

INCARNATE WORD ACADEMY

College Guide 2025 – 2026

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Quick Information:

Official size of class of 2023:	51
IWA School Code:	443-330
Graduation Date:	May 16, 2026
Class Rank:	Incarnate Word Academy does not rank
GPA:	Weighted GPA, 4.0 scale
College Counselor name:	Dr. Talia M. Pennington-Dorsey
College Counselor email:	tpennington-dorsey@incarnateword.org

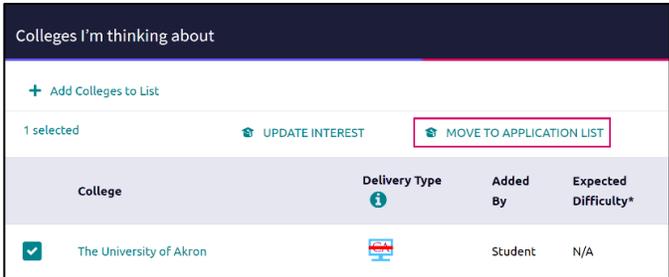
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Senior Year To Do List

Summer

Many of these tasks appear later on the checklist, but if you can accomplish them over the summer, notice how your to-do list will shrink in the fall!

	<p>Consider taking some of the self-assessments in Naviance such as Strengths Explorer, Career Interest Profiler, or Do What You Are 2.0. You can access these in Naviance by going to the tab labeled “About Me” and selecting any of these options under “My Assessments.” Another option is through YouScience, where students can get assistance connecting talents and skills with careers.</p>
	<p>First, use “Colleges I’m thinking about” in Naviance to build your college list. Discuss the list with your family and narrow it down to the colleges you are most interested in attending. A good balance can come from 8-10 schools on your list however, your college list should FIT your post secondary goals. Build the college list that is right for YOU.</p>
	<p>When you have finalized your list, make a chart for each college using the template in the back of this document to track application requirements. This will help you remember passwords, essay requirements, recommendation requirements, etc. Note: Colleges may track data such as visits to your applicant portal as a measure of demonstrated interest, which can factor into admissions decisions.</p> <p>Look up deadlines, essay topics and recommendation requirements and put them in your chart.</p>
	<p>Add your colleges to “Colleges I’m Applying To” in Naviance. Be sure that you mark how you are applying (Common App, Apply Texas, or directly to the institution).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Colleges I’m Applying To” will be available later in the summer after Naviance recognizes you as a senior. From Naviance Student, navigate to Colleges > Colleges I’m Thinking About. 2. Place check marks in the checkboxes next to the schools to which you are applying. 3. Click Move to Application List. 
	<p>If you are using the Common App, type in the email address you used on Common App and your birthday and click “match.” Important note: Use your personal email address for all application items. Do not use your IWA account as you may need to refer to this communication during your college career. Then, log into Common App and complete the FERPA waiver. Colleges prefer that you check that you waive your right to see your letters of recommendation. This language can sound scary, but checking yes only means you will not expect that the colleges will allow you to read your recommendations after you start college. See the Naviance section of this guide for step-by-step instructions of how to complete the FERPA waiver and complete the Common App “match.”</p>
	<p>Register for the SAT or ACT if you plan to take it again. Check now for upcoming deadlines.</p>
	<p>If you don’t plan on taking the SAT or ACT again, send your official scores to the colleges you are applying to. Send scores via the College Board or ACT website where you registered for the exam. If schools on your list are test optional or test blind, you will not be penalized for choosing this option.</p>

	Create your Apply Texas and/or Common App accounts. Try to fill out the basic application before the first day of school (and prior to August 1st), and make a list of questions for the college counselor.
	Fill out the teacher letter of recommendation request form so you are ready to ask in August. Give some thought to your answers. Remember, this is to help your recommender offer specific and persuasive details.
	If you haven't done so already, fill out the counselor letter of recommendation request survey from the college counselor: Counselor Recommendation Survey Just like for the teacher recommendations, give some thought to your answers. Remember, this is to help your recommender offer specific and persuasive details.
	If possible, visit colleges on your list. Come prepared—do research on the school ahead of time, present yourself professionally, be prepared with questions. There are no perfect set of questions; ask about things that matter to you and your college decision. *Virtual tours are still great options..
	If you're applying to Texas A&M or the University of Texas, prioritize those essay prompts and those applications. Submit your application as early as possible while still doing a thorough job. It's imperative that you apply early to these large competitive colleges. Consider making the end of September your deadline for UT and A&M.
	As you finalize your list, move them to "Colleges I'm applying to" in Naviance. To request transcripts, click on "request transcripts" at the top of the screen on the "Colleges I'm applying to" screen. IWA will begin sending transcripts in mid August.
	Polish your essays and write any remaining essays. Ask a couple of people for their feedback, but not too many people or the feedback may be overwhelming.

