that follow should help focus your search. You might feel self-conscious addressing these questions or think that the answers may be obvious; however, an honest and thoughtful self-evaluation can reveal what qualities and programs you should look for in a college, and will prepare you to write personal essays and talk about yourself in interviews.

#### Your Goals and Values

- Why do you want to go to college?
- What do you care most about?
- What do you argue passionately about with friends?
- What concerns occupy your energy, efforts and thoughts?
- Is there an accomplishment of which you are most proud?
- What do you want to accomplish in the years ahead?
- What has been the most influential experience to shape your thinking and personality?

## **Your Education**

- What aspects of your time at Berkeley Carroll have you enjoyed the most?
- If you could live this time over again, would you do anything differently?
- What courses have you enjoyed most? Why?
- How would you characterize Berkeley Carroll? What would you change about the school if you had the resources to do so?
- What methods and styles of teaching engage your interest and effort the most?
- What have been your most stimulating intellectual experiences in recent years?
- Have you been challenged by your work in high school? In what areas do you feel confident of your preparation and in what areas may you feel inadequately prepared?
- Is your transcript an accurate measure of your ability?
- Are there any outside circumstances that have interfered with your academic performance?

## **Your Activities and Interests**

- What extracurricular activities do you most enjoy? Which would you like to pursue in college?
- Where have you committed most of your time outside of school? What do you do for fun?
- How would you describe your role in your home or in your community? What would you consider your most significant contribution to either/both?

## **The World Beyond You**

- How would you describe your neighborhood or community?
- How has your environment influenced your way of thinking?
- What most concerns or interests you about the state of the world today?
- What has been the most controversial issue at Berkeley Carroll or in your community? What is your opinion about this issue?
- What books have you read or concepts you have learned have challenged or changed your way of thinking? What did you learn from the experience?
- Do you have any contemporary heroes? Any historical heroes?

## **Your Personality**

- How would someone who knows you well describe you? What are your best qualities?
- What are your most conspicuous shortcomings?
- How have you grown or changed during your high school years?
- What relationships are most important to you and why?

- In what ways are you similar to or different from those with whom you are closest?
- How do you respond to pressure, competition or challenge?
- How do you react to failure, disappointment or criticism?
- How do you make decisions? What are some of the best decisions you have made most recently?
- How much do you rely on direction, advice or guidance from others? Have you ever made a decision in the face of significant opposition?

## **EVALUATING A COLLEGE**

- What are you looking forward to doing in college? What worries you the most?
- What do you hope to gain from college? What is the overriding consideration in your choice?
- Do you have specific interests that you wish to pursue in college that require special facilities or programs, such as art studios, labs, or study abroad?
- What balance of study, activities and social life do you desire? Is it important to you to perform at the top of your class or would you be satisfied being somewhere in the middle? How well do you respond to academic pressure?
- How much structure and direction do you need? Do you know what a core curriculum is, and would that be a fit for you? Would an open curriculum with few requirements be more appropriate? How about distribution requirements?
- Would you enjoy living in a different part of the country? How often do you want to return home?
- Are you looking for a community that will draw students from different parts of the country, with different backgrounds and viewpoints?
- Would you find it exciting or to attend a college where the other students were different from you? Would you prefer to be someplace that is more comfortable and familiar to you?
- How free do you feel to make your decisions about college? Do you and your parents/guardians agree about your plans for college? How important to you are the opinions of your teachers, friends, or considerations of reputation or prestige?

## **TYPES OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

There are more than 2,500 colleges and universities in the United States, including research universities both public and private; colleges of art, business, or engineering and technology; service academies and private and public liberal arts colleges. There are also English-speaking foreign universities that may be a match for you. The primary difference between colleges and universities is that a university offers a full range of graduate degrees (including at least one terminal degree); colleges, in contrast, emphasize undergraduate instruction.

Most students seek a B.A. degree, or Bachelor of Arts, through comprehensive liberal arts and science study. There's a lot of confusion about what the "liberal arts" really are, but most liberal arts institutions aim to give students a broad-based education that emphasizes skills like writing and critical thinking, focusing on the humanities, social sciences and natural/physical sciences, in addition to a major so that you are prepared for a variety of different careers rather than one specific field. While there are some exceptions, students usually spend their first two years exploring and satisfying distribution requirements, declaring a major toward the end of their sophomore year.

Students interested in professional degrees, like business, communications, engineering, sports management or physical therapy, may find a specialized school or program is a better fit. Often, universities require a student to select a particular college or school of study when the application is originally filed. For example, Washington University in St. Louis offers degrees in five different schools: Arts and Science, Architecture, Business, Art, and Engineering, and applicants must indicate to which program they're applying.

There are many institutions that have a religious foundation but are no longer actively connected to that history, so try not to dismiss a school simply because it has an apparent religious affiliation. Women's colleges, similarly, often defy all the stereotypes associated with them. The historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have a long tradition of providing a top-notch education to men and women of African descent.

Many of the top universities in the country are publicly funded. Usually it is more difficult, sometimes exceptionally so, to be admitted to a public university as an out-of-state student because states give preference to their own taxpayers' children. Similarly, you may have to pay a lot more as an out-of-state student. Is it ever worth it, then, to consider public universities in other states? Absolutely. The distinction between public and private institutions has to do with how they're funded, not their quality, and there are many terrific public universities that offer beautiful campuses, well-funded programs and top-notch professors.

## **RESEARCHING COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

There are many places to learn about individual colleges and universities. You shouldn't rely on a single source; instead, consult a couple of different types of sources for information.

□ Objective guides, like Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges, are filled with statistics and straightforward lists. Most if not all, of this information is also available for free through SCOIR, which also has a search engine. Consider using the following websites for clean and accurate information:

The College Scorecard, <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

College Board's Big Future, <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

- ☐ Subjective guides can be very useful. Two favorites in this category are The Fiske Guide to Colleges or The Best 387 Colleges, since each give 2-3 pages for each school it considers and the information tends not to be too overwhelming. Although not as comprehensive, Colleges That Change Lives is a wonderful subjective guide for those considering smaller liberal arts colleges. Other guides in this category include The Insider's Guide to Colleges and Cool Colleges. These books try to provide some evaluation of the colleges' strengths and weaknesses, but read them critically. Subjective guides reflect the authors' values and prejudices, which may or may not align with your own.  
Maybe after Berkeley Carroll you want big lectures or you want a club sports program because it means you can play instead of watching from the sidelines!
- ☐ Institutional publications are going to clog your mailbox and inbox beginning this winter or maybe even since last summer. Every college has a website, which provides far more access to information than written materials. Having said that, some colleges' viewbooks effectively impart a sense of place and summarize what's distinctive about the undergraduate experience. Of course, publications make every campus look stunning and every student body diverse, don't use a viewbook as a substitute for a campus visit. Many admissions offices also post blogs, which can be terrific sources of information, but know that they are managed very carefully to reflect the image the admissions office wants you to have of its school.
- ☐ There are also specialized guides for students who may be looking for particular features in a college, academic or social. For example, books are available for students of color, international students, visual or performing artists, those with learning disabilities, and gay and lesbian students.

**What Not To Use: Our advice is to avoid any and all books, magazines, and websites whose purpose is to rank institutions.**

In a New Yorker piece published in February, 2011, Malcom Gladwell, using his usual mix of elegance, logic and data, deconstructed college rankings. The main thrust of his argument was this: "There's no direct way to measure the quality of an institution—how well a college manages to inform, inspire, and challenge its students. So the U.S. News algorithm relies instead on proxies for quality—and the proxies for educational quality turn out to be flimsy at best." (The article is a great read; we're happy to provide copies if the link at the end of the guide requires a subscription.)

In other words, rankings rely on factors that may or may not have any relationship to a college's quality of experience. For example, just because a college reports a low student/faculty ratio does not mean that students actually enjoy close relationships



with their professors. Nor do rankings tell you anything about some of the factors you may care most about. Is the student body left-leaning politically? Is it diverse? Is there access to a city? What kind of city? Does the school offer sculpture in the art department? Does it have a competitive football program or intramural soccer team?

Rankings also punish self-selective institutions. As an extreme example, consider St. John's College, which admits about 75% of its applicants. For the purposes of ranking, it looks easy to get in, and is therefore relegated to the bottom of the list. But St. John's is a special place with a self selecting applicant pool. It doesn't offer the typical college experience. Students there spend four years following a Great Books curriculum. They begin freshman year with Aeschylus, Thucydides and Plutarch and end senior year with Kierkegaard and Heisenberg. They learn ancient Greek and French and how to compose music. The application is exhausting. Only extremely bright students who crave a particular kind of intellectual experience apply, so the college is actually selecting its class from a remarkably qualified pool. It is not, in fact, an "easy" school to get into, but the rankings don't — and can't — reflect reality.

