



Duchesne Omaha 1881
Academy of the Sacred Heart

**COLLEGE
HANDBOOK FOR
PARENTS**

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Dear Parents:

Welcome! I am looking forward to a shared collaboration of support for your daughter on her road to college.

The College Counseling Program at Duchesne is rooted in Goal V of our Sacred Heart Goals— *Personal Growth in an Atmosphere of Wise Freedom*. It is of the utmost importance that students are in charge of their college search, making decisions about where they go, and taking ownership of their admission and scholarship applications.

My ultimate goal is to find a school for every student that will set her up for success. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States! Keep in mind that means there are many schools that will be a good match. My philosophy is to encourage students to have lots of options on the table. I am committed to helping them discern a school that is a good fit academically, financially and personally.

College counseling begins formally in Junior Seminar during third quarter junior year and continues in Senior Seminar first semester senior year. During these classes, we discuss every aspect of the college application process including scholarships and financial aid. Students will use the SCOIR platform to manage college and scholarship searches and keep track of their applications.

I will be writing a letter of recommendation for every student and take great pride in making these very professional and personal. Therefore, I will be visiting with students individually. I will also ask for parental input – see Parent Brag Sheet. Parents are welcome to meet with me at any time. Email me for an appointment.

Here are some helpful things *you* can do:

- Be aware of the critical calendar and remind your daughter of pending deadlines.
- Encourage your daughter to communicate with me regularly and to visit with the college representatives when they come to Duchesne.
- Remind your daughter that she will be successful no matter which college she attends. What a student does when she gets to college is far more important than where she goes.

It is my pleasure to help your daughter and I am honored to be part of her journey.

Sincerely,

Frances Swanson
College Counselor

Critical Calendar for College Planning

Spring of Junior Year

Junior Seminar meets one block each week during third quarter spring of junior year.

1. Explore colleges by researching SCOIR, reading printed materials, meeting representatives at Duchesne and visiting campuses.
2. Make a standardized testing plan.
3. Duchesne will offer the ACT to all juniors in the spring of junior year.
4. Visit, visit, visit college campuses.
5. Write a resume.
6. Meet with Mrs. Swanson for college conversation.
7. Sign up for scholarship searches, for example on Education Quest or FastWeb.

Summer between Junior and Senior Year

1. Visit, visit, visit campuses.
2. Finalize list of prospective colleges on SCOIR.
3. Write a rough draft of a college essay.

Fall of Senior Year

Senior Seminar meets one block each week during the first quarter of senior year.

1. Retake standardized tests if necessary
2. Complete all applications by November 1 to avoid missing any deadlines.
3. Check college websites for application/scholarship deadlines.

Dear Parents: The following survey is offered as a tool to help you think about what you want for your daughter as she is considering a college. Perhaps you can use it as a spring board for discussion and conversation, keeping in mind that the ultimate choice will be hers to make.

MOM AND POP QUIZ

Self-Assessment Survey for Parents

Name five things that your daughter is doing right now that you hope she will CONTINUE TO DO in college:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Name five things that she is NOT doing now, but you hope she WILL DO in college (academic or otherwise):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Name five things that your daughter IS doing right now that you hope she WON'T CONTINUE in college:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Choosing a School

Pretend that there's a perfect college. We'll call it "Fantasy State." In YOUR opinion, it's the ideal school for your daughter. Keep it in mind as you answer the questions below and if you really have no preference in one area – or have several preferences – be sure to say so. Put an asterisk (*) by those preferences you feel very strongly about:

I. Location

How far is it from home? (within an hour's drive or a day's; in a foreign country) _____

Do you prefer: a big city; suburb; small town, etc? _____

Do you have other preferences or requirements? (near a ski slope or far from one; close to grandparents; close to a major medical center): _____

Do you have a specific region of the US in mind? International? _____

In what location do you think your daughter wants to go to school? _____

How will your daughter react if your expectations conflict? _____

II. Enrollment

Will your daughter be best off in a small college (under 2,500 students)? A medium small one (2,500-5,000)? A medium one (5,000-10,000)? a large one (10,000-18,000)? _____