August-September

	Make sure you have all applications required for college admission and financial aid/ know what application the school requires. Put this in your chart.
	Look up deadlines and put them in your chart.
	Sign up for a one-on-one meeting with the college counselor before the end of September . During this meeting, we will go over your transcript and make sure your list of colleges is appropriate to your academic and personal record.
	Register for the SAT or ACT if you plan to take it again. Be mindful of registration deadlines.
	Request recommendations at least four weeks before they are due. Ask politely-- don't assume he or she will write a letter. Send a thank you note and keep the recommender posted on your plans. Give the recommender: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Resume -Recommendation request form -Stamped, addressed envelope if it will be mailed -If it will be done electronically, make sure colleges are in the "Colleges I'm applying to" on Naviance and that you've selected that teacher to write a recommendation on Naviance (but ALWAYS

	ask first in person).
	Visit colleges and attend college fairs/ IWA campus visits. Come prepared—do research on the school ahead of time, present yourself professionally, be prepared with questions.
	To request transcripts, click on “request transcripts” at the top of the screen on the “Colleges I’m applying to” screen. IWA will begin sending transcripts in August.
	Continue to polish your essays.
	Get good grades 😊

October-November

	Complete and return your FAFSA as quickly as possible after it opens on October 1 . Check to make sure your college or state does not require any other financial aid forms. Some schools may require a CSS Profile . If they do, contact the college’s financial aid office.
	If you completed a FAFSA, you should receive your Student Aid Report (SAR) within four weeks after submitting the FAFSA. Review the SAR carefully and check for any inaccuracies. If necessary, correct any items on the SAR and return it to the FAFSA processor (if a college transmitted your data directly, notify the college of any change).
	Attend Catholic College Night at Strake Jesuit . Again, come prepared and professionally dressed. There will be a lot of colleges there, so make a plan in advance of what colleges you really want to visit. Print labels with your name and address so you don’t have to spend your time filling out your information on their postcards.
	Keep an eye on your application deadlines. Submit your applications well before the deadline to allow time for problems that might occur.
	If you’re applying Early action or Early decision, submit your applications well in advance of the deadline. Remember, if you are accepted under the Early decision option, you are expected to enroll at that college and to withdraw all other applications. Submit financial aid information if requested from early decision/action candidates. *If you are considering Early decision, please speak with the college counselor first.
	Have official test scores sent by the testing agency to colleges on your list. Remember that it takes some time for the colleges to receive the scores, so you should request them early.
	To request transcripts, click on “request transcripts” at the top of the screen on the “Colleges I’m applying to” screen.
	Check to see if the college you are applying to requires any additional financial aid forms.
	Meet with the college counselor to review your final list of colleges. Be sure you have all bases covered. It is a good idea to make copies of everything before you drop those envelopes in the mail or print what you submitted online. If for some reason your application gets lost, you will have a back-up copy.
	Keep getting good grades!

December

	December 1 —Application deadline at the University of Texas and Texas A&M
	Have official test scores sent to colleges on your list if you choose to do so. Note: Some schools have chosen to remain test optional.
	Meet with the college counselor again to review your final list of colleges. Be sure you have all bases covered. It is a good idea to make copies of everything before you drop those envelopes in the mail or print what you submitted online. If for some reason your application gets lost, you will have a back-up copy. File your last college application.
	If you applied for early decision, you should have an answer by now. If you are accepted, follow the instructions for admitted students. If the decision is deferred until spring or you are denied, continue to submit applications now to other colleges.
	Submit copies of acceptance and denial letters to the college counselor for school records. Submit letters regarding awarded scholarships to the college counselor.

January-March

	Keep working in your classes! Grades and courses continue to count throughout the senior year.
	Remember to monitor your applications to be sure that all materials are sent and received on time and that they are complete. Stay on top of things and don't procrastinate; you can ruin your chances for admission by missing a deadline.
	Complete scholarship applications. You may be eligible for more scholarships than you think, so apply for as many as you can.
	Submit copies of acceptance and denial letters to the college counselor for school records. Continue to submit letters regarding awarded scholarships to the college counselor.
	Enjoy your final year in high school, but don't catch senioritis!

April-May

	Review your college acceptances and financial aid awards. Be sure to compare financial aid packages in your decision-making process. If you are positive you will not enroll at one or more of the colleges which accepted you, please notify those colleges that you have selected another college. Keeping colleges abreast of your plans might enable those colleges to admit someone else. If you know which college you will attend, send your tuition deposit and follow all other instructions for admitted students. You must decide which offer of admission to accept by May 1 (postmark date).
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	May 1 --decide on the one college that you will attend. By May 1, send in your tuition deposit to the college you will attend. Notify the other colleges that accepted you that you have selected another college.
	If your first-choice college places you on their waiting list, do not lose all hope. Some students are admitted off the waiting list. Talk with the college counselor and contact the college to let them know you are still very interested. Keep the college updated on your activities.
	Prepare for AP Exams and request that your scores be sent to the college you will attend.
	Keep Naviance updated with acceptances and denials for school records. Submit information regarding awarded scholarships to the college counselor via Google Form.