**“In other words, rankings rely on factors that may or may not have any relationship to a college’s quality of experience.”**

If statistics and charts are helpful for you, make your own rankings. Decide which criteria you value most, weight them in a way that feels right to you, and scour websites and viewbooks for each college's statistics. You'll still have to visit campuses to get that all-important gut feeling, but your own ranking system can help you figure out where to focus your energies.

## **CAMPUS VISITS**

Absolutely the best way to begin your search is to plunge in and visit a few schools. For a first trip, don't worry about selecting colleges that you think will be perfect. The first trip is about exploration. You should choose some places that are geographically proximate so you can hit several (usually two per day) that are very different from each other. Don't limit your search by type too early. You may also decide to use local colleges and universities to learn more about setting, size and type.

You may need to visit campuses twice (if they are convenient). Start with an informal visit over spring break and then return in the summer or fall for an interview or overnight visit. If you can't begin your visits until the summer, you aren't behind - just realize that you will probably see quiet campuses.

Many college have virtual tours ([www.ecampustours.com](http://www.ecampustours.com)) and even VR tours (<https://www.youvisit.com/collegesearch/>), which can be great ways to make an initial visit from the comfort of your own home (and without the cost of a flight!)

Additionally, for students who might be underrepresented on many private and predominantly white college campuses (first generation students, students of color, low income students), many colleges have fly-in or diversity programs designed to introduce students to their campus resources. These programs require an application and include funding for a flight or bus/train fare. A list can be found here, [Comprehensive List of Fly-In Programs](#).

### **Making Good Use of a Campus Visit**

Most colleges and universities offer campus tours throughout the entire year. There may be some vacations (winter and spring) when tours are more limited. There will be tours available in the summer, though you may be seeing a quiet campus undergoing construction. (At many schools they joke that the academic year is divided into four quarters: fall, winter, spring and construction.) The campus tour will still give you a sense of the place and the culture of the school. The tour guide will be a student selected by the admission office for her or his ability to project an acceptable image of the institution to visitors.

While they may be paid representatives or they volunteer because of their love of the campus, they are usually encouraged to be honest and to draw upon their own experiences. They are human and have bad days. Please don't disregard a college because the tour guide was less-than-inspiring or infuriatingly perky. If you have a lousy tour, try to talk with someone in the admission office before leaving campus. Or approach other students who might be available. I worked with a student once who almost left a college halfway through a bad tour, but on the way to his car, he met some students playing guitar under a tree, and his perception of the college changed completely.

Most colleges have you arrange tours online in advance. Many require reservations. Also, keep notes on all the places you visit - particularly if you are seeing lots of places - soon they will all begin to look the same! Keep track of how you felt as much as important facts and figures. Also note programs you would like to learn more about later.

You could also ask us about Berkeley Carroll alumni who attend schools you're considering. If you email them in advance (Facebook is terrific for this), they are often thrilled to meet with you and show you their version of the college. Who better to talk to you about the transition from Berkeley Carroll to that college than someone who went through it?

### **Campus Interviews**

Interview practices vary widely: not all colleges offer them; some are evaluative, some are informational, and some are both. Some schools interview before you apply, while others do so after they receive your application. Make sure you understand what the schools you're interested in expect.

One piece of advice that is consistent: wait at least until the end of junior year to begin interviewing. No matter how smart, mature and articulate you are in March or April, you will have much more to say about summer plans and senior year in June, July or August. Your focus will be clearer, your ideas more detailed, and you'll make a stronger impression on your interviewer as a result.

When available, an interview can be a helpful part of the application process. It's an opportunity for you to show the admission committee the breathing human being behind the stack of papers they'll be evaluating. An interviewer's goal is to assess your level of interest in the institution, your maturity, and curiosity. Most of all, your interviewer is trying to assess how well you might fit with the school. The best interviews are natural conversations that allow you to talk about the things that really interest you. Admission counselors like meeting young adults and hearing about their lives, so the tone is generally upbeat and fun. For many students, interviewing is the most fun part of the whole college process.

**“The best interviews are natural conversations that allow you to talk about the things that really interest you.”**

You should prepare for an interview by researching the college, taking a tour and developing questions beforehand for your interviewer. Don't be that student who, when asked, “Do you have any questions for me?” stares blankly and says, “No.” That makes a very bad impression. Even asking about your interviewer's experiences at the college makes for good conversation and can reveal a lot about the school.

Colleges on the East Coast that recommend interviews will assume you aren't a serious applicant if you didn't arrange one, and will likely read your application with a negative bias. Colleges in other parts of the country can be more forgiving, but do note that interviews can often be scheduled with alumni volunteers near home or via Zoom. Contact the college to see if these options are available.

Finally, with all due respect to the well-intentioned mothers out there who insist you should wear a skirt or necktie to make a good impression, interview attire should be casual. You'll probably be a little nervous, and the last thing you'll want to be worrying about is your clothing. If you normally wear your hair swept up in a mohawk, please don't change it for the interview. After all, if that's your look, do you really want to attend a college that isn't accepting?

### **Some Questions You Might Ask of your Tour Guide and/or Interviewer:**

1. How big have your biggest classes been? Did they break down into smaller sections? Who led those sections, professors or teaching assistants? How were they?
2. How small have your smallest classes been? What were the size of each of your first year classes?
3. Do you go to professors' office hours very often? Do your professors hold those in their offices, coffee shop, in lab?
4. What has been your favorite class so far? What did you like about it? What has been your least favorite class, and why?
5. Are you thinking about studying abroad? Where do you want to go? What about your friends?
6. Have you done any research while you've been here? What about your friends? What are you/they working on? How did you/they find out about it?
7. What are some of the biggest issues on campus?
8. Are students involved in the local community? How so, or why not?
9. Do you get off campus much? When you do, where do you go? What do you do?
10. Where did you live your first year? How did you choose where to live?
11. Has anyone interesting come through campus lately? Bands, politicians, authors, artists, scholars?
12. Where are you from? Where are your closest friends from? How did you meet your closest friends here?
13. Why did you decide to come here? Was there a moment that made that final decision?
14. What surprised you about this school?
15. Is there anything you would change about the college?
16. Are there things you expected to be true that aren't? Are there things you didn't expect to be true that are?
17. What do you do on a Thursday night? What about a Saturday morning? What's a typical weekday for you?
18. Where's your favorite place to study? WHEN do you do most of your studying?
19. What non-academic activities do you do? How did you get involved in them?
20. Why did you decide to be a tour guide?

# SENIOR YEAR

## CONTINUING THE PROCESS

### MOVING FROM SEARCH TO APPLICATION: SENIOR YEAR PRIORITIES

You and your classmates will enter senior year having reached slightly different milestones in the college process. Different parts of the process take different amounts of time for different students; part of our job is to help you craft a schedule of how to approach it all that makes sense for you.

**There's a myth out there that senior year doesn't matter, but in fact senior grades are critical.**

You cannot put academics on the back burner while you fill out applications. Colleges want students who are excited about learning. There's a myth out there that senior year doesn't matter, but in fact senior grades will be critical. A dip in senior year will cause more damage than a slight rise in scores or a polished essay can make up for, and can even lead to a rescinded admission offer if the "slip" is more of a "drop."

### EARLY DECISION, EARLY ACTION AND OTHER EARLY NOTIFICATION

With early programs, we have yet another aspect of the college admission process that has been magnified and distorted by the media. Although statistics often suggest that it's easier to get into a college if you apply early, you have to remember the early pool is often stronger academically than the regular pool. This is often especially true if you are looking at early action. If you need strong first semester senior year grades to bolster your application, it can actually be a disadvantage to apply early. It is essential you discuss any early application plans with us in the first few weeks of senior year. Such decisions should be made with both heart and head in the form of love for the school and the reality of statistics.

In an effort to clear up some confusion, here are some basic definitions:

- **Early Decision** is a binding process. That means by submitting your application early, typically in November, you are telling a college that it is your first choice school and, if admitted, you will withdraw all other applications from other schools and not initiate any new ones.
- **Early Action** is a non-binding process. This means that although the college may offer you admission in mid-December, you may file other applications and make your final decision by May 1. Because it is still regarded as a first-choice program, however, it is not considered good practice to submit an Early Action application casually, nor should you apply to multiple places Early Action.

- **Restrictive (or Single Choice) Early Action** is offered by only a handful of schools (at this point, Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, Yale and a few others). Although, like Early Action, it is a non-binding program, you may not be able to submit multiple early applications. Check each college for details.
- Rolling Admission, while not technically an early program, necessitates filing applications early. With rolling admission, the earlier you submit your application, the more likely you are to be admitted. Indiana University and CU-Boulder are the most common rolling admission schools for BCS students. Applications to these schools are ideally submitted by mid-October.

