



**2024-2025 College Planning Handbook**

# A Note from the Office of School Counseling

Dear Senior and Parent(s),

Congratulations! You are about to embark on the most exciting year at Snyder! It will be a busy year. So, we are here to help and support your plans. To that end, we have created the College Planning Handbook as your manual from early fall through graduation.

During the past three years, you have been able to strengthen, develop, explore and commit to your academics, extra-curricular activities, service, leadership and character. Now as a Senior, we strongly encourage you to initiate honest assessments and discussions with your family so as to pursue admission at institutions which best meet your post Snyder needs and goals.

Remember, as a Senior, **you are the primary and responsible person** for maintaining **communication** between college/military personnel, your parents and school counseling office. Your communication and organizational skills will be critical and expected.

Please make regular use of **Naviance** and the **School Counseling Google Classroom**, which include your College Planning Handbook and other research tools for college, career, and scholarship information. Transcripts are requested and sent through **Naviance**. Refer to **Naviance throughout** your entire Senior year to minimize errors and stress. Remember **Naviance** and **Google Classroom** include most **websites**, important **deadlines** and all Snyder **forms** you'll need, including the **Senior Plan Form** required for graduation.

The Office of School Counseling is here to support your plans and communications with colleges. Students, please keep all Senior appointments, stop by with questions and concerns or ask your parents to call or email us. We sincerely look forward to working with you. Again, Congratulations and God bless!

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## College Application Planning:

The Office of School Counseling provides college application, orientation and support. However, it is up to the student to take ownership of the process. Remember, your parents are supportive, but not responsible for your college application process.

Taking ownership of the college application includes:

- organization (timelines & documents\*)
- communication
- time management

\*\*\*Submit **copies of all admission and financial awards** to School Counseling when you receive them. Seniors must also complete the Senior Plan Form through Google Forms. This form is the official transcript request for the college you have chosen to attend. **The Senior Plan Form is due May 2, 2025 to the Office of School Counseling.**\*\*\*

## The Role of the Student

- **Communicate** regularly with college admission personnel, your parents and Snyder counselor.
- **Attend** individual or group meetings scheduled and share information with your parents.
- **Evaluate, Determine and Prioritize** your college criteria and preferences (self-assessment).
- **Research** college and/or military options (website, view books – many available in the Office of School Counseling).
- **Pre-register** to meet college admissions representatives during their scheduled Snyder campus visit. **Attend** college fairs.
- **Register** online and on time for standardized tests. Track test score status (released, sent or withheld). **Be aware of deadlines.**
- **Apply** for financial aid – **Be aware of requirements and deadlines.**
- **Finalize** your college list by October of senior year--keep the Office of School Counseling aware of any changes and requests from colleges.
- **Request** letters of recommendation (if required) politely from teachers or School Counselor in timely fashion.
- **Follow** all application procedures and requirements--submit supplementary materials, keep track of deadlines, adhere to requirements, keep copies of your applications, and note when materials are sent.

## Selecting Colleges

Complete 4 to 8 applications based on your high school credentials and undergraduate college admission criteria. Consider including 1 - 2 "reach schools", 2 - 4 "possible schools" and 2 "highly likely" admission probabilities. Most college applications should fall into "possible." Do not apply "just to see if you'll be accepted". Do not assume admission is a "sure thing". Remember admission is never guaranteed.

Admission probabilities:

- "Reach" colleges - student's credentials suggest that admission is unlikely. Some colleges are "reaches" for virtually every student, no matter how strong, because of the extraordinary selectivity of the institution. If accepted, student may or may not likely attend.
- "Possible" colleges - student's credentials and the college's admission profile suggest admissions possible. If accepted, student is likely to attend.
- "Likely" colleges - student's credentials suggest that admission is likely and the student would gladly go if admitted.

Your final short list must be discussed with your parents and shared with your counselor.

## Criteria for Considering Colleges:

### STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**Enrollment:** Total school size (freshman class, undergraduate, graduate)

1-5K small, 5-15K medium, 15K+large

**Retention:** Percentage of freshmen who enroll and earn a degree.

**Student Profile:** Male/female ratio. % commuter vs. resident. % on financial aid. % minorities. % of religious affiliations. Political affiliation, student interests, athletic opportunities and participation, etc.

### LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS

**Location:** Geographic region. Distance from home. Travel costs and convenience.

**Setting:** Urban, rural, suburban. Weather. Nearest city. Recreational opportunities.

**Facilities:** Technologies, libraries, labs, studios, practice rooms, computer access. Athletic and recreational facilities. Residence halls, cafeterias, off campus eateries and student center(s).

### COLLEGE TYPE AND PHILOSOPHY

**Type:** 2, 4 year. State/Private/Religious/College/University.

**Purpose:** Liberal Arts. Pre-professional business, education, fine arts, engineering, etc. Technical/Vocational.

**Philosophy:** Traditional/Progressive. Highly scholarly/Career-oriented. Comprehensive.

**Calendar:** Semester/trimester/quarter. Inter-term programs. Accelerated programs.

**Curriculum Requirements:** Core curriculum/flexible requirements.

Proportion of study to general education/concentration/student choice.

**Curriculum:** Majors offered in your areas of interest. Breadth and depth of courses offered.

Interdisciplinary courses/majors offered. Strength of departments.

**Independent Study:** Individual tutorials. Seminars. Senior projects. Research opportunities.

**Special Study:** Fieldwork. Internships. Exchange programs. Foreign study. Joint degree programs. Cooperative work/study plan. Pre-professional programs (law, medicine, etc.)

**Standards:** Degree requirements. Grading system. Honor Code. Accreditation.

## ADMISSIONS

**Selectivity:** Percentage of applicants offered admission. Range of test scores. Class rank of admitted freshmen.

## ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

**Faculty:** Percent with PhD's. Origins of degrees earned. Original faculty research/scholarship. Teaching course load. Undergraduate research opportunities. Emphasis on undergraduate teaching and learning.

**Faculty-Student Relationships:** Faculty:student ratio. Advising (major/minor). Accessibility. General support and assistance. Academic support and assistance (formal/informal). Departmental clubs, colloquia, student committee opportunities. Class size. Classes under 20 students/over 50 students. Opportunities for discussion/student participation/exchange of ideas.

**Academic Demands:** Workload. Course expectations. Type of assignments. Academic pressure/competition. Availability of classes. Ease of registration.

**Intellectual vitality:** Students' motivation toward learning. Flexibility/structure for study. Interest in political, social issues. Exchange of ideas.

**Career Preparation:** Pre-professional programs. Career assessment and advising. Internship opportunities. Undergraduate employment placement services. Graduate school advising and preparation. Percentage to go on to graduate school. Graduate school/employment placement.

## CAMPUS & STUDENT LIFE

**Types of students:** Diversity and tolerances. "Typical" student. Values - money/material possessions/social appearances.

**Campus Community:** Homogeneous. Pluralistic. Cohesive or fragmented. School spirit. Controversial campus issues. Liberal/directive/restrictive social policies. Percentage of commuters.

**Housing:** Predominantly large dorms/housing clusters/townhomes- student housing. Availability of singles/doubles/suites. Off-campus housing availability. Roommate selection process. Coed/same sex. Centralized/decentralized dining. Alternative dining programs.

**Campus Life:** Activities related to your interests. Social life, Greek life, sports, or other dominant interests. Clubs and organizations-traditional, creative, competitive, issue-oriented. Presence of religious, ethnic, or cultural groups. Cultural opportunities on campus or in community. Focus of social life on campus/fraternities/community/other colleges nearby/home. Athletic teams in Divisions I, II, III.

## **COSTS & FINANCIAL AID**

**Costs:** Student budget for tuition, books, lab, tech. fees/room & board/books and personal expenses/travel costs.

**Family Resources:** What can your family afford?

**Awards:** Percentage of students receiving aid. Types of awards (academic, athletic, service, need based). Range of awards. Average award.

**Financial Aid:** Based on need/merit/or funds available. Loan and job expectations.

**Application:** State of Florida – Bright Futures, Federal Government FAFSA. As part of FAFSA, some colleges require FAFSA PROFILE. Deadlines for State, Federal and other financial aid applications. Civic, private, religious, corporate scholarship opportunities.