Documents Required for College Admissions

IWA Documents

IWA will send the following documents. We use Common Application and NACAC forms unless otherwise requested by individual colleges.

1. Official transcript with senior courses listed
2. Up to two teacher letters of recommendation with teacher evaluation forms
3. One College Counselor recommendation with Secondary School Report (SSR)
4. Incarnate Word Academy School Profile
5. Mid-year transcript (in January)
6. Final transcript (after graduation)

Your college counselor sends the above documents electronically, except where schools require a printed copy. These documents will be sent to every college that the student lists in **Naviance Colleges' List**.

Student Documentation Responsibilities

- ✓ Complete and submit all application materials online including; application fees, the actual application, a detailed resume when possible, and all required and/or optional essays.
- ✓ Send SAT and/or ACT w/Writing test scores.
- ✓ Send AP test scores to your enrolling college if the score is 3 or above.



When planning to take the SAT, SAT subject tests, or ACT w/Writing, *send test scores at least three weeks before deadlines*, or you may need to rush scores. Scores must be received before deadlines.

Here are procedures for sending scores:

<http://www.actstudent.org/scores/send/>
<http://sat.collegeboard.org/scores/send-sat-scores>
<http://apscore.collegeboard.org/scores/>

IWA's School Code is 443-330.

Supplemental Essays and Scholarship Application: Check the Common Application website and university websites to determine if your colleges have additional essays and scholarship forms that must be completed. Be sure to check due dates.

Resume: You must fill out the activities section on the Common App and the extracurricular activities, community service, awards and honors, and employment sections on Apply Texas. UT and A&M highly recommend uploading a more detailed resume, and many other colleges will accept a mailed, emailed, or uploaded resume as well.

Once your application is accepted, you will need to create a student account on each college website.

Remember to keep track of usernames and passwords!

Residence Hall Room Deposit: Check university requirements for details on deposits and refunds. You may only deposit at one college. You must deposit at a college by **May 1st** (in most cases) or you could relinquish your acceptance slot. If you are on a wait list, you must still deposit at another college in order to secure a spot for attendance.

You must notify the college counselor of all scholarship offers, admissions offers, denials, waitlists, etc., and your college decision, by May 1, 2026. This information is used in the graduation program.

Naviance

Click here for a [video overview](#) of Naviance Student.

Adding Colleges to Your Application List in Naviance

- 1) Go to the website: <http://student.naviance.com/incarnatewa>
 - a. Enter username and password
- 2) Click "Sign in."
- 3) Click the "Colleges" tab at the top of the screen.
- 4) Click the link "Colleges I am applying to"

The first time you click the "Colleges I am applying to" link, a form will appear titled "Important Privacy Information for Common Application." You must take the following steps for the Counseling Office to be able to successfully submit application materials. This waiver is asking you to waive your right to see your letters of recommendation once you start attending college.

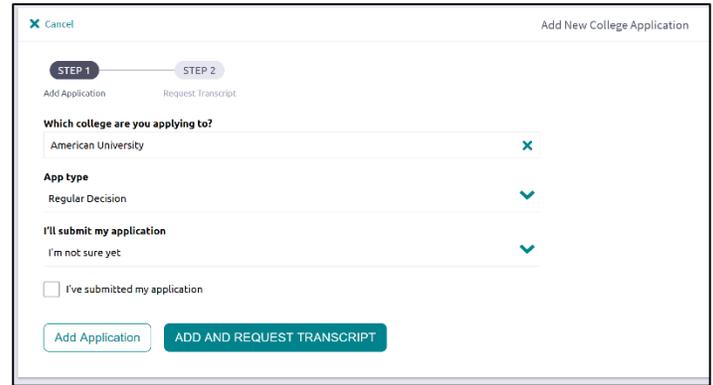
- a. Please click the circle next to "Yes, I do waive my right to access, and I understand I will never see this form or any other recommendations submitted by me or on my behalf."
- b. Click the box next to the statement: "By completing this form, I authorize all schools that I have attended to release all requested records ..."
- c. Enter your **Common Application** username and password in the boxes where indicated (see example above).

From Colleges I'm Applying To

4. Click the **Add** button (+ sign).

The Add New College Application, Step 1 Add Application displays.

5. From **Which college are you applying to?** use the drop-down or type the name of the desired college and select from the matches.
6. From **App Type** click the drop-down to identify your answer.
7. From **I'll submit my application?** click the drop-down to identify your answer.
8. If you have already sent in your application, select the checkbox labeled **I've submitted my application**. If not, leave it unchecked.



If you currently do not need to request transcripts, select **Add Application**.

How to Tell Whether a College Can Receive Documents Electronically

When you look at your list of colleges you are applying to in Naviance, there is a column titled "Submissions."