For the more visual among you, here is a chart:

	Can I submit applications to other schools at the same time?	If I get in, do I have to go?	Can I submit more than one application of this type?	Does applying this way improve my chances of admission?
Early Decision	Yes	Yes	No (unless you are deferred and apply to a different school with a later ED round)	Yes, but only if you're a strong candidate
Early Action	Yes	No	Yes (with some exceptions)	Maybe
Single-Choice or Restricted Early Action	No	No	No	Maybe
Rolling Admission	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Regular Admission	Yes	No	Yes	No

### CRAFTING A FINAL LIST: REACHES, MIDDLES AND FOUNDATIONS

In late October, we will ask you to submit your final list of colleges, signed by your parents/guardians. Most Berkeley Carroll students will submit between eight and ten applications, striking some balance between “reaches,” “middles,” and “foundations”. The exact number of each category will depend on the student. Expect to have help from us in determining what constitutes a reach, likely or a foundation for you and what combination makes sense.

This may be pretty obvious, but a “reach” is a school to which your chances of admission are relatively small. We encourage students to stretch themselves, and it is typical to have one or two reach schools on a final list. But there’s a difference between a “reasonable reach” and an unreasonable one: if the statistics show you are not in the

competitive range (you fit the bottom 25% of admitted student statistics), think twice about investing in the application. A “middle” is a school where your odds are better than 50/50 based on your record and test scores. You want most of your schools to fall in your middle range. “Foundation” schools are places where we’re pretty confident you’ll get in based on previous years’ statistics.

It is critical that you take foundation schools seriously since it is very possible that you will attend one of them. You must like your foundations schools and you must treat them like targets or reaches. If you blow off a likely school – skip visiting, or fail to interview – the school could waitlist or deny you, regardless of the strength of your academic record. We recommend applying to three foundation schools. (We purposely don’t use the term “safety” at Berkeley Carroll, since these schools should form the foundation of your college list.)

## **COMPLETING THE APPLICATIONS**

The Common Application is accepted by more than 800 colleges and universities. You fill it out once, then submit it online to all the colleges you’ve designated. Although many colleges also require an institution-specific supplemental essays, and good college essays require many drafts, the application process is infinitely easier to manage using the Common Application.

We will host an essay writing workshop in June after classes end so that students may work on their first draft over the summer. During the summer months, we will host a series of active writing workshops to assist you in brainstorming, crafting, and editing your essays. In first week of school in September, we will host our annual College Bootcamp (this will take place the day before the first day of school). Your main essay and completed Common Application will be due on this day.

Note that there will be some colleges and universities that do not utilize the Common Application. These may have separate essays and requirements. Georgetown University, the University of California, the University of Maryland, the University of Washington, Penn State University are all examples of schools that use an application other than the Common Application.

All applications - regardless of actual deadline - should be completed the week before Winter Break. There are a variety of reasons for this, including the fact that seniors need an honest-to-goodness break between semesters.





# CHAPTER 4

## ELEMENTS OF THE APPLICATION

*Your academic record, scores, personal essay, letters of recommendation and extracurricular activities will determine where you get into college. This section could easily be the longest, most detailed section of the handbook. But we think it's important to tailor advice to individual students, their records, their achievements and the colleges to which they are applying. We'll talk about specifics in our individual meetings, but here is some basic information for those just beginning the process.*

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## THE ACADEMIC RECORD

Your high school transcript – that is, the academic classes you’ve taken and the grades you’ve earned in them – constitutes the single most important factor in the college admission process. As a junior, you should be working your hardest to maintain a record that accurately reflects your abilities or improve one that falls a little short of your own expectations. While it’s true colleges will be more generous with a candidate showing an upward trajectory, all of your grades count and you cannot depend on a stellar junior year to dramatically alter your chances of admission to more selective places. A dip in junior year grades, however, can negatively impact your admission chances at many places and may place higher importance on senior grades. Contrary to what you may have heard, senior year grades and classes do count! A college will not usually make an offer of admission without seeing first quarter or first semester grades, and all offers of admission are contingent upon you finishing senior year with grades consistent with the rest of your record.

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## STANDARDIZED TESTING

The next section of the handbook is dedicated to explaining the role of standardized testing - the SAT and the ACT - in the college admission process, but it has to be stated here that standardized testing, for all its faults, remains an important part of the decision-making calculus. Colleges and universities will invariably downplay the role

of testing in admissions presentations, but the last several years have shown a greater reliance on scores in decision-making, especially at the highly selective institutions. This reality must be factored into the assessment of your list's overall balance between "reaches," "middles," and "foundations."

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## THE PERSONAL ESSAY

The essay can be a critical factor in admissions at many colleges, and you must plan to spend considerable time brainstorming, writing and editing the pieces you submit with your application. We will spend a lot of time talking about the specifics of your own essays, but there are a couple of pieces of advice that apply to everyone. First, think about depth over breadth. Your application as a whole is designed to give a sense of your breadth; let your essay reveal something of your depth. Keep your essay focused on one topic and avoid something that reads like a prose version of your resume. These are the Common Application essay prompts:

1. Some students have a background, identity, interest, or talent that is so meaningful they believe their application would be incomplete without it. If this sounds like you, then please share your story.
2. The lessons we take from obstacles we encounter can be fundamental to later success. Recount a time when you faced a challenge, setback, or failure. How did it affect you, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?
4. Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma - anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.
5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.
6. Describe a topic, idea, or concept you find so engaging that it makes you lose all track of time. Why does it captivate you? What or who do you turn to when you want to learn more?
7. Share an essay on any topic of your choice. It can be one you've already written, one that responds to a different prompt, or one of your own design.

While we will provide essay writing materials and an essay writing workshop shortly after classes end in the spring, we will also be available in the summer to sit down and talk

through some of the ideas you have for essay topics or review a draft. **You will be expected to have a draft you are excited about and a completed Common Application by ReBoot Camp, the day before school begins in the fall.**

**We strongly encourage you to use editors sparingly and thoughtfully, if at all, and please never, ever use an “essay coach.”** An application essay is different from other kinds of writing you do, and what makes for a strong academic essay is not necessarily going to succeed as an application essay. Your essay needs to reflect your own voice and style, and too often, well-meaning editors (including parents) go overboard in helping you attain a level of “perfection.” Colleges don’t expect perfection. They don’t even want perfection. They want a sense of you.

Besides well-meaning editors, there are “essay coaches” out there who promise to help students write strong college essays. Few of these folks have actually worked in college admissions, and none of them know what your complete college applications will look like. Your essay has to fit into a larger narrative that even a good writing coach can’t possibly understand. Besides, it’s through essay writing that we often get to know our students best. Any essay work you do with someone else detracts from what we’re able to say about you in letters of recommendation and during telephone conversations with the admission officers who are reading your file. Ms. Chen, Mr. Almonte, and I have each read more application essays than any tutor will ever read, so take advantage of our expertise.

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## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Recommendations from teachers are a very important part of the application. They portray a student in the classroom and the school community in ways not necessarily captured by grades.

You should request recommendations from 11th or 12th grade teachers who know your work and work habits well. (We will require you to do this in the spring, so that teachers can get a head start on their writing!) Although you may have established a good relationship with a teacher you had in 10th grade, colleges want to know about more recent work. You need not have received an A in a class in order to request a recommendation from that teacher; sometimes the class that was really a struggle elicited your best academic work. You should think of the balance between the disciplines and perspectives of the two teachers from whom you request recommendations.

Most colleges will expect letters of recommendation to come from teachers in your core academic subjects, unless you are applying to a performing or visual arts program or school.

## EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Your record of activities can be a significant supporting credential, but it is always a supporting credential. An application is always read first for academic qualification. At selective institutions, there are more academically qualified applicants than places in the class, so activities such as sports, work, religious activities, the arts and community service play an important role in how you are evaluated during the admission process in terms of how you might contribute to the community. The impact of an activity is related to the level of commitment, accomplishment and initiative you demonstrate. It is more important to show commitment to a small number of activities than a laundry list of miscellaneous clubs and activities. Please, please, please do not panic junior year because you think you haven't done enough and become what admission officers call a "serial clubber." It's a strategy that won't fool anyone. Find something you love, or something that's important to you, and throw yourself into it. It doesn't have to be in school to count; even a part-time job or time-consuming family responsibilities can speak to a variety of talents and valuable personal qualities.