How good is your daughter at asking for help (anything from directions to tutoring) when needed? _____

Do you prefer an institution that is primarily for undergraduates? _____

What advantages (if any) do you see in having grad students on campus, too? _____

Would you consider a single-sex school? _____ Would you prefer one? _____

In a coed school, do you care whether the male-to-female ratio is unbalanced? _____

Do you prefer a school with a religious affiliation (and/or a strong majority of one religious group)? If so, which one? _____

Would a religious affiliation bother you? _____

Is geographic diversity in a student body important to you? _____ Racial/ethnic diversity? _____

What preferences (and prejudices) do you think your daughter has regarding the size and student composition of the college she will attend? _____

III. Academics

Does your daughter have a major in mind? _____ If so, what? _____

How certain about it do you think your daughter feels? _____

Does she have a career goal? _____ If so, what? _____

How do YOU feel about this choice of major and/or career? _____

What other academic areas do you hope will be pursued in college? _____

Do you think your daughter works better when challenged by tough classes and bright classmates, or when near the top of a less competitive group? _____

How hard do you think your daughter works in high school? See choices below:

- Very hard (maybe too hard at times)
- Hard (especially the night before tests and term papers)
- Somewhat hard
- What's work? Life's a beach!

How hard do you think your daughter expects to work in college? (use the same scale above) _____

What other special academic focus or programs appeal to you (military, agricultural, or technical institution; study abroad opportunities; etc)? _____

Is having your daughter attend a perceived prestigious college important to you? _____

Is it equally, more, or less important to your daughter? _____

IV. Finances

***Have you had an honest conversation with your daughter about how you can help her with financing her college education? _____ This is extremely important.**

Will cost influence where your daughter attends college? _____

Are you planning to apply for financial aid? _____

How much money, if any, have you set aside for college expenses for your daughter? _____

What amount do you expect your daughter to contribute from earnings and assets? _____

V. Campus Life

What extracurricular activities do you hope your daughter will pursue in college? _____

Would you prefer a college with a reputation for being conservative? _____ Liberal? _____

Does not matter? _____

How do you feel about fraternities and sororities? _____

How do you expect weekends will be spent? See choices below. Check all that apply:

- Coming home (with the laundry)
- With the high school boyfriend
- Studying
- Some study; some socializing
- Partying
- Working (as in making \$\$\$)
- Playing/watching college sports

VI. Living Situation

Would you prefer your daughter to live at home? _____

In a single-sex dorm? In a coed dorm? _____

In a sorority house? _____

How will your daughter do with a roommate? _____

How about more than one? _____

Does dorm size matter? _____

Would you mind an off-campus apartment? _____

Other living situation considerations? _____

Where do you think your daughter prefers or expects to live? _____

VII. Et Cetera

Name five things not mentioned yet that you think your daughter “can’t live without” at college (vegetarian food; wheelchair ramps; a French-speaking dorm):

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

VIII. Getting Personal

What are your daughter’s ACT test scores?

GPA? _____

If “5” is “most selective” and “1” is “not at all selective,” to which level of colleges do you expect your daughter to apply? _____ Which do you think are likely to say yes? _____

Why do you want your daughter to go to college? _____

Do you think she should go straight from high school? _____

Do you have specific schools in mind that you’d like your daughter to consider? _____

If so, which ones? _____

What aspects of the college admission process and of having your daughter actually going to college are you most apprehensive about? _____

Which are you most looking forward to? _____

Which aspects of the college selection/admission process are likely to cause friction between you and your daughter?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Do you think your daughter feels pressure from you to attend a specific school or type of school? Explain:

Who do you think should decide which college your daughter should attend? See choices below:

- She should. Period.
- She should (with strong parental input).
- She should (with some parental input).
- Parent(s) (with some input from kids).
- Duchesne College Counselor.
- The “Friends” network.

Hopefully, this exercise will help you think about your own feelings as you work with your daughter to help her through the discernment of choosing a college. Feel free to share this survey with her as you make plans for college visits!