If the icon that appears in the submission column looks like either of the following:



The counselor will be able to submit transcripts and letters of recommendation electronically **provided the student is applying online using the Common Application (if the school is a Common Application member), or the college is a non-Common Application member but is set up to receive documents electronically through Naviance.**

If the submission icon looks like a postage stamp:



The college is not equipped to receive recommendations and transcripts electronically. For these colleges, give addressed and stamped envelopes for letters of recommendation to teachers.

FERPA and FERPA Waivers

What is FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

What is a FERPA waiver?

A FERPA waiver allows colleges to treat parts of your application as confidential. Colleges recommend and prefer that you waive FERPA rights to your application, and IWA requires that you do so before we send your letters of recommendation. You will do so in several ways during the application process, including online waivers for colleges and services like Common App.

How to Complete the FERPA Waiver

Once you have created a Common Application account, click on the “My College” tab, then on the left hand side, click on “Assign Recommenders.” The FERPA release waiver is the first item on that page. Click the blue text under the “FERPA Release Authorization” to complete the FERPA waiver.

Release Authorization

Clear
explanation of
FERPA

1 Instructions >

2 Form

The questions you will see on the next screen relate to your educational records. The first pertains to the transmission of your educational records from your secondary school(s) to the colleges to which you are applying. The second concerns your right of access to confidential letters of recommendation. Under the terms of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), you can review letters of recommendation and accompanying forms after you enroll at a postsecondary institution and only if that institution saves the documents post-enrollment. In a moment, you'll be asked if you wish to waive this right.

Why should you consider waiving your right of access? Waiving your right lets colleges know that you will never try to read your recommendations. That in turn reassures colleges that your recommenders have provided support that is candid and truthful. While you are free to respond as you wish, if you choose not to waive your right, some recommenders may decline your request, and some colleges may disregard letters submitted on your behalf. Remember, even if you retain your right of access, you still won't be able to view any recommendations until after you have been admitted to and enrolled in a college. In other words, FERPA does not give you the right to inspect recommendations before they are sent to your colleges.

After you make your selection, you will be able to invite your recommenders. Once you make the first invitation, you will not be able to change your response to the waiver question. To ensure that you fully understand the implications of your selection, we urge you not to answer the waiver question until you have consulted with your guidance counselor or another school official.

Release Authorization

1 Instructions > 2 Form

- I authorize every school that I have attended to release all requested records and recommendations to colleges to which I am applying for admission. I also authorize employees at these colleges to confidentially contact my current and former schools should they have questions about the information submitted on my behalf.

Please select one:

- I waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.
- I DO NOT waive my right to review all recommendations and supporting documents submitted by me or on my behalf.
- I understand that my decision pertains to all colleges to which I apply and that my **selections on this page cannot be changed once I invite a recommender.**

Signature Date

Matching your Common Application & Naviance Accounts:

Once you have completed these steps on the common application, you are now ready to MATCH (connect) your Common Application account to your Naviance Account. Matching the two accounts is an important step as it allows the high school to process your materials electronically! Click the link for a [video tutorial](#).

1. Log onto Naviance Student
2. Navigate to **Colleges > Colleges I'm Applying To**
3. If the accounts are not matched, a message will display at the top of the window, along with a **Match Accounts** button. **You must have a common application account created to do this step.**

The screenshot shows the Naviance Student web interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with "English", "Give feedback", "2 new messages", and "LOG OUT". Below this is a teal header with the Naviance logo and "Student" text, and a menu with "Home", "Courses", "Colleges", "Careers", "About Me", and "My Planner". The main content area is titled "Colleges I'm applying to" and includes a search bar. A prominent pink message box states: "It looks like you are not currently able to apply to Common App schools. Match your Common App account to Naviance Student account to get started." A white button labeled "Match Accounts" is positioned to the right of the message. At the bottom, there are links for "Manage Transcripts", "Application Milestones", "Compare Me", and a plus sign icon.

Letters of Recommendation

Tips

- Always ask politely in person for the letter of recommendation
- Bring the letter of request form and your resume
- Write a thank you note and let the recommender know where you decide to attend
- The college counselor will write you a counselor recommendation. She needs the letter of recommendation request form and your resume, but does not need envelopes.
- Letters are acceptable unless a college says not to send them specifically
- 1-2 letters are sufficient
- Letters should be written by teachers who have had you in junior or senior year and know you well

For schools that can receive letters of recommendation through Naviance (see the Naviance section of this document):

First, always ask politely and in person for letters of recommendation. Provide your recommender with the letter of recommendation request form, your resume, and addressed and stamped envelopes if they will be sent by mail.

1. After a teacher agrees to write a letter for you, log on to your Naviance account, go to the “Colleges” tab, and click on “colleges I’m applying to.”
2. Select “add/cancel requests” under Teacher Recommendations and select that teacher from the drop-down menu.
3. Write a thank you note to the teacher in the Personal note section, indicate your application deadline, and click “Update Requests.”