## WHAT SELECTIVITY MEANS

This is probably a good place to make some comments about selectivity. Students at Berkeley Carroll, because they are at Berkeley Carroll, are typically competitive at highly selective colleges and universities. That said, most students will likely have one or two schools on their lists that have to be considered a "reach" school. Some students will be disappointed when they hear their college counselor indicate that a school they really like is a "reach" or, occasionally, even an unrealistic choice. "But I've worked so hard." "But my grades are a better indicator of my abilities than my scores." "But the college says it values leadership, and I have done so much in this area at Berkeley Carroll." These are common - and understandable - responses. But we have to come to terms with a hard truth: college admissions are not meritocratic, at least not in the way we might think it should be. Put another way: the process does not always seem fair.

Colleges, especially private colleges, are not driven by a mission to reward students for hard work or achievement. Instead, admission decisions are made according to goals and criteria established by the college president and trustees, some of which are obvious - high grades - and some of which are not. This doesn't lead to unqualified students being admitted, but it does mean that excellence is assessed in ways that might surprise us, and that we might even disagree with. Scores do, indeed, often hold an otherwise qualified and compelling student back. Sometimes one student is admitted over a classmate with a higher GPA. Even a spectacular extracurricular profile will fail to overcome bumps on the transcript.

**Admission deans aren't judging you or your value, they're assessing your application in terms of their institutional priorities.**

The inherent unfairness of the process is only exacerbated at the most selective twenty or so institutions. Stanford's admit rate in 2004 was 11% (it is now <4%). Making admission decisions was excruciating work. In fact, about 60% of the valedictorians who applied were denied that year. Of the 600 students submitting perfect SAT scores, 400 were denied. In other words, even perfection wasn't enough to guarantee admission. There were simply too few places in the class for the stunning richness of the applicant pool. The university needed mathematicians and poets; tight ends and gymnasts; oboists, youth ministers and political activists. It wanted students from South Dakota and Rhode Island and Mumbai. It sought first generation college students and children whose parents had the capacity to donate buildings that would serve the entire university.

And it could, in fact, meet all of these goals while upholding the university's exceptionally high academic standards. But at the same time, literally thousands who were exceptional in their own right did not make the final cut. There was nothing wrong with their files; others simply floated to the top. Today Stanford's admit rate is less than 5%. It is twice as hard to be admitted today as it was 10 years ago. If you apply to Stanford, the Ivies, or the few other schools in this category of selectivity, you have to assume you will not be admitted. This is simply the statistical reality.

But don't be disheartened! When you do the research and focus on fit rather than prestige, you quickly discover how many incredible choices there are available to you at all levels of selectivity. In fact, competition among schools has led to astonishing innovation and improvement in undergraduate programs over the last 15 years. There are more outstanding choices today than at any point in American history.

**To put these statistics in perspective: The average admit rate considering all of the 2500 four-year colleges in the United States, is nearly 65%.**

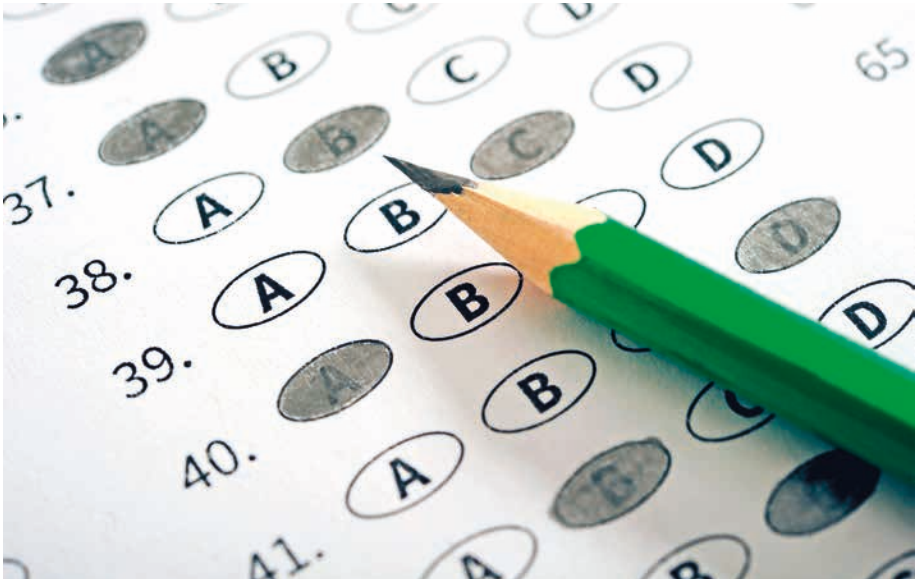
# CHAPTER 5

## STANDARDIZED TESTING

*No part of the college admissions process is freighted with more misinformation or provokes more anxiety than standardized testing. At most institutions, testing does not drive decisions - but at the most selective institutions, they can play a critical role in an application's competitiveness.*

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## THE ROLE OF TESTING

No part of the college admission process is freighted with more misinformation or provokes more anxiety than standardized testing. At most institutions, standardized testing does not drive decisions; instead, scores play a supporting role in concert with the academic record and recommendations.

Most colleges recognize that your performance in the classroom over the last three years reveals more about your likelihood for success in college than what you are able to at 8:00 on a Saturday morning, armed with a calculator and a Number 2 pencil. Testing provides one of many data points in the application.

Standardized tests do not measure intellect, intelligence or aptitude. They do not reveal creativity, study skills, critical thinking, motivation or insight. They do not predict success. In fact, the only thing the SAT or ACT will accurately measure is how well a student does on standardized testing.

For most students, the worst part of the SAT or ACT is the stress of taking the test: once it's over and scores come back, they match one's academic record reasonably well and attention returns to the more meaningful aspects of the process.

For other students, there will be some frustration when test scores do not match academic performance. While some colleges will deemphasize testing, you must accept that, however unfair, testing plays a major role in this process, and some schools - especially highly selective institutions - will weigh scores more heavily than others.

**Note:** All colleges will accept the ACT and SAT as equivalents without bias if testing is required.



## TEST OPTIONAL

Due, in part, to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more college and universities have shifted to a test optional, flexible, or blind review process. For the Fall 2022 cycle over 1800 schools did not require standardized testing, and more than 1400 have extended test optional/blind policies for the Fall 2023 cycle and beyond. With an ever changing landscape it can be helpful to understand the varied language when it comes to testing in admissions review process.

**Testing Flexible:** These schools may not require testing, but if they do, they will accept testing outside of the SAT or ACT. While not necessarily applicable to the Berkeley Carroll community these other exams may be AP exams, IB diplomas, international exams, etc.

**Testing Optional:** Schools practicing testing optional review process do not require testing for admission and students who do not choose to submit testing will not be penalized. However, if testing is submitted, it will be considered as part of the review

**Testing Blind:** Schools practicing test blind review processes, will not consider testing at all in the application review, even if testing is submitted it will not be considered.

Every school will have different policies. And you may send scores to one school and not the other. We are here to answer questions and help to determine if and when standardized testing will become an addition to your application.

**We will have honest conversations with you about your testing as it relates to your record and your college list. In the meantime, here is some general information about the tests:**

The **PSAT/NMSQT** is the qualifying test for the National Merit Scholarship. Each year, 3% of students are recognized for their high scores--about 1/3 of that 3% will be recognized as semi-finalists and/or finalists possibly qualifying for modest scholarships. This test is offered in October at BC and all students will be registered. There is no parallel test offered by ACT.

**Students must register online for the SAT and ACT. Berkeley Carroll is not a test center, so students must select an area high school from the list of locations when registering.**

The **SAT** is the most familiar of all standardized tests, having tortured generations of teenagers. Most students will take the SAT twice, once in December, March or May of junior year (depending on when they started prep) and again in the fall of senior year. As with most aspects of the college process, one size does not fit all, and you have to make some decisions about what timing works best for you.

The **ACT** surpassed the SAT in number of test-takers in 2012. Like the new SAT, the ACT is a curriculum-based test. Most students who choose to take the ACT will take the ACT twice, once in April or June and again in the fall of the senior year.

## PRACTICE TESTS

A few years ago, we made the decision to partner with Compass Education Group to provide practice tests as well as testing advice for our sophomores. Specifically, we moved from offering the official PreACT and PSAT10 to offering a full-length practice SAT and ACT in the spring of the sophomore year. We did this for a few reasons:

- 1) Compass proctors the exams, if virtual, then scores the exams and provides detailed score reports within 2-3 days of taking each test.
- 2) Along with Bespoke Education and Focus Educational Services, Compass will provide individual advice upon request (without a charge for consultation).
- 3) Compass conducts an informative testing overview just for Berkeley Carroll families as they determine a test preparation plan for their student.
- 4) The full-length tests tend to be better indicators than a diagnostic or a shortened practice test when predicting which test (SAT or ACT) is a better option.
- 5) By offering these practice tests, we are able to offer both tests in the spring instead of the fall, allowing sophomores to have more math and English under their belts.