Student Name:

6. Something you need to know about my daughter is...

7. Is there anything you wish to add which would help me in writing the letter? e.g. educational background, special family situation, special medical history, personal achievements, etc.

8. Does your daughter have a learning disability that has warranted special accommodations?
If so, do I have your permission to discuss it in the school letter as a way of providing context for her academic performance? (This is something you may want to discuss in person.)

9. Are there any family-related factors that will influence your daughter's college decision?

10. Please list any particular colleges you would like your daughter to consider:

Testing Information

STANDARDIZED TESTS

An important part of the application for college is made up of standardized test scores. Students need to schedule their testing plan keeping the following in mind:

- All schools all over the country take either ACT or SAT.
- Students can retake the tests and schools will take the highest scores.
- Mrs. Swanson advises all juniors to wait and to take ACT in the spring of junior year.
- Preparation for the tests is recommended to familiarize students with the testing format. Test prep options are listed on the Duchesne Academy College Counseling website.
- Early Action and Early Decision candidates need to be especially careful in planning testing because fall testing options are not that plentiful.
- SAT Subject Tests are achievement tests that used to be required by highly competitive colleges. Many colleges are no longer recommending students take these tests. However, students should check the website of their prospective schools for updates on testing requirements.
- Duchesne will offer the ACT to all juniors in the spring of their junior year.
- Many schools have adopted a test-optional policy. This means that students can choose whether to report their standardized test scores as part of their application. If a student is considering this strategy, she should discuss this with Mrs. Swanson.
- It is the student's responsibility to sign up to take the tests and have the scores reported to Duchesne and to her colleges. Duchesne's school code is: 281685.
- Please note that standardized test scores are NOT included on the official transcript. Students are responsible for sending all their official test scores to their colleges.

Visiting Colleges

Selecting a college is one of the most important decisions a person can make, and **it is hard to imagine someone making a \$75,000 - \$200,000 investment in a school without seeing it and investigating it thoroughly!** The college visit is one of the best ways to ensure a “good fit” between the institution and the student. Some students visit colleges during the summer or during the winter break, while others wait until all of their options are known before visiting. If you visit colleges in the summer, you will be able to get to more campuses but will not see the students. However, visiting in the summer is far better than not visiting at all!

Planning the Visit:

1. Make a list of the colleges you want to see
2. Make travel plans allowing at least 4 hours at each college. Find out the distances between the schools and time needed to get from place to place
3. Call the admissions office to make appointments at least three weeks in advance
4. Ask to have college information sent to you before you make the trip. Thoroughly review materials about the college so you will be prepared with questions
5. Ask if it is possible for you to spend the night in a dormitory and/or visit classes
6. Ask if there is anything you need to bring with you (resume, transcript, etc.)

What to Include on the College Visit

1. A tour - call ahead to get a time and place to meet group
2. At least one meal or snack in the cafeteria to see students
3. A meeting with a professor in your area of interest
4. Free time to wander around the campus and observe activities
5. A reading of the student newspaper to find out about issues on campus
6. A visit to a class that interests you, if there is time
7. An overnight stay in a dormitory while parents stay in a hotel
8. An interview if there is time (some schools will offer interviews in your own city through local alums and other schools do not hold interviews at all)
9. Make it a point to meet with the college representative for Duchesne
10. Connect with Duchesne graduates attending the college

Areas to investigate:

Geographic area

Housing, including study and dining facilities, student organizations

Library

Types of programs available (academic and extracurricular)

Academic pressure and competitiveness

Lecture and entertainment series

Advisory program (Students? Faculty? Professional Counselors?)

Health services

Students' attitudes, interests and feelings about the school

Student- faculty ratios and relationships

Security

Mrs. Swanson is very happy to help you:

1. Call colleges and connect you with our representative
2. Plan trips with suggestions of other schools
3. Prepare for interviews

Follow-up

1. Take notes immediately after each visit as details tend to blend together and become confused as you visit more than one campus.
2. Write a thank-you note to your interviewer or tour guide.