Click the link for a [video tutorial](#).

For schools that cannot receive letters of recommendation through Naviance:

First, always ask politely and in person for letters of recommendation. Provide your recommender with the letter of recommendation request form, your resume, and addressed and stamped envelopes.

ApplyTexas

ApplyTexas was created through a collaborative effort between the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the colleges and universities represented on the site. The goal of the project is to offer a centralized means for both Texas and non-Texas students to apply to the many outstanding postsecondary institutions available in Texas.

On ApplyTexas you can accomplish a multitude of tasks including:

- Apply for admission to any Texas public university, as well other participating Texas colleges.
- Copy a submitted application to another institution.
- Submit your application essays online.
- Apply for scholarships from participating universities.
- Search for and view both general and university specific information.

Please read through the informational pages of the ApplyTexas.org website before you begin.

Special ApplyTexas Reminders

When filling out an *ApplyTexas* application, do not check the box requesting that UT send your teachers online letters of recommendation. If you do so, your application will appear as deficient, even though it is not.

You must regularly check your application status online. Only by checking regularly will you be prompted to complete the section called “Self Reporting Transcript/Courses,” which is required of all applicants.

Coalition Application

The “Coalition Application” was created by an “unprecedented coalition of diverse public and private colleges and universities” who sought to improve the college admission application process for all students. The Coalition has developed a free platform of online tools to streamline the experience of applying to college and currently over 135 colleges and universities utilize the Coalition application.

You can sign up to use the Coalition Application at <https://www.coalitionforcollegeaccess.org/>.

Common Application

The **Common Application** (informally known as the **Common App**) is an undergraduate college admission application students use to apply to over 900 colleges and universities. Its mission is to encourage the use of “holistic admission,” a process that includes subjective factors gleaned from essays and recommendations alongside more objective criteria such as GPA and standardized testing.

Member colleges may also require a Common App Supplement, and ask additional questions of applicants.

Common App makes the process easier for applicants, and I highly recommend using it.

You can sign up to use Common App at www.commonapp.org.

College Visit Resources

All visits to IWA are posted on Naviance. Check often to sign up. Also, you are allowed four days during your senior year to visit colleges. Be sure to tell your teachers in advance and bring written proof to the school secretary when you return (a pamphlet, note from the representative, etc.). Come Prepared:

- **Do some preliminary research on the college or university**—if you already know the basic information about the school, you can gather more in-depth information from the representative. Plus, by asking in-depth questions rather than simple questions that can easily be answered on the college’s website, you are showing your preparedness and interest.
- **Present yourself professionally**—introduce yourself, show you’re prepared, and if you’re interested in the school, let them know!
- **Be prepared with questions**—think about what really matters to you and ask the questions that will help you determine if this school is a good fit for you. It can also be helpful to ask the same questions on each visit so you can compare like information.

Sample Questions to Ask College Representatives:

- How would you characterize the majority of students?
- From what economic background do most students come?
- What do students like most about the school? Least?
- What do the students do for fun?
- Do most students get involved in student organizations? Which organizations are most popular?
- What is the role of sororities and fraternities on campus?
- Is there a good balance between academics, social life, and activities?
- Is the campus empty on the weekends? How many students live on campus?
- What role do sports play on campus?
- Do the students like the food and residence halls?
- What sort of facilities does the student center offer?
- What role does technology play on campus?
- How would you rate the fitness center?
- What is distinctive about the education that the students receive?
- What is the most popular major?
- Are students generally enthusiastic about their classes?
- How would you characterize the academic pressure and workload?
- Are the faculty members engaged and accessible to students?
- Approximately what percentage of students who apply are admitted?
- Do many students go on to graduate and professional school?
- What is new on campus this year?
- Is there a “hot” issue that students are debating this year?

Other College Visit Tips:

- Try to set aside time when you can “blend in” with other students on campus. Send mom or dad for coffee so you can get a more authentic experience of the campus from a student perspective.
- Talk to students who *don't* work for the admissions office. They are likely to be more straightforward with you if they aren't getting paid to promote the school. Keep it positive, but ask straightforward questions like:
 - If you don't mind my asking, what was your main reason for coming here?
 - If you could change something about your experience at this college/university, what would it be?
 - What is something not on the tour that you think new/prospective students should know about?
- Ask the admissions office if you can audit a class (or simply try to sit in on a lecture for a subject you are interested in); this will give you a good idea for the instructional style and philosophy of the school.
- If you are looking at schools that are geographically different from Houston, make sure you visit during the coldest part of the year—you need to know if you can realistically handle the weather!

Frequently Asked Questions

When do I submit college applications?

Most college applications do not become available on-line until August. Students should complete all college applications during the months of August, September and October, especially for highly selective schools and competitive state institutions.

When do I apply for financial aid with colleges?

