

Applying to College 101

What should my college list look like?

- The number of schools on your list may vary depending on your personal situation and the competitiveness of the schools you choose. In general, it is true that students apply to more colleges than in the past because of the competitiveness of space.
- **Balance** is the key. Students can divide the colleges on their lists into three categories: Likely schools, Probable schools, and Reach schools



- **Likely** schools are colleges to which you will almost certainly be admitted. A likely school for one student may not be a likely for another. If your scores, GPA, academic record, etc. all compare very favorably with the school's averages, then it may be a likely school for you. Ideally, your likely school has a high rate of acceptance or is a regional school that doesn't have strict limits on the number of students they can accept (like Armstrong, Savannah State, Georgia Southern, etc). You should have one likely school on your list, and it is essential that it be someplace that you like and would be happy to attend.
- **Probable** schools are generally colleges for which your scores, GPA, and academic record are somewhere in that school's average range or slightly higher. Be sure to check the acceptance rate to see if it is favorable. Again, a probable school for you may not be a probable school for other students.
- **Reach** schools are colleges at which you meet all of the basic criteria, but your scores, GPA, and academic record are below average when it compared to the school's statistics. This may be a dream school that you really like. Many students have one of these on their lists, but it is necessary for all students. Also, be sure to realize that if you are accepted to a reach school, you will likely find the work to be very challenging and will have to work very hard to be successful-so be prepared!



- Students who apply early may not need as many schools on their lists. For example, if you apply early action and are notified in December that you have been accepted to a school that you know well, have visited, and really want to attend, then you may not find it necessary to apply to your likely schools.

- You might also need to have a financial safety school, which is a college that you know you can afford in case your financial needs are not met.

What if the college is too expensive?

- Don't be scared too much by sticker prices. If you really like a particular school, you should apply. Just be sure to have an affordable backup school.
- Explore the financial aid and scholarships that are available at private schools. You may qualify for enough merit and/or need based aid to make a private school affordable.
- Many well-endowed schools provide free tuition for students whose family income falls below certain thresholds. Other colleges have instituted programs in which they commit to meet 100% of "need" (as determined through the FAFSA process) through grants and/or scholarships.

When do I apply to college?

- Most students will be submitting the majority of their applications between mid-October and late December.
- Many schools will have separate deadlines for scholarship consideration, financial aid, and admission. Deadlines for scholarships (merit based awards through the admission office) and financial aid (need based aid through the financial aid office) may be earlier than the final admissions deadline.
- It is extremely important that you read all instructions and check all deadlines for each of your schools and be careful to note whether the school is on rolling admissions (see next page). If you see an admission deadline that is fairly late in the year (March or later), then there's a good chance that the school has rolling admission.
- The vast majority of the college crisis situations with which we have assisted would have been avoided if the students had read all application instructions carefully. The instructions may include important information about testing requirements, financial aid deadlines, or other vital requirements.



How do I send my transcript and what about sending SAT/ACT scores?

- All seniors requesting a transcript must have a Transcript Request Form on file in the counseling office. By law, we are unable to send your transcript to any college without a signed release form.
- When you are ready to apply, see Mrs. Roberts in the counseling office about sending your transcript. Be sure to request transcripts in a timely manner. This is especially important if your application requires a letter of recommendation to be sent with your transcript.

- Before you request that transcripts be sent, check to see if the college has any sort of counselor recommendation form or secondary school report form that must be completed and submitted by the counseling office. If so, you will need to personally request this information.
- For The University of Georgia, The Common Application, and Send U, the counselors will complete the forms online.
- If a student requests that a counselor write a letter of recommendation or complete a form, the counselor may include GPA, class rank, SAT/ACT scores, and specific course information.
- Discuss with your counselor any special circumstances that should be explained in the recommendation.
- It is not unusual for two to three weeks to pass before a college receives and processes transcripts so please try to be patient and try not to panic if the transcript isn't processed immediately.
- Colleges generally require that you submit official copies of your SAT/ACT scores, which is done directly through the College Board or ACT. Your SAT/ACT scores are not part of your transcript.



Early Action, Early Decision, Rolling, Regular.....What does it all mean?!?

- The glossary of admissions terms grows every year, but the information below should help! Note, though, that these are only guidelines. Many variations exist, which is why it is essential to read application instructions carefully and note the official procedure and deadlines.
- The **regular**, old fashioned admissions deadline structure is fairly straightforward. Students apply by a certain date (usually sometime between January 1 and February 15). All admission decisions are sent to applicants at approximately the same time (usually by April 1).
- **Early Action** generally refers to a process in which students can apply by an early deadline (usually somewhere between October 15 and December 1) and receive an admissions decision early (usually mid to late December). Students will either be admitted, denied, or deferred (meaning that the college will wait and consider you with the regular pool of applicants). Applying early is generally not recommended for students with GPA, scores, and overall academic records that do not compare favorably with the college's averages.
- **Early Decision** is typically a binding agreement in which the student commits to attend that college and withdraw any other application if accepted. This is obviously a serious decision and students, along with their parents/guardians, must be certain about their choice.
- **Rolling Admission** has become a very common alternative to the old-fashioned procedure. The college chooses a date on which they will begin making admissions decisions and sending notifications (usually on or before January 1). From that time on, they will review applications as they are received and will send out decisions as they are made. Many of these schools will list a final deadline, but it is best to apply closer to or even before the start date before any programs become full.

What do I need to do to be considered for scholarships from colleges?

- As always, check with your colleges before you apply. In most cases, students will automatically be considered for scholarships by the admissions office. Sometimes you must apply by a certain date in order to be considered for scholarships. When in doubt, speak with an admissions representative.
- Some colleges will require students to submit an extra form requesting to be considered for scholarships. Most scholarship money that students receive comes from the college they attend, so it is essential that you check all deadlines and procedures.



Do I apply for financial aid when I send in my application?

- Financial aid is a completely separate process that is handled by a different office. Generally, the financial aid process will begin after you have applied for admission. Financial aid procedures are very different than admissions procedures and have different deadlines, so you must be sure to read the procedures for each college and do so early!
- You apply for financial aid by completing a FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). This form cannot be completed until January 1 or later and should be done online. Priority deadlines for financial aid are often in February, so it is advisable to complete the FAFSA as early as possible.

Please continue to check the counselor's website for ongoing and updated information pertaining to seniors. Many events are held at South Effingham High School including the College Probe Fair, Georgia Apply to College, Financial Aid Night, and College Field Trips. You can find the dates/times on your senior calendar of events.