Hints on Obtaining Money for College Scholarships and Financial Aid

- Money for college is either “gift money,” i.e. money that does not need to be paid back, or loans.
- Gift money is awarded for merit or financial need. Leadership, service, talent and academic record can all bring scholarships.
- In looking for scholarships, it is important to note that colleges differ greatly in their policies toward awarding scholarships. Some schools offer no merit based scholarships - all aid is awarded based on financial need. Other schools have heavy endowments and give a great deal of merit based scholarship aid. If money is a big issue in looking for colleges, a student should check out ALL scholarship policies and possibilities when conducting her college search.
- Education Quest in Rockbrook Village is a wonderful place to find out about all types of funding options for college. It is a free service that Mrs. Swanson highly recommends.
- In order to apply for government money the FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid) must be filled out yearly. The results of the FAFSA are sent free of charge to all of the schools being considered. **Some schools still require the FAFSA if a student is applying for scholarships of any kind even if a family will not qualify for need based financial aid.**
- Some colleges also require the CSS Profile. It can be filed as early as October of senior year. You can access this online at <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org>. There is a fee to file this document.
- Mrs. Swanson highly recommends applying to more colleges if funding is an issue. Scholarship packages vary greatly and this gives a family more to consider.
- PRIORITY APPLICATION DEADLINES ARE ESSENTIAL if a student is applying for scholarships. Some of these are as early as November 1. A student could be admitted to a school after this date but no scholarships will be considered.
- Most often financial aid packages are made up of scholarships, grants, loans and work-study. The bottom line can be the same but the proportion of the package in gift money can be vastly different among several schools.

Financial Aid Worksheet

Estimated First-Year College Costs

Tuition	
Fees	
Books and Supplies	
Room and Board	
Transportation and Travel	
Personal	
Medical and Dental	
Miscellaneous	
Other	
TOTAL	

Financial Aid Tools

FAFSA

What is federal student aid?

Federal student aid is financial assistance that's available through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid. Students must be enrolled in an eligible program at a college participating in the federal student aid programs.

Federal student aid covers college expenses such as tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. This aid can also help pay for a computer and dependent child care expenses. Research non-federal aid early (ideally, start in the spring of junior year of high school). You can estimate eligibility for federal aid by using the FAFSA4caster. Apply online at <https://studentaid.gov>

How do I apply for federal student aid?

Step 1

Get free information and help from Mrs. Swanson, the financial aid office at the college you plan to attend, or the U.S. Depart of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid at <https://studentaid.gov/> or 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243). Free help is available anytime during the application process. Never pay for help. **

Step 2

Get a Federal Student Aid ID. An ID # lets you electronically sign your online Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), make corrections to your application information, and more - all online.

Step 3

Collect the documents needed to apply, including income tax returns and W-2 forms (and other records of income). A full list of what you need is at <https://studentaid.gov/>. Tax return not completed at the time you apply? Estimate the tax information, apply, and correct the information later.

Step 4

Submit a FAFSA electronically. Please check the deadlines for submitting your information at each college to which your daughter is applying. Every college has a different deadline for FAFSA filing.

Step 5

Federal Student Aid will send you a Student Aid Report (SAR) - the result of your FAFSA. Review your SAR, and, if necessary, make changes or corrections and submit your SAR for reprocessing.

** The FAFSA is being revised for the 2023/2024 school year. Please check the website for information**

Step 6

If you are selected for a process called verification, your college's financial aid office may ask you to submit tax returns and other documents, as appropriate. Be sure to meet the college's deadlines, or your federal student aid will be delayed.

Step 7

Whether you're selected for verification or not, make sure the financial aid office at the college has all the information needed to determine eligibility.

Step 8

Contact your college's financial aid office if you have any questions about the aid being offered. First-time applicants: Review the award information from all of the colleges to compare amounts and types of aid being offered. Decide which college to attend based on a combination of (a) how well the college suits your needs and (b) its affordability after all aid is taken into account.

When do I apply?

As soon as possible after its October 1 release, complete and submit your FAFSA® form along with any other financial aid applications your chosen school(s) may require. You should submit your FAFSA form by the deadline of the schools to which you are applying, CHECK THE WEBSITES OF THE COLLEGES FOR DEADLINES. DO NOT FILE BEFORE OCTOBER 1ST.

CSS PROFILE

WHAT is the PROFILE?

The PROFILE is an online application that collects information used by certain colleges and scholarship programs to award institutional aid funds. (All federal funds are awarded based on the FAFSA.) Some colleges may require additional information, such as tax returns or an institutional application. If parents are divorced, some colleges will also require the noncustodial parent to complete the Noncustodial PROFILE.

The College Board collects a fee to process the CSS/Financial Aid PROFILE® (PROFILE). You should only submit a PROFILE if the college or scholarship program instructs you to do so. The College Board provides free assistance should you have questions about the process, the application, or the questions found on the application. See link for more information. <https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/>

What do I really need to know about the financial aid process?

PREPARE

Learn about federal student aid programs and what's available to you. You can use FAFSA4caster to increase your knowledge of the financial aid process; become familiar with the various types of federal student aid that are available; and investigate other sources of aid, such as grants and scholarships. Be sure to check the financial aid page of every college website for the deadlines and forms required.

APPLY

This step is where many deserving students falter, either because they assume they won't qualify or because the FAFSA may seem complex and difficult to complete. FAFSA4caster provides an opportunity for you to become familiar with many of the questions that are asked on the FAFSA, and you can use the FAFSA4caster to practice answering the questions online. Remember, it is always a good idea to apply. You may be surprised by the amount of aid for which you qualify. Many schools will require the FAFSA or CSS Profile for their scholarships and grants.

RECEIVE

The FAFSA office will inform you what sorts of aid you qualify for. Federal student aid may not cover all college expenses. Many financial aid packages include loans, both to students and parents.

REPAY

If aid is in the form of loans, you must repay these loans and become familiar with the repayment process. Student loans, unlike grants and work-study, are borrowed money that must be repaid, with interest, just like car loans and mortgages. You cannot have these loans canceled because you didn't like the education you received, didn't get a job in your field of study, or because you're having financial difficulty. Loans are legal obligations, so before you take out a student loan, think about the amount you'll have to repay over the years.

College Websites Worth Reviewing

www.educationquest.org: Provides free college planning services including financial aid advice. Office located in Rockbrook Village, Omaha.

www.fastweb.com: A scholarship search program. Information on local and federal aid, a “Q and A” section, a financial aid timeline, and a glossary are also included.

www.finaid.org: Includes information on scholarships, loans, and financial aid - governmental, college controlled, student profile based, etc. There are financial aid forms on-line, a “calculator” which helps you to figure out what your estimated family contribution will be - or if it is even worth your time to complete financial aid forms.

<https://studentaid.gov/> : Registration for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid along with answers to frequently asked questions about the financial aid process.

www.collegeboard.com: the College Board’s .com web site to register for the College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Profile. The CSS Profile is the application used to apply for nonfederal financial aid.

collegenet.com: search by key word or by profile.

collegeview.com: search by school or financial aid. Lists scholarships available from a school.

collegexpress.com: searches for school fit, scholarships and loans.

Petersons.com: College Picks; online practice tests for the GRE, GMAT, SAT, and TOEFL; financial aid database of scholarships, grants, and prizes.

campustours.com: Exactly what it sounds like: college tours, plus campus maps and web sites.

act.org: On-line registration for the American College Test (ACT). They have prep information, a college search program, and a financial aid estimator.

www.commonapp.org: The Common Application is accepted by over 500 schools. The application is completed online and submitted electronically.

www.allaboutcollege.com: This web site connects you to college web pages. Almost every college web site includes an application which can be downloaded or submitted online. Find the college, click on admissions, and look for application forms as part of the admissions web page.

ncaa.org: scholarships and internships by sport or division; links to NCAA schools; comprehensive; user friendly for athletes.

naia.org (national association of intercollegiate athletics): links to member schools web sites; lists of schools by sport

venturescholar.org: identifies high-achieving African-American, Black, Latino, Hispanic, and Native American high school and college students and provides them with recognition and information to increase their chances of pursuing careers in medicine and the allied health professions, science, engineering and mathematics.