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available by **October 31st** of the senior year. The FAFSA can be found at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Students and families are encouraged to complete this form as soon thereafter as possible. Each college sets its own deadline. Some more selective institutions also require the CSS Profile in addition to the FAFSA. The CSS Profile is available at www.profileonline.collegeboard.com. Check with the financial aid office of your school to find out if the Profile is required.

What is IWA's CEEB code?

443-330

How many students are in the class of 2026?

51

What is my class rank?

Like most private schools and more and more public schools, IWA is a non-ranking school. We do not report class rank to students/parents or to colleges.

What is my GPA on a 4.0 scale?

Your GPA is already on a weighted 4.0 scale. If a college asks for your GPA on a 4.0 scale, report your GPA as it has been given to you even if it is over 4.0. If they ask for an "unweighted GPA" recalculate your GPA giving yourself no extra points for honors or AP classes.

On the Common App it asks for GPA scale and whether or not it's weighted. What do I put?

The scale is 4.0 and it's weighted.

How do I know if I'm in the top 10% or the top 25% for admissions purposes?

While IWA does not rank, you can ask the college counselor if you fall into these categories.

Apply Texas asks if I'm graduating under the Recommended or Distinguished program—what do I put?

List that you are under the Recommended program.

Apply Texas asks for the number of college credits I have. What should I put?

List only classes you have either taken independently at a community college and dual credit hours. The college will factor in AP credit when you enroll.

Apply Texas asks what colleges I've attended. Do I count AP credits?

No, only classes you actually took at a college.

What do I do if there aren't enough spaces for all of my classes when the application asks for my schedule?

You can leave something off that the college does not require you to have taken, like Theology or Study Hall in most cases. Then, when they see your transcript, they will see all of the classes you have taken.

Should I mail a copy of my resume in addition to the electronic resume?

If you don't think you've been able to accurately display what you have accomplished on the electronic resume and the college does not say not to, send your resume.

Should I do the optional essay?

To give yourself the best advantage, do anything that says it is optional.

How do I find scholarships?

The majority of money you receive will come directly from the college you choose to attend. Once you have applied for financial aid, you will want to check your desired colleges' websites for scholarships available to their prospective students. Scholarship opportunities that come through my office are advertised on the scholarship link of the Naviance Student. All students and parents have access to this site. Lastly, if you have the time and energy, there are some general scholarship databases such as www.scholarships.com and fastweb.com that you can search. It is your responsibility to research and apply to scholarships if you so choose.

When should I register for the SAT?

We recommend that all students take the SAT for the first time during the second semester of the junior year. There are test dates 7 times per year, always on Saturday mornings. You must register online at www.collegeboard.com a month in advance of the actual test date. If accommodations are needed, please see the School Counselor.

Should I take the SAT more than once?

Most students will take the SAT multiple times to try to achieve a better score. Colleges consistently tell us that they are looking for the best scores, and encourage students to retest. Many private colleges will "super score," meaning they will take the best sub scores from multiple test dates to create a super score.

Should I take the ACT as well?

We highly recommend that students take both the SAT and the ACT. All colleges accept both scores and weigh them equally. Some students will naturally do better on one over the other. Therefore, try them both to see which test is better for you. When registering for the ACT, you have the option to sign up for the writing section. Register online at www.act.org. The test is offered on Saturday mornings, 6 times per year.

College Admissions Vocabulary

College List Building and Balance:

Reach: Colleges where you have a 25% chance of being admitted. Important note: Schools with less than 20% acceptance are a reach for everyone.

Match/Target: A match or target school is a college or university where you have a 25-50% chance of being admitted. Keep in mind that there is no guarantee that you will be admitted to a target school, but you should feel good about your chances of admission.

Safety: Colleges and universities where you have greater than a 75% chance of admission.

Admissions Decisions:

Admit - You're in! You are being offered admission to the college to which you applied. Let your college counselor know the good news.

Deny - You are not in. The decision is made by the college or university admissions committee and is sent to you. You should report this decision to your college counselor.

Wait list - You are not in yet but have been placed on a waiting list in case an opening becomes available. Usually you have the option to accept a spot on the waitlist or not. Some colleges admit many students from the waitlist, some admit a few, and some admit none. Sometimes colleges will notify waitlisted students once they have finished drawing from that list.

Deferred acceptance - Your admissions decision is being moved to a later date. Usually you applied Early Action or Early Decision, but will be moved to the Regular Decision pool, and may be accepted or denied from there.

Award Package - This is the way colleges and universities deliver their news about student eligibility for financial aid or grants. The most common packages include Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, and Work Study (see below).

Bachelor or Baccalaureate Degree - The degree received after the satisfactory completion of a full-time program of study or its part-time equivalent at a college or university. The Bachelor of Arts (B.A) and the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) are the most common baccalaureate degrees.

"Best Fit" - The college search is not about getting into the best college. There is no school that is best for all students. Some students do best at large public universities; some do best in small liberal arts colleges; still others want to study far from home. Students should look beyond the big name schools or the ones friends are excited about and do their own research.