## **Writing College Application Essays**

Most every college or university requires at least one essay. Essays are critical to your application. Topics are broadly defined (the generic "Tell us about yourself" essay), or more narrow in scope ("If you undertook to write a book what would it be about?"). Colleges want to learn about your accomplishments, goals, passions, insights and experiences (including lessons learned from mistakes.) The idea is to capture your individuality and convey it to the reader(s). Warmth, directness, and humility - (if genuine) - are qualities that shine. Cynicism and

"cutesiness" are generally unattractive. Humor frequently flops and "laundry lists" of activities and clichés should be avoided. Following are notes from Bill Hiss, former Dean of Admissions at Bates College, on writing college application essays.

1. Importance for colleges:
  - A. *To judge depth of students' understanding of intellectual or social issues, quality and freshness of mind, "lighting up" of issues referred to skeletally elsewhere in application.*
  - B. *To show writing style, technical correctness, fluency (sentence subordination, paragraph construction/unity, vocabulary, metaphorical versus concrete language, etc.)*
2. Subject: Anything of real interest to the student. It should light up another part of the folder.
  - A. *Autobiographical: Be careful of the obvious "How my trip to France taught me independence." but if reflective (travel, significant personal struggle, or family experience) can be a very impressive subject.*
  - B. *Social/political: Ought to be tied to previous student interests. An essay on devotion to environmentalism as an abstract idea carries little weight.*
  - C. *Intellectual interests: Response to works of a particular author; research in certain areas, places where the student has outgrown and reached beyond his/her curriculum.*
3. Length: More than 2/3 of a page, and usually less than three pages to ensure being read carefully.
4. Format:
  - a. Neat, readable, typed or hand written (or word processed)
  - b. Physically prepared by student him/herself (not dad's/mom's secretary, even as typed -- it raises doubts about editorial overlays.)
5. \*For weak writers/poor scorers:
  - a. Take real care; start in summer or September; rewrite frequently.
  - b. Ask if it is accepted or required to send one to three extra writing samples; in and out-of-class work, with teachers' comments.
6. \*Weighted by college: Often as a confirmer of decision if other credentials clear. Essay can be a powerful "tipper" in close cases, especially with very strong or very poor essays. Warning: Faculty admissions readers pay careful attention to essays. As eventual consumers they are vociferous complainers about admitting students with dull or error riddled essays.

## Letters of Recommendation

Many college applications and scholarship applications ask for letters of recommendations. Choose the teacher or other person who will best be able to highlight your success and who is willing and able to write a full and descriptive recommendation. Choose one who has recent experiences with you to draw on.

- Ask someone who knows you well
- Ask early
- Ask personally
- Provide all necessary materials
- Waive your right to read the letter
- Send a thank-you note

SOURCE: Peterson's College Quick Find and Peterson's Application Organizer



### **When asking someone to write a recommendation:**

- Give the person you are asking plenty of notice.
- Complete the Letter of Recommendation Request Form (found on Naviance or in School Counseling) and give to the person writing a recommendation to use as a guideline.
- Make sure the person writing the recommendation is clear on what to do with it when it is completed.

### **Application “Tips” - “Proofs” - “Must Do’s”:**

SOURCE: National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC)



In an admissions report from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Education Council the following reminder was given to future applicants:

"People do not apply to colleges; folders do. The folder and application are a single opportunity to influence process. Approach each aspect of the application as an opportunity. **Devote time** and thought to each of the various portions."

As you think about your folder circulating among an admissions committee, consider the following:

- **Read every word of the directions before you even print your name.**
- Demonstrate your **best** work - something of which you can be proud.
- Essays should be error-free, thoughtful, logical and organized. Do not overreach. Use comfortable vocabulary. Be yourself. "The essay should say something the rest of the application doesn't say, or at least should elaborate on something the application barely suggests; a talent, an interest, thought on world or local problems, a personal accomplishment."
- Be yourself - do not write what you think the admissions office wants. The committee reading your application wants to know you - whatever you think and do. No matter how ordinary you feel, your folder represents a different individual from all the others.
- Use specific examples when describing your interests and achievements. Explain your involvement - why the things you chose to discuss are important to you. It is better to emphasize the degree of involvement in a few activities than a long list of superficial interests.
- Why are you going to college? To learn? To learn what? Why? A college should be convinced that you truly want an education. Avoid simplistic answers and reasons. If you want to be an engineer, for example, cite an experience from your own life of deed and thought that led you to this present choice.
- If humor is part of your style and personality, consider using it.
- Typing or printing is acceptable. In some cases, you will be required to write an essay in your own handwriting. Neatness and legibility are obviously essential.
- **Proofread.** Spelling errors are unacceptable.
- Photo copies (clear ones) are perfectly acceptable, but sign each one individually. Your name should be on each page or article submitted in addition to the applications.
- **Proofread again!**
- Remember the college application is a legal document. Falsifying information or submitting work that is not your own is considered fraud and may disqualify your application for admission.