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## NONSTANDARD ADMINISTRATION

To be eligible for extended time testing, a student must meet all of the following requirements:

- Diagnosed learning disability
- Documented disability at BCS
- Receive approval for, and utilize, accommodations at BCS

To receive extended time on the SAT or ACT, contact Ms. Epstein in the Office of Learning Strategies. **Please be aware that the guidelines to apply for and receive accommodations for the ACT exam may be more stringent than for the SAT.**

## TEST PREPARATION

There are many different options for test preparation, and students have different needs. Scores should generally match academic performance, and for some students this is already the case, making intensive and expensive preparation unnecessary. Most, however, will benefit from some test prep.

Reading is the best long-term preparation strategy. Taking challenging courses that will exercise, develop and strengthen critical thinking, higher order reasoning and problem-solving abilities will be advantageous when taking standardized testing.

Short-term test preparation is about demonstrating the skills in a testing situation. Test prep courses, private tutors or time spent with practice test software or a book will lower your anxiety level and, hopefully, improve test results. This type of test preparation helps you become familiar with the types of questions and the instructions you will encounter on the test. You can learn test-taking skills that will help you pace yourself, make educated guesses and eliminate careless mistakes.

For most students, the best time to begin test prep is the fall of junior year. For those who find standardized tests particularly difficult, the summer before or after junior year might feel like a better time. While we encourage you to start early, build in breaks around exam time - your junior year grades always carry more weight in the college admission process than test scores.

### “Reading is the best long-term preparation strategy.”

Among the many options, Berkeley Carroll works with carefully vetted test prep companies to offer reasonably priced options, but we also find that families who have been through the process will often have the best advice for which of the programs or individual tutors have been helpful to them. There are test prep recommendations listed on the last page of this guide.

#### **The College Board**

<https://www.collegeboard.org/>

#### **ACT Assessment Testing**

<https://www.act.org/>

#### **Standardized Testing Guide from CompassPrep**

<https://www.compassprep.com/compass-guide/>

TEST DATE	TEST	REGISTRATION	LATE REGISTRATION	MULTIPLE CHOICE SCORES AVAILABLE
August 27, 2022	SAT	July 29, 2022	August 16, 2022	~ September 9, 2022
September 10, 2022	ACT	August 5, 2022	August 19, 2022	2-8 weeks after test date
October 1, 2022	SAT	September 2, 2022	September 20, 2022	~ October 14, 2022
October 22, 2022	ACT	September 16, 2022	September 30, 2022	2-8 weeks after test date
November 5, 2022	SAT	October 7, 2022	October 25, 2022	~November 18, 2022
December 3, 2022	SAT	November 3, 2022	November 22, 2022	~ December 16, 2022
December 10, 2022	ACT	November 4, 2022	November 11, 2022	2-8 weeks after test date
February 11, 2023	ACT	January 6, 2023*	January 20, 2023*	2-8 weeks after test date
March 11, 2023	SAT	February 10, 2023*	February 28, 2023*	~March 24, 2023*
April 15, 2023	ACT	March 10, 2023*	March 24, 2023*	2-8 weeks after test date
May 6, 2023	SAT	April 7, 2023*	April 25, 2023*	~May 19, 2023*
June 3, 2023	SAT	May 4, 2023*	May 23, 2023*	~June 16, 2023*
June 10, 2023	ACT	May 5, 2023*	May 19, 2023*	2-8 weeks after test date
July 15, 2023* (No Test Centers in NY)	ACT	June 16, 2023*	June 23, 2023*	2-8 weeks after test date

\*Spring deadline and response dates are subject to change. Please check [www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for clarification.

# CHAPTER 6

## A WORD TO PARENTS

*The college admission process is sometimes as difficult for parents as it is for students, and this more conscious you are of your role in it, the smoother it will go. Your challenge in the months ahead is to strike a delicate balance between being involved and driving the process.*



If you are like most parents, you have already read the introduction and previous five chapters with more interest and intensity than your son or daughter. Don't worry, students will get all of this information in school, so it's perfectly fine if you are this handbook's primary user. Know from the outset that we encourage parents to take an active role in their student's college process.

Although students may argue forcefully to the contrary, they need you. They need your help and, most of all, they need you as their sounding board. Your challenge in the months ahead is to strike a delicate balance between being involved and assuming the driver's seat. The college admission process is sometimes as difficult for parents as it is for students, and the more conscious you are of your role in it, the smoother it will go.

Your role is to support, encourage and respectfully question. It's your child who has to live and study at this new institution for four years, so she, not you, needs to be in charge of the process. Some students are capable of running the process entirely by themselves. They are the exceptions. Most need some help, **but it has to be the right kind of help.** Handling standardized test registration, making travel arrangements and campus tour appointments, making clear what is affordable: good help. Doing the research, writing any part of the applications: counterproductive help.

**Let me give an example of good intentions gone bad.** A few years ago I worked heavily with a student who struggled with writing. After multiple drafts, he had an essay that was clear, thoughtful, and an excellent reflection of him as a student and thinker. I signed off on it. The next day, he came to see me. This was a very emotionally

stable young man, but he started to tear up as he relayed how the previous night his parent and an older sibling had read his essay, deemed it ‘terrible’ and spent a couple of hours – excluding the student – ‘fixing’ it. One day he had felt confident and proud; the next he was demoralized. His family had good intentions, but their actions not only undermined the student’s psychological well being, they actually jeopardized his chances of admission.

I explained to the parent on the phone that the “improved” draft was perhaps a more elegant piece of writing, but as a personal essay it no longer accurately reflected the student’s abilities and no longer captured anything of his wonderful personality. For the purposes of college admission, the parent had taken a very good essay and turned it into a very bad one. “I want what you want,” I explained, “which is for your son to get into his top choice colleges. Besides,” I continued, “if he doesn’t own the process, he doesn’t get to own his success. He has worked hard on his applications, and he deserves to know, in his heart, that he, not you, earned those offers of admission. Your ‘improved’ essay undermines both his chances of being admitted and his ownership of the process.” The parent, although still nervous, conceded. For the record, the student was admitted to the college in question.

**“ Your role is to support, encourage and respectfully question. It’s your child who has to live and study at this new institution for four years, so she, not you, needs to be in charge of the process.”**

Psychologist Madeline Levine, author of *Teach Your Children Well: Parenting for Authentic Success*, writes, “Most parents today were brought up in a culture that put a strong emphasis on being special. Being special takes hard work and can’t be trusted to children. Hence the exhausting cycle of constantly monitoring their work and performance, which in turn makes children feel less competent and confident, so that they need even more oversight.” (Levine, 2012) We understand how difficult it can be to trust them, especially when your children don’t think about and work toward goals the same way you do. But please, trust them and trust us.

**Another issue we see**, and one with which you can help: sometimes a senior will tell us that she feels like her identity has been reduced to simply “college applicant,” especially at home. Try designating one dinner each week for college discussions, leaving the rest of the week for conversations about all the other stuff that makes your son or daughter interesting. The families who have tried this strategy have found the quality of conversations about college increase dramatically and, at the same time, they have experienced fewer outbursts, screaming matches, meltdowns and slammed doors.

**Your student will be excited by this process, yes, but he will also be anxious, conflicted, frustrated and overwhelmed.** Give him the space to deal with his emotions and try to keep your own emotions in check. Use us. If you feel overwhelmed, your student shuts down, and you're worried everything is shutting toward disaster, pick up the phone and call us. We won't meet with parents alone, but we will help you sort through whatever is happening on the phone.

Let's talk about the nuts of bolts of how our office can help. We like to meet with students and their parents at the beginning of the college process. Although we work very much as a team, students will be assigned to a primary counselor in December and a kick-off meeting with one of us in the winter or early spring of junior year ensures that everyone is on the same page when beginning the search process. You will come out of this first meeting with an initial college list.

**It is critical that you keep an open mind.** Our job is to educate, and that means we may well introduce ideas to which you are adamantly opposed. Similarly, schools you had in mind may have become more selective than you realize over the years, while other schools may have become more interesting and, yes, better. We will, likely, introduce you to new schools and some you've never heard of before. In any case, our feelings are not hurt when, over the course of the process, some of our ideas fall by the wayside. In fact, that is what's supposed to happen. But it's important that students arrive at their final list having thoughtfully considered and rejected a range of different options. It is equally important to listen to our advice in terms of developing a balanced list. We don't want your students to be applying to only reach schools; this means that they need to visit schools within reach, including some that may be foundations for them.

A second family meeting, in the fall of senior year, allows us to evaluate where your student is in the process and figure out what support he needs to thoughtfully finalize his list and write the applications. Some seniors are ready to handle this phase independently and would prefer not to have a second meeting with their parents. Under the right circumstances, this is healthy, and it doesn't mean that you, as parents, are being excluded from the process. You have the right to ask your child to pose questions on your behalf, or call or email us directly.

Throughout this handbook in general, and this section in particular, we've offered our services in a variety of capacities. We can do a lot to help students and families through this process. But please remember that there are limits to what we can do. We cannot serve as probation officers, checking in with every single student every single day to make sure that x, y and z have been completed. As a family, you need to come up with a system to communicate what is or is not getting done.



**Your student isn't the only one who will be excited, anxious, conflicted and overwhelmed during this process - as parents, you, too, may have moments of panic.** That's normal, but you cannot let those moments become chronic. Worry is counterproductive. The word worry itself comes from the Old English verb to strangle. Don't let your anxieties about this process strangle you and your child!

**We'd like to recommend a couple of books we think might help provide you with some perspective.**

Frank Bruni's *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania* exposes the many myths surrounding prestige and demonstrates that it's what you put into your college education that matters.

If you read only one book on parenting over the course of this year, we'd like to make a serious plug for Julie Lythcott-Haims' *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. "Dean Julie" was the Dean of Freshmen at Stanford for many years. She writes with humor and humility, as a college dean and a parent, about the necessity of letting children claim their independence -- and the cost of doing too much to "help" them.

Another book, humorous in tone, but tremendously insightful, is *Watsamatta U: The Get-A-Grip Guide to Staying Sane Through Your Child's College Application Process*, by Karin Kasdin. Kasdin describes in hilarious detail all the mistakes she made during her son's process, and reflects on what might have worked better.

Finally, you will probably find yourself talking with other parents going through this process, sharing experiences and offering advice. This can be really helpful and healthy. It can also feed anxiety, especially when families have to factor finances or other private factors into the college search.

**Parents who have gone through this process before have asked us to encourage you to consider avoiding conversations about specifics about the college and the process and instead help each other with things like separation anxiety and travel logistics.** Avoiding the specifics will help to make sure your conversations feel like less of a race through the gauntlet and more like guided support.

We very much look forward to working with your family in the months ahead.



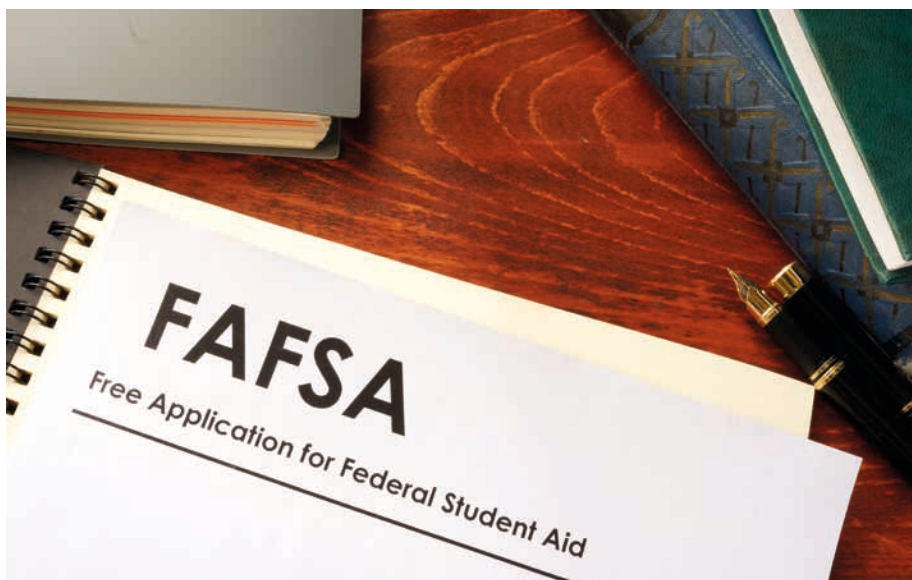
# CHAPTER 7

## FINANCIAL AID

*While many parents would love to tell their children “money is no object,” it is perfectly legitimate, indeed necessary, to have an open, honest conversation about what is financially realistic for your family.*

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## APPLYING FOR NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID

As college counselors, we have heard the financial aid process described as everything from “confusing” to “Byzantine” to “Kafkaesque.” It is a complex process, but it’s actually fairly straightforward, certainly more so than the admissions process. In this section, we will do our best to demystify the college aid process, explain the terms you’ll be reading on various college aid websites, and give you a few pieces of advice to help keep the college aid process in perspective.

According to the **College Board**, the **average cost of tuition and fees for the 2021-2022 school year** was \$38,070 at **private colleges**, \$10,740 for **state residents at public colleges**, and \$27,560 for **out-of-state residents attending public universities**, and SUNY tuition and fees, for an in-state resident, is \$8,810. Personal expenses, books, travel, and fees will drive those costs higher, to between \$25,000 (at the low end) and \$75,000 (at the high end). While there are certainly many families in the US for whom financial aid is unnecessary, for the majority of families, financial aid is a significant factor in the college process.

We want you to know that that’s okay. While many parents would love to tell their children “money is no object,” it is perfectly legitimate, indeed necessary, to have an open, honest conversation about what is financially realistic for your family. What is your family’s “tuition threshold?” Do those numbers align with what colleges will likely expect you to pay? Do family circumstances (divorce, remarriage, unemployment, self-employment, generous grandparents) need to be part of the discussion?

Part of learning to be an adult is learning to do cost-benefit analysis...and increasingly, we find that Berkeley Carroll students and families are finding value in terrific lower-cost institutions, be they public universities or schools where students are strong candidates for merit aid. It is the rare college search that doesn't include some level of compromise; as a rule, we are huge advocates of choosing schools that allow you and your family to minimize loan debt.

We encourage you to have the “family money talk” early – if we know that finances need to be part of your college thinking, we'll be better able to help you create a strong and realistic college list. We also encourage you to use each college's net price calculator to get a sense of what your costs might be with financial aid considerations.

We also want you to know that while we are always here as a resource, we are not financial aid experts. Your best resource will, inevitably, be the financial aid officers at the schools to which you are applying. Many financial aid offices may require the same documents, but each will have its own policies, deadlines, and ways of packaging aid. We strongly encourage you to contact colleges directly with your aid questions.

## HOW COLLEGES APPROACH AID

There are as many ways for a college to determine a student's aid package as there are colleges and students – but there are a few things to know (and to ask about) when you visit schools.

### Awareness of Need

Schools fall into two major categories: “Need-Blind” and “Need-Aware.” These are what they sound like. A “Need-Blind” school will NOT take into account your family's financial situation when making its admission decision. Will you need the school to cover tuition, room, board, books, and laundry money? Will your family be covering your full cost? Not their concern. They will admit you, and then they will send your information to the (usually separate) Office of Financial Aid, which will assess our need, then create a financial aid package (or not), based on the information provided. A “Need-Aware” school will certainly not treat your family's ability to pay as the major factor in the decision-making process, but they reserve the right to consider your family's level of need when reviewing your application.

Why do some universities consider need in the admissions decision, while others don't? Usually, it's a question of resources. Some universities have enough money to cover the full need of any and every student who requests aid. Others, with more limited resources, have to make tough choices about how to use the funds they have. Often, some of those tough choices will revolve around financial aid. This leads us to...

## Meeting Need

Colleges have various ways of putting together your financial aid package as well, most of which we'll discuss below, once we've walked you through the forms you'll fill out. One question you'll want to ask when visiting colleges, however, is whether a school meets full need or meets partial need. Those that meet partial need will likely expect you to take out more loans.

"Meeting Full Need" is, more or less, what it sounds like. An institution commits to meeting the full demonstrated need for every student they admit, with a package that may include loans, grants, and work study, in addition to a family's own contribution. There are a few caveats, however. You might assume that "full need" would be a simply mean anything not covered by the FAFSA's Estimated Family Contribution – that you could look at the EFC, assume that's what a university will ask you to pay, and that "meeting full need" means an institution plans to cover the rest. This may be the case – but not always. An institution will take the EFC under advisement – but private colleges and universities will also use something called the CSS Profile and any other forms they have requested (see the next section, on forms) to create their own estimate of what your family can afford to contribute. Sometimes this will be less than the federal EFC, sometimes more. More about aid packages will follow.

**"The aid packages you are offered will differ from college to college. Even two colleges that commit to meeting full need may do so in dizzyingly different ways."**

"Meeting Partial Need" is, again, relatively self-explanatory. Essentially, a school that meets partial need will admit you, assess your need to be \$10,000 and may offer you some financial aid, but is only committed to covering your family's cost up to \$7,000, leaving a \$3,000 gap that you and your family will need to find a way to meet – usually through loans or outside scholarship. This "gap" between the cost of attendance and the amount a school will help you cover can vary from institution to institution – and lends the practice its nickname – "gapping."

The aid packages you are offered will differ from college to college. Even two colleges that commit to meeting full need may do so in dizzyingly different ways. One might offer more loans, another more scholarships. One might offer substantial work study, another might not offer work study at all. Know, too, that sometimes two aid packages may look very different on paper, but that their differences may not be so vast "in real life." For instance, one school might give you both "merit scholarship"

and “need-based grant,” while another offers you simply grant money – but, in reality, the two schools are covering roughly the same amount. Some schools don’t offer merit money, while others call any dollar that isn’t a loan or work-study “merit.”

All this to say, when you receive offers from more than one institution, be sure to read the fine print, and be sure to ask questions. Think about what the true cost to you of each institution will be, and think about things like the amount of student loans you are willing to take on. Talk this over carefully as a family. Call financial aid offices if you need to and ask them to walk you through their offer. Know that you will be hitting them at a busy time of year, but that they are interested in helping you to make sense of what they know can be an anxiety-producing part of the college selection process.

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## FINANCIAL AID FORMS

There are several forms you will hear mentioned, again and again, at campus information sessions across the country.

1. The **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)**. Every family applying for financial aid in the United States will fill this out, at [www.fafsa.org](http://www.fafsa.org). The FAFSA determines eligibility for all publicly funded grants and loans, including Pell grants, Stafford loans, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) and federally-funded on-campus work study programs (among others). It’s also the first and most universally recognized form colleges use to figure out a student’s aid package, because it provides a baseline Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

October 1 – The FAFSA is available at <https://fafsa.ed.gov/>. Students and parent(s) must create separate FSA IDs here, <https://fsaid.ed.gov/npas/index.htm>. Your family may, in most cases, use prior prior year taxes to fill out this form (for 2023-24, this means 2021). Some colleges will require present year taxes and W2 forms as well, especially if you have had drastic changes in income.

November 1/15 -- Financial aid application deadlines for most ED/EA programs. The deadline is earlier because it will allow families to receive financial aid packages along with an offer of admission.

February 1/15 or March 1 – Financial aid application deadlines for most RD programs. A college will not be able to create an aid package for you until the FAFSA is completed and the EFC calculated.

2. The **CSS PROFILE (College Scholarship Service PROFILE)** is the second-most-universal financial aid document. Most private colleges will require it and use it, in conjunction with the FAFSA, to determine your aid package. It is used to determine institutional funding. Know that every college has its own methodology for determining aid. Though, colleges that receive the same information may “package” you very differently (more on this later). The CSS Profile is completed in two steps:  
October 1 – Register for the CSS PROFILE at <https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile>. Do this as soon as you have decided where you’ll apply. The registration asks several core questions, and allows you to indicate colleges to which you’ll apply. You will be charged a fee and additional costs per college. Once you have registered and added your target colleges, you will access a customized version of the PROFILE immediately, one that includes the questions your colleges have asked for you to complete. You will fill it out online and submit it to CSS, which will then distribute it to the colleges of your choice. The CSS asks for more asset information than the FAFSA in addition to information from non-custodial parents, business income and more.
3. Some schools may ask for institution-specific documents in addition to the FAFSA and CSS Profile. Usually, these additional forms are an attempt to get a clearer or more detailed “snapshot” of your family’s financial needs – are there other students in private school? Have there been recent changes to your family’s financial picture? Make sure, as you’re putting together your application checklist for each school, that you keep track of any separate financial documents they require.
4. Supplemental Documents. The two most common supplemental documents your family may need to fill out are:
  - The Divorced/Separated Parent’s Statement – a document filled out by a student’s non-custodial parent, and returned directly to colleges. This usually needs to be filled out whether or not the non-custodial parent will be contributing to college expenses; most colleges will not create an aid package for a student until the statement has been provided, or they have received sufficient proof that the statement cannot be provided. If you have specific questions about this form and your family circumstances, we are absolutely here as resources, and can talk you through some options.
  - The Small Business/Farm Supplement – This form is often required if a parent is self-employed. It should be sent directly to colleges.
  - Income Tax Returns – Colleges will request tax returns from both parents, or both sets of parents as well as W-2 forms.



## THE FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE

When you are admitted to a school, and if you have filed all the necessary financial aid forms, you'll usually receive an "award letter." This letter, which may arrive with your admission offer, or several days later, will explain the combination of grants, loans, and other kinds of financial aid the school is prepared to offer you. Most financial aid packages consist of some combination of the following:

- **Need-based Grants and Scholarships** – This is the best kind of aid, because it doesn't need to be paid back. Some scholarships may require you to maintain a certain GPA or participate in certain activities in order to remain eligible.
- **Federal Work Study** – The federal government subsidizes this program, which provides part-time jobs to eligible students. Usually you can work only a certain number of hours each week (10-15 is common). The money is paid directly to the student and is good for living expenses. There is a maximum amount the government allows a student to earn each year through this program. Usually work-study jobs are on campus, and can consist of anything from handing out towels at the campus gym to performing high-level research in a professor's laboratory. The most interesting work study jobs are coveted and go fast –so if you are offered work study money, you should be sure to do your research early about opportunities available.
- **Student Loans** – These loans, usually taken out in the student's name, are often subsidized by the government with interest rates much lower than other loans for which your family might apply. In most cases, no interest is charged while a student is enrolled at least part-time. No repayment is required until after you graduate. There are maximum allowances for subsidized Stafford loans for each year of college.
- **Estimated Family Contribution** – The EFC is sometimes included on the award letter, sometimes not. Remember, the college's estimate of your family's contribution may differ a bit (or even substantially) from the EFC provided by the FAFSA.

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## FINANCIAL AID AND EARLY DECISION

Finally, a word on Early Decision as it pertains to financial aid. While applying to a school early decision can absolutely have benefits, it does have at least one significant financial drawback. By applying early, you relinquish the opportunity to compare aid packages between schools. You should weigh the pros and cons of waiting to see what other schools may offer in terms of financial aid – if money is a significant consideration in your application process, you may want to avoid Early Decision.

## NET PRICE CALCULATOR -- A CONSUMER TOOL

Net price calculators are available on a college's or university's website and allow prospective students to enter basic financial information about themselves to find out what students with similar financial circumstances paid to attend the institution in the previous year, after taking grants and scholarship aid into account. It is important to recognize a few facts about Net Price Calculators:

- ☐ Each college's or university's NPC will be different, reflecting only that institution's financial aid methodology.
- ☐ The net price that is calculated by your college's or university's NPC will only be as good as the information you enter into the tool. Be as accurate as possible.
- ☐ The NPC has its limits. It does not accept foreign currency. Divorced and separated parents should contact each college for assistance in completing the NPC. Still, it is the best tool available for calculating possible costs.

## FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIP REFERENCES

**The CSS/PROFILE Financial Aid Application** <https://profileonline.collegeboard.com/index.jsp>

**FAFSA-Free Application for Federal Student Aid**  
<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

**FastWeb! Scholarship Search**  
<http://www.fastweb.com/>

**Overview of Federal Student Aid**  
<https://fafsa.ed.gov/spa/fafsa4c/#/landing>

**Finaid.org (comprehensive financial aid information)**  
<http://www.finaid.org/about/>

**Net Price Calculator**  
<https://collegecost.ed.gov/net-price>

# CHAPTER 8

## APPENDIX

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## ATHLETICS

If you are interested in playing varsity sports in college you should first turn to your coach to help you assess the likelihood of your playing and in which division. College athletic programs are regulated primarily by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which establishes rules on eligibility, recruiting and financial aid. The NCAA has three membership divisions: Division I, Division II, and Division III. Colleges are members of a division according to the size and scope of their athletic program and whether they provide athletic scholarships.

### **If you are serious about playing competitive sports in college, do the following:**

Talk to your BCS or outside coach about the kinds of colleges you are considering. Ask if she or he will contact these schools on your behalf. Quite often a college coach will request a video of your play. Discuss with your current coach what you might send that represents you best.

When you communicate with the admission offices at the colleges in which you are interested, let them know that you are a varsity athlete interested in participating in their sport program. They can put you in touch with a coach or assistant coach.

Contact the college coaches yourself. Let them know of your interest in their school and their team. You will want to provide them with an athletic resume or video. They may have a questionnaire on the athletics site for prospective athletes to complete. Set up a visit to the college. You should see the coach and speak with players during that visit.

Athletic scholarships are available from Division I and II institutions (with the exception of the Ivy League Conference). While a Division III college cannot offer you an athletic scholarship, a coach may be able to influence an admission decision. Understand, however, that a coach's ability to support an applicant in the admission process varies at each institution, so don't rely solely on a coach's word.

Watch out for very aggressive coaches. A coach's goal is to build the best team possible. Typically, a coach can share with the admissions office a list of their top recruits. There is no guarantee that an admission committee will follow the coach's recommendation. The strength of your academic record and your level of enthusiasm for the college/team will be considered in the coach's list.

A coach's promises should always be taken with a grain (or three or four) of salt. Coaches who guarantee you admission are probably not in the position to do so. It is the admission committee that makes admission decisions, not the coaches. There are no guarantees. You could be courted regularly, called weekly, invited to visit, and you may still not be admitted. Being recruited is very different than being a top recruit.

**“If you are interested in playing a varsity sport in college you should first turn to your coach to help you assess the likelihood of your playing and in which division.”**

It is not unusual for a coach to want to hear from you that his or her college is your top choice. The coach doesn't want to waste time recruiting someone who isn't going to enroll. Don't lie to coaches about your interest in their college. However, you do not have to make a commitment unless you choose to apply Early Decision.

Please keep us posted of communication you have with coaches. We will speak with the admission office and it is important to know what a coach has been telling you. That said, please understand that we are not in the position to advocate for you as athletes. Admissions and athletics run on parallel tracks, and it is considered inappropriate for college counselors to reach out to coaches.

Of course, we are happy to discuss your athletic prowess and contributions to our teams in our recommendations and conversations with admission personnel, but we are not the experts in assessing athletic talent. Your coaches will be most helpful in this regard.

### **NCAA Clearinghouse**

The NCAA has established a Clearinghouse for the recruiting of student-athletes to Division I and II institutions. If you are only looking at Division III colleges you need not register with the Clearinghouse. All students considering Division I or II must

register with the Clearinghouse. In the spring of your junior year you should fill out an eligibility form at The NCAA Eligibility Center at <https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>. Please give your counselor any necessary school forms so that your transcript can be sent to the NCAA. You must also send your scores directly from the College Board or ACT.

A Division I coach cannot contact a student off the college campus until after July 1 of the junior year. The coach may contact you no more than three times off campus.

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## ARTISTS AND PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION

Colleges and universities seek exceptional talent in a number of areas beyond academics. Just as many colleges will weigh an athlete's skill in the evaluation of an application, so will many institutions give special consideration for a talented actor, musician, dancer or visual artist.

If you are a serious artist, you may consider submitting a portfolio or record of your work (many colleges use the tool Slideroom for this purpose). Many colleges have clear guidelines for these submissions, and some may even require an audition.

In many cases, your submission will be evaluated by a member of the arts faculty rather than an admission officer, and a recommendation will be added to your file, though this varies from school to school. The admission committee always retains final authority over admission decisions, and your academic record will always carry more weight than your arts evaluation.

At most colleges, it is not necessary for you to major in the arts in order for your talent to be considered. Bear in mind, however, that most applicants submitting portfolios are very serious about their art, so the "curve" is often quite steep. If you are considering a portfolio submission, you should discuss your ideas with both your relevant teacher and us.

## LEARNING DIFFERENCES AND THE COLLEGE PROCESS

College and university admission personnel understand that a student's academic record and/or standardized testing may be impacted by a learning difference. And all colleges and universities, of course, must comply with The Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of a learning disability. As with all candidates, the admission committee thoughtfully considers the likelihood

of a student's success at the college, given the resources available at the institution and the skills and strategies the student has developed.

Most, if not all, colleges and universities have a disability resource center. If you need or would like extra academic support in college, you should definitely contact the appropriate office or person during the search phase of the college process. You should speak with your counselor about how, when and if you would like to disclose your disability in the admissions process.

There are a number of helpful books on this topic we can recommend, including *The K&W Guide to College Programs & Services for Students with Learning Disabilities or ADD/ADHD*.

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## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

No aspect of the college admission process is more misunderstood than affirmative action. The majority of its critics, as well as many of its supporters, do not actually understand how affirmative action is practiced in a college admission office.

The Supreme Court has continued to permit colleges and universities to consider race as one factor among many in a holistic review of an applicant's candidacy. Assembling a class that reflects the diversity of our country is an acceptable goal, according to the Court. Writing for the majority in the landmark case *Grutter v. Bollinger*, Justice O'Connor ruled that the constitution "does not prohibit the [University of Michigan's] narrowly tailored use of race in admissions decisions to further a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body."

**"No aspect of the college admission process is more misunderstood than affirmative action."**

Just like many students at Berkeley Carroll who cite diversity as an important quality of an ideal college, students and professors at institutions across the country value differing viewpoints generated around a seminar table resulting from differing backgrounds and experiences.

Colleges and universities do not use quotas, and have not since the Court ruled such methods unconstitutional in 1978 (*Regents of Univ. of California v. Bakke*). Students are never admitted because of their race. O'Connor's decision in the *Grutter*

asserted that universities must, as Michigan's law school did, "ensure that each applicant is evaluated as an individual and not in a way that makes an applicant's race or ethnicity the defining feature of his or her application."

Instead, in assembling a diverse class, admissions may factor in how a student's experience as a racial minority has affected his or her life or contributed to his or her perspective. Applicants of color must meet the same high expectations for academic and extracurricular achievement as other applicants, and the Court was satisfied that this does, in fact, occur.

It has been argued that class, not race, should be considered in admission decisions. In the opinion of this former admission officer - who, unlike pundits or politicians, has actually practiced affirmative action - this is a flawed argument, since socioeconomic class is, and has long been, a major factor in holistic application review. It's not an either/or proposition: both race and class are considered by readers as they evaluate applicants, along with many other forms of diversity, including national origin, religion, sexual orientation, ability, geography, family structure and unusual life experiences.

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## REFERENCES

On Rankings: "A ranking can be heterogeneous as long as it doesn't try to be too comprehensive. And it can be comprehensive as long as it doesn't try to measure things that are heterogeneous. But it's an act of real audacity when a ranking system tries to be comprehensive and heterogeneous—which is the first thing to keep in mind in any consideration of U.S. News & World Report's annual 'Best Colleges' guide."

Malcolm Gladwell, "*The Order of Things*." *The New Yorker*, Feb. 14, 2011, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-order-of-things>

Valerie Straus, "U.S. News changed the way it ranks colleges. It's still ridiculous." *Washington Post*, Sept. 12, 2018

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2018/09/12/us-news-changed-way-it-ranks-colleges-its-still-ridiculous/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.db2656591b66](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2018/09/12/us-news-changed-way-it-ranks-colleges-its-still-ridiculous/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.db2656591b66)

On Selectivity: "Any high school senior who applies to those schools listed in the 'most selective' category would do well to accept the endeavor as a crapshoot. ...Whatever they decide -- up or down -- says little about you and everything about them."

Malcolm Gauld, "*Playing the Odds*." *Huffington Post*, March 29, 2013 [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/malcolm-gauld/college-admissions-\\_b\\_2974892.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/malcolm-gauld/college-admissions-_b_2974892.html)



## STANDARDIZED TEST PREP PROVIDERS

This list is not comprehensive, but following are some of the companies with whom Berkeley Carroll families have had good experiences in their engagement with testing preparation. Nearly every organization will have a sliding scale for their service fees if a family has financial need. Please connect with our office for recommendations if you have financial concerns about the cost of test prep.

Bespoke Education *	<a href="https://www.bespokeeducation.com/test-prep/">https://www.bespokeeducation.com/test-prep/</a>
Brooklyn Learning Center	<a href="http://www.brooklynlearningcenter.com/">http://www.brooklynlearningcenter.com/</a>
City Smarts	<a href="https://www.citysmarts.net/test-prep">https://www.citysmarts.net/test-prep</a>
Compass Education Group **	<a href="https://www.compassprep.com/">https://www.compassprep.com/</a>
Focus Educational Services ***	<a href="http://www.focusededucationalservices.com/">http://www.focusededucationalservices.com/</a>
Kaplan (low cost opt, partners with ACT)	<a href="https://www.kaptest.com/act">https://www.kaptest.com/act</a>
Khan Academy (free, partners with SAT)	<a href="https://www.khanacademy.org/SAT">https://www.khanacademy.org/SAT</a>
Revolution Prep	<a href="https://www.revolutionprep.com/programs/test-prep/">https://www.revolutionprep.com/programs/test-prep/</a>
Sentia Education	<a href="http://sentiaeducation.com/">http://sentiaeducation.com/</a>
Zinc Educational Services	<a href="https://www.zinc.nyc/">https://www.zinc.nyc/</a>

\* We partner with Bespoke Education to offer small classes for Berkeley Carroll students. Typically, there is an option for a Fall/Winter course and a Winter/Spring course. Financial aid is available for families who receive aid from Berkeley Carroll.

\*\* We also partner with Compass to provide full length practice tests to all sophomores for the ACT and SAT. Compass provides a testing overview in a webinar format specifically for BC families every May.

\*\*\* Owned and operated by a BC family.

## NOTES

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