Candidates Reply Date Agreement (CRDA) - If admitted to a college, a student does not have to reply until May 1. This allows time to hear from all the colleges to which the student applied before having to make a commitment to any of them. This is especially important because financial aid packages vary from one school to another, and the CRDA allows time to compare packages before deciding.

College Scholarship Service (CSS) - The College Board created this program to assist postsecondary institutions, state scholarship programs, and other organizations in measuring a family's financial strength and analyzing its ability to contribute to college costs. CSS processes the PROFILE financial form that students may use to apply for non federal aid. This form is submitted to many private colleges and universities along with the FAFSA when seeking financial aid from these institutions. Participating colleges and universities indicate whether they require this form.

Common Application - The Common Application is presently accepted by nearly 700 independent colleges and some public universities. The colleges and universities that accept the Common App give it equal weight with their own application forms; many colleges use only the Common App. Students complete the information on the Common App and then submit it to any of the schools listed as accepting it. Some schools will require supplementary information to be completed by the applicant; these supplements are usually accessed through the Common App. The Common App is online.

Cost of Education - This includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses. A student's financial aid eligibility is the difference between the cost of education and the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) as computed by the federal government using the FAFSA.

Course Load - The credit hours a student takes in each semester. Twelve credit hours is usually the minimum to be considered a full-time student. The average course load per semester is often 16 credit hours.

Credit Hours - The hours per week that college courses meet are counted as equivalent credits for financial aid and used to determine your status as a full- or part-time student status.

Double Major - Available at most schools, the double major allows a student to complete all the requirements to simultaneously earn a major in two fields.

Early Action (EA) - Many colleges offer the EA option. A student applies to a school early in the senior year, usually between October 15 and January 15, and requests an early application review and notification of admission. The answer usually takes three to four weeks after application. If accepted, the student is not obligated to attend that institution but can bank this admission and still apply to other colleges during the regular admission cycle. Some selective colleges offer Single Choice Early Action (SCEA) or Restricted Early Action (REA) which allow students to apply to only one college early. Please read the fine print to be sure you are in compliance with all restrictions, and discuss early applications with your counselor.

Early Admission - Some colleges will admit certain students who have not completed high school, usually exceptional juniors. The students are enrolled full-time and do not complete their senior year of high school. Colleges usually award high school diplomas to these students after they have completed a certain number of college-level courses.

Early Decision (ED) - Sometimes confused with Early Action, the Early Decision plan allows students to apply to an institution early in the senior year, usually between October 30 and January 15, and request an early notification of admission. The student and college counselor sign a contract with the school at the time of application that indicates that if accepted, the student is obligated to attend that institution. Some colleges and universities offer both ED and EA options.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - The amount of financial support a family is expected to contribute toward a child's college education. This amount is part of the formula used by the federal government to determine financial aid eligibility using the FAFSA form.

Federal Pell Grant Program - This is a federally sponsored and administered program that provides grants based on need to undergraduate students. Congress annually sets the appropriation; award amounts vary based on need, and the maximum award for is approximately \$6,095. This is "free" money because it does not need to be repaid.

Federal Perkins Loan Program - This is a federally run program based on need and administered by a college's financial aid office. This program offers low-interest loans for undergraduate study. Repayment does not begin until 9 months after the borrower drops to less than halftime enrollment status. The maximum loan amount is \$5,500 per year.

Federal Stafford Loan - This federal program provides low-interest loans for undergraduate and graduate students. The maximum annual loan amount depends on the student's grade level and on whether the loan is subsidized or unsubsidized. The interest is currently 4.66%. Repayment does not begin until 6 months after the borrower drops to less than halftime enrollment status. Several repayment options are available.

Federal Work-Study Program (FSW) - A federally financed program that arranges for students to combine employment and college study; the employment may be an integral part of the academic program (as in cooperative education or internships) or simply a means of paying for college.

Gap - The difference between the amount of a financial aid package and the cost of attending a college or university. The student and his/her family are expected to fill the gap.

Grants/Scholarships - These are financial awards that are usually dispensed by the financial aid offices of colleges and universities. The awards may be need- or merit-based. Most are need-based. Merit-based awards may be awarded on the basis of excellence in academics, leadership, volunteerism, athletic ability, or special talent.

Honors Program - Honors programs offer an enriched, top-quality educational experience that often includes small class size, custom-designed courses, mentoring, enriched individualized learning, hands-on research, and publishing opportunities. A handpicked faculty guides students through the program. Honors programs are a great way to attend a large school that offers enhanced social and recreational opportunities while receiving an Ivy League-like education at a reduced cost.

Internship - This is an experience-based opportunity, most often scheduled during breaks in the academic calendar, whereby a student receives credit for a supervised work experience related to his or her major.

Major - The concentration of a number of credit hours in a specific subject. Colleges and universities often specify the number of credits needed to receive a major, the sequence of courses, and the level of course necessary to complete the requirements.