## Standardized Tests

If at least one SAT with Writing and one ACT with Writing score is not on file with Snyder and colleges to which you will apply, you **must register online** asap **to test at least once** prior to each colleges' admission deadline. Registration information (fees and fee waiver eligibility) is available in the Office of School Counseling or on the College Board (SAT) website

[www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org) and ACT [www.actstudent.org](http://www.actstudent.org). Indicate the Snyder high school code or CEEB (100819) when registering.

Preparation for SAT/ACT can range in price and forms. Formats may include: working independently using College Board and/or ACT prep books, taking practice tests (online), private group prep courses, and/or private individual or small group tutoring. Snyder does not endorse any particular test prep organization or tutor.

**REMEMBER:**

Colleges and Universities consider test scores sent at your request by each testing agency (SAT or ACT). It is the student's responsibility to send test scores to each college by (1) indicating a college as a score recipient at the time you register to take a test, or (2) requesting that scores be sent directly to the colleges, scholarship programs, or [NCAA Clearinghouse](#) after testing and student has received scores. *You must update where you want the scores sent each time you take the test(s).* All of these transactions may be completed online.

## **Important Tips “Perils of Senioritis”**

- Colleges pay close attention to choice of Senior year courses and to your Senior academic performance in the seventh semester of high school. It is not wise to "lighten up" in the Senior year. An upward trend in the senior year can be helpful in the admissions process whereas a senior year slump can be extremely detrimental.
- Colleges reserve the right to revoke offers of admission or to place admitted/matriculated students on academic probation if eighth semester (final transcript/after graduation) grades fall dramatically. Avoid extreme changes in effort during the last semester.
- Inform your counselor if a college notifies you that your file is incomplete.

## **Financial Aid**

- It is the student's primary responsibility to seek financial resources. Be **prepared to dedicate a significant amount of time** to financial research.
- Students should apply for financial aid even if they aren't certain they'll qualify. Financial aid will not be offered unless an application is submitted.
- Most financial aid is awarded on the basis of need (this is called "need-based aid"). Academic scholarships get the most publicity, but the bulk of financial aid goes to students who can demonstrate "financial need": financial need is simply the difference

between the amount the family can pay--as calculated from the financial information in the application--and the cost of attendance.

- Family income is not the only factor used in determining how much a family can pay. How much the family can pay depends partly on family income, but other factors such as family size, number of children in college, and other expenses also are considered.
- Colleges expect both students and parents to contribute toward college costs. Financial aid is intended to supplement, not replace, a family's own resources.
- Students may receive different amounts or types of financial aid from different colleges. Even colleges that cost about the same may offer a student different types and amounts of aid, usually because their policies for awarding financial aid differ.
- The college that offers the most aid, or whose award letter arrives first, may not be the best one for the student to attend. Educational, not financial, considerations should remain central factors in selecting a college.

#### FEDERAL AID:

- Most colleges will expect that you will file at least one form: the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- This form is available online only and is filed **after October 1st**.
- This is the application for federal student financial aid used to determine a student's eligibility for federal grant, loan, and work funds.
- This is processed at no cost and applications are accepted online at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov).

#### STATE:

- Submit an **online** completed Florida Financial Aid Application for **Florida Bright Futures** and other state grants/scholarships at [www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org](http://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org)
- The application gives the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) permission to evaluate your high school transcript and test scores for eligibility for a Bright Futures and other state scholarships and grants.
- **You must apply after October 1st, during your last year in high school, before graduation, or you will forfeit all future eligibility for a Bright Futures Scholarship.**

NOTE: Many private colleges will request an additional form such as an Institutional Financial Aid Form or a form known as PROFILE. The PROFILE is produced and processed by the College Scholarship Service (CSS), a division of the College Board (the SAT people). This form is available in early fall and typically asks for more specific information about assets and home equity. The individual institutions may then send an additional list of questions specific to their criteria for determining financial aid eligibility.