Merit Awards, Merit-Based Scholarships - More "free" money, these awards are based on excellence in academics, leadership, volunteerism, athletic ability, and other areas determined by the granting organization, which can be a college or university, an organization, or an individual. They are not based on financial need.

Minor - An area of concentration with fewer credits than a major. The minor can be related to the major area of concentration or not; for example, an English major may have a minor in theater.

Need Blind - Admissions decisions made without reference to a student's financial aid request, that is, an applicant's financial need is not known to the committee at the time of decision.

Non-Matriculated - A student who has either not been admitted, but is taking classes or has been academically dismissed. Under this category, a student may neither receive financial aid nor participate in an athletic program at that school.

Open Admissions - A policy of admission that does not subject applicants to a review of their academic qualifications. Many public junior/community colleges admit students under this guideline; that is, any student with a high school diploma or its equivalent is admitted.

Residency Requirement - The term has more than one meaning. It can refer to the fact that a college may require a specific number of courses to be taken on campus to receive a degree from the school, or the phrase can mean the time, by law, that is required for a person to reside in the state to be considered eligible for in-state tuition at one of its public colleges or universities.

Retention Rate - The number and percentage of students returning for the sophomore year.

Rolling Admissions - A college begins admitting students as soon as applications are received. There may or may not be an application deadline. This concept is used most often by state universities. Responses are received within three to four weeks. If admitted, a student is not required to confirm until May 1. Out-of-state residents applying to state universities should apply as early as possible.

Student Aid Report (SAR) - Report of the government's review of a student's FAFSA. The SAR is sent to the student and released electronically to the schools that the student listed. The SAR does not supply a real money figure for aid but indicates whether the student is eligible.

Student-designed major - Students design their own majors under this policy offered at some (usually private) colleges. It offers students the opportunity to develop nontraditional options not available in the existing catalog of majors.

Test Blind - Schools do not look at ACT/SAT scores for admission, even if scores are sent in with applications.

Test Optional - Schools that do not require SAT/ACT scores for admission. Instead, you must decide whether or not your test results are an accurate representation of your academic ability and potential.

Transcript - This is the official document containing the record of a student's academic performance history. Incarnate Word issues transcripts on request, and they are certified by the signature of the school's officer, and an official seal and stationery.

There are two types of transcript: **official** and **unofficial**. Most colleges require you to submit an official transcript when you apply. **Official transcripts** have to be sent directly from IWA to your college, either by mail or through an electronic documents system like Naviance. You can request official transcripts through Naviance Student.

A transcript you print or copy yourself is always unofficial. If you just want to look at the information your transcript includes for your own personal use, an **unofficial transcript** is fine. **Important note:** Several colleges will accept student-submitted scans of your unofficial transcript during the application process. These "Digital Transcripts" are available in your NetClassroom portal. Using your digital transcript will help you expedite your application and keep your online application portal current.

Transfer Program - This program is usually found in a two-year college or in a four-year college that offers associate degrees. It allows a student to continue his or her studies in a four-year college by maintaining

designated criteria set down at acceptance to the two-year program. It is not necessary to earn an associate degree to transfer.

Virtual Visit - This is the use of the Internet to investigate various colleges by looking at their home pages. A student can "tour" the college, ask questions via email, read school newspapers, and explore course offerings and major requirements online. It is not a substitute for a live visit.

Yield - The percentage of accepted students who will enter a college or university in the freshman class; these students have received formal acceptance notices and must respond by May 1 with their intention to enroll. The more competitive the school, the higher the yield percentage.

Incarnate Word Academy

Teacher Letter of Recommendation Request



STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS:

- Politely ask for your recommendation, in person, at least four weeks before it needs to be submitted. If the teacher accepts, have a conversation about where you are applying.
- Give the recommender your resume and addressed and stamped envelopes if the recommendation will be submitted via mail. You do not need to include envelopes for counselor recommendations. Check Naviance to see if the recommendation is sent electronically or through the mail.
- After a teacher agrees to write a letter for you, log on to your Naviance account, go to the “Colleges” tab, and click on “Colleges I’m Applying to.” Select “add/cancel requests” under Teacher Recommendations and select that teacher from the drop-down menu. Click “Update Requests.”
- Follow up with a handwritten thank you note. In the spring, let your recommenders know which college you will be attending.

Please fill in this form as completely as possible. Your teacher will be able to write a more persuasive recommendation if you include specific instances to refresh your recommender’s memory and remind him/her of important and interesting contributions that you made in class or to IWA.

Full Name _____

Birth date _____ **Anticipated major** _____

Possible career path _____

Date you anticipate submitting applications: _____

Explain something meaningful or insightful you have contributed to this teacher’s class:

What is something that you have read, discussed or learned about in *this* teacher’s class that has had an impact on your thinking?

How have you grown in this subject area during your time at IWA?

How are you different now than you were when you started at IWA?

Other information you want to share with your recommender: