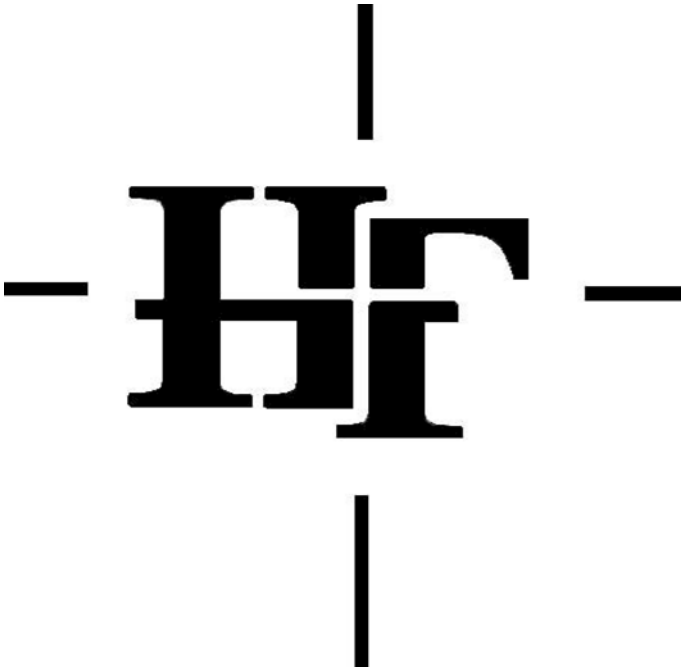


College Planning Handbook

Prepared by HF College Counseling
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Introduction

College counseling is guidance in preparing for and learning about college, making appropriate college choices, applying for admission and financial aid, deciding among options, and making the transition to college life. It takes place throughout all four years of high school.

Holy Family High School encourages each student to seek a college or university that will challenge him/her intellectually and emotionally. Our primary intent is to ensure that each graduate is admitted to a quality school which will best suit his/her needs.

The college application process can be intense and lengthy. It can also be confusing and anxiety ridden. It is a time when you are asked to evaluate yourself in ways you may not have done before. It is a time when you will be making important life decisions that will affect who you become in the future. It is important that you are open to learning throughout the process and willing to ask and listen to where God is calling you to go next.

The decision where to attend college is a personal one. Though the final decision involves your parents, the work involved is YOUR responsibility. This manual was prepared to provide you with answers to questions you might have as you go through this process. The more you know, the better you are able to take control and the greater likelihood that you will make informed and appropriate decisions.

In making college choices, students are encouraged to seek the greatest challenge, select the best opportunities, explore new horizons, and look for the right "fit". Remember, God has a plan for your life. Through prayer involve Him in your decision making and trust that He is working all things for your good.

While you ultimately make these decisions, remember that there are people ready and willing to assist and guide you. Do not be afraid to ask questions and seek help when you need it.

College Admission 101

College applications ask for a lot of information. They request your transcript, SAT & ACT scores, resume of in and out of school activities, essay, and recommendation letters.

Transcript:
The first thing an admission officer does is review your transcript. They will be looking for:

- Curriculum. What classes did you take? Did you challenge yourself?
- What are your grades? What are your grade trends?
- Pursuing a curriculum that challenges a student throughout their high school career typically advantages that student in terms of college admission and success as a student in college.

Test Scores:
Second, an admission officer will look at your standardized test scores. *Many colleges offer test optional admission!

- Colleges that require test scores accept both the ACT and the SAT. Please be sure to check requirements!
- Most colleges will evaluate you using your highest subject test score from all tests. It is in your best interest to take both tests more than once. Ideally you should take both twice before your senior year begins.
- The PSAT and PreACT will help prepare you for the ACT and the SAT and give you an idea of what you need to concentrate on studying. Take both tests seriously.
- Please refer to page 15 for test prep information and links

College admission officers will tell you that each applicant is evaluated individually. What they mean is that in evaluating the remaining criteria (resume, recommendations, essays), some factors will be weighed more heavily than others for each student depending on that student's strengths.

Resume: See page 22 for sample resume

- Highlight your leadership and commitment. Include the amount of time you commit to each activity, how long you stick with each activity, the leadership roles you take on, and the contributions you made.
- Get involved early in high school. It will make achieving leadership easier.
- Record your involvement using SCOIR. You are able to export this information into a resume.
- Include hobbies and be sure and account for activities you are involved in outside of HFHS.

Essay:

- Highlight something about you that the admissions office will not learn elsewhere in your application.
- This is your chance to shine and convince them that you will be a contributor on their campus.
- The typical question is "Tell us about a significant person, moment, activity, or experience in your life and how it affected you." The most important part of that question is "and how it affected you."
    - Start keeping a list of important moments in your life now! That way when you are a senior you will have essay topics ready to go.

Letters of Recommendation:

- Ask teachers who know you well and can give you a good recommendation based on your interactions with them in class and activities. Check with your college counselor to help decide who you ask.
- Do not ask a teacher who does not know you well. They will only, at best, give you a generic recommendation that will not add anything to your application.
- Counselor recommendations are requested more frequently than teacher recs. It is a good idea to get to know your college counselor. Be sure to complete the Student and Parent Brag Sheets.

That is how a college will evaluate you. You have to evaluate colleges to decide which ones you will grace with your application. Make sure you are applying to schools that fit your needs. Campus visits are the best way to figure out if you will like a school or not. (See page 14 for more details on Campus visits)

Planning Calendar

Your entire High School career prepares you for college. Each year is an opportunity to focus on different aspects that build on each other. The outline below lays out what the priorities are for each year. As you get into your junior and senior years the priorities become more specific. Using this guide will help you be prepared for each step.

Freshman Year

Grades

- Plan your curriculum carefully to meet college requirements. Consult your counselor when it is time to select courses for the next year.
- It is important to start high school on the right foot. Be sure that you are doing the work required of you in each of your classes.
- Building relationships with your teachers offers many benefits. Do your best and ask for assistance as needed.
- Establish your study habits early. The later you are in your high school career, the tougher it is to make improvements in your GPA.

Involvement

- Look for opportunities to develop non-academic skills such as: leadership, creativity, responsibility, special talents, and individuality.
- The earlier you become involved in activities, the easier it will be to achieve leadership roles in those activities.
- The more activities you try early, the easier it will be to determine which activities hold the most interest to you.
- Be a "doer" not a "joiner".
- Do what interests you and not what you think colleges would be interested in.

Sophomore Year

Curriculum

- Challenge yourself by taking honors classes if appropriate.
- You will have your first exposure to the SAT through the PSAT and take the PreACT for the second time.
  - Results of the PreACT, taken as a sophomore, offer a good predictor of a student's ACT score.
- Begin to include college campus visits as part of your family vacations, etc.
- Start attending college visits here at HFHS.

Junior Year

September

- Prepare for the PSAT.
  - The October test will be used to determine the National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists and Commended students. (See your college counselor for details)

October

- Attend the local college fairs.
- Attend college representative visits at HF.
- Take the PSAT/NMSQT in school.

November

- Meet with your college counselor to review your record and identify any areas of concern and to start the college conversation.

December

- Work on maintaining or improving your grades.
  - Grades from junior year and first semester of the senior year will be most important.
- Results of PSAT are returned to students.
  - Review your scores to help identify the areas you need to concentrate on in your preparation for the SAT.

January

- Begin preparation for SAT and ACT.
- Schedule a conference with your college counselor to begin the college selection process.
  - This meeting for juniors and their parents is designed to begin seriously considering specific schools.

February

- You will automatically be registered for the school-based ACT and SAT for the spring semester
- Register for summer SAT/ACT dates.
- Apply for Summer Pre-College Programs. (See page 9 for details)

April

- Schedule campus visits. (See page 14 for details)
- Explore different options:
  - ROTC
    - Gather information regarding admission and scholarships
  - U.S. Service Academies: West Point, Naval, Air Force, Coast Guard, or the Merchant Marine
    - For USMA, USNA, & USAFA you need three letters requesting a nomination, one for each of your senators and one to your congressperson. Form letters can be found on the Academies' websites.
  - Division I or II Athletics
    - Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse. This is required to make an "official" visit as a prospective student-athlete or to play at the Division I or II level. Register online at www.eligibilitycenter.org

May

- Do well on finals!

Pre-Senior Summer

June-July-August

- Discuss with your parents what your budget for college will be. Talking about finances is never easy but it is incredibly important!
- Start researching scholarships. See list in My Drive section in SCOIR.
- READ! READ! READ! This is the best way to improve your standardized test scores and academic performance.
- Visit college websites and look through college guidebooks.
- Make Campus Visits
- Read carefully the emails as well as brochures that you receive in the mail and review websites. They can be much more meaningful after you have been on campus.
- Work on your resume and essays!

Senior Year

August

- Complete military academy and ROTC applications.
- Register to retake the SAT, ACT. Over two-thirds of students improve the second time around.

September-October

- Start your applications.
  - Know what your deadlines are and plan so you can meet them.
  - Save all of your documents so you can use them for other applications.
  - Start your essays early and have someone else read them.
  - In SCOIR, add colleges to which you are applying, and request recommendations.
- Early decision or early action plan applications must be completed now.
- Keep your grades up.
  - Some colleges will wait to make a decision until after they have first semester senior grades.
- Complete your senior resume (See example on page 22) using SCOIR
- Schedule another meeting with your college counselor.
- Meet with the college reps from any school in which you are interested when they visit HFHS.
- Attend the local college fairs.

- Finish campus visits to your top schools. Arrange for permission for these trips with the HF office.
- Complete your FAFSA online at www.studentaid.gov. You may also need to complete the CSS Profile.

November

- Finish and turn in all of your applications.
  - Have your college counselor review your application before you submit it.
  - Make sure you put your best foot forward.

December

- Complete any applications which you still intend to submit.
- Register for the College Opportunity Fund if you have applied to in-state public colleges https://cof.college-assist.org/

January

- Expect to be contacted for an alumni interview by some colleges.

February-March

- Respond quickly to any requests from either admissions or financial aid offices for additional information.
- Be patient and wait; admissions offices are very busy, but if something significant develops which can enhance your chances for admission then let them know.

April

- Review all your acceptances and financial aid awards. Call the financial aid offices if you need clarification of your award or need to discuss the amount of your aid package.
- If you have any doubts about your decision, visit the colleges which have offered acceptances, stay overnight, go to class, talk to students and professors, and get a feel for the campus.
- By May 1, notify all colleges who have accepted you that you will or will not be enrolling.
  - Your enrollment deposit must also be paid by May 1 to the college you plan to attend. At some schools, the earlier you deposit, the higher priority your campus housing application receives. **Deposit at only one school.**

May

- May 1 is the deadline date for deposits for admission to most colleges.
- Keep grades strong and do well on Final Exams!
  - **Do not forget that all offers of admission are contingent upon you successfully completing your final semester. This means performing at the same level you did throughout high school.**
- Inform your college counselor of your choice, so your final official transcript is sent to the correct school.

Pre-College Programs

Most of these programs are designed for capable, highly motivated young men and women who have completed the 11th grade and who are intellectually prepared for college level work. The sessions usually run one to six weeks. Costs vary; a six-week session may run $3000 or more while other programs may only cost a hundred dollars. Application deadlines vary, but most are between January 15 and May 1. Classes are taught by college faculty.

In addition to your courses, the programs usually also feature workshops on selecting a college, pre-professional programs, career planning, college survival skills, and many diverse extracurricular activities.

These programs are widely recognized by college admissions committees. However, a student should not attend one because he thinks it will give him an "in" at a specific college. Admissions offices are clear that those who attend summer programs have no special connection. Rather, they value a new knowledge, experience, or creativity that these programs might help develop. They also strongly value work experience, volunteer activities, and unusual travel experiences which add to the profile of the student.

A list of programs can be found on the HF website as well as in the My Drive section of SCOIR.

College Selection Criteria

The following factors should be considered in narrowing your focus of colleges to which you plan on applying:

Size

- Large.
  - More than 8,000 undergraduate students. Typically offer more majors, activities, books in their libraries, computers on campus, and students in each class. Obviously, more students are competing for usage of labs and computers and leadership positions in extra-curricular activities.
- Medium.
  - Between 3,000 to 8,000 undergraduate students. Offer combination of small and large school strengths and weaknesses.
- Small.
  - Less than 3,000 undergraduate students. Usually offer small classes, more personal attention, fewer majors and activities, smaller libraries and computer centers, and greater opportunity for participation in student activities and/or sports.

Geography

- In what area of the country do you want to be?
- What type of climate do you prefer?
- Do you want to be in a city, suburb, or small town/rural area?

Personality

- Do you want a campus with a strong Catholic identity?
- Do you want a campus with liberal or conservative leanings?
- Do you want your campus to be politically active?
- Do you want a lot of diversity among the student population?
- Do you want your campus to be a very friendly place?
- "Fit" - Do you feel comfortable here? Will you for four years?

Level of Selectivity

- You are going to college to be intellectually challenged. Make sure that the students around you are as intelligent as you.
- Compare your GPA to the average GPA of students at schools you are considering (Understand that this is not always reported 100% accurately).
- Will the college's academic reputation help you in the future with graduate school applications and job hunting?
- Many colleges with names you may not be familiar with are well known in the academic community.

Major

- If you know what major you want to pursue make sure the colleges you are applying to offer it.
- If you are undecided apply to colleges that offer a wide variety of classes and plan to take general classes the first two years to help you decide what you would like to pursue. Most colleges do not require you to declare a major until the end of your sophomore year. However, without declaring a major you may be limited in the classes you can sign up for.
- SCOIR and www.mymajors.com offer career interest inventories and descriptions of programs, classes entailed, and careers it leads to for free.

Websites for College and Financial Aid Information

Most Recommended Websites	
College in Colorado	http://www.mycoloradojourney.com
SAT (College Board)	http://www.collegeboard.org
ACT	http://www.actstudent.org
Federal Financial Aid	http://www.studentaid.gov
Financial Aid - Comprehensive	http://www.finaid.org
Scholarship Search	http://www.scholarsnapp.org
Western Undergraduate Exchange	http://www.wiche.edu
NCAA	http://www.eligibilitycenter.org
Colorado Council	http://www.coloradocouncil.org
College Search	
College Board	http://www.collegeboard.org
Princeton Review	http://www.princetonreview.com
Catholic Colleges	http://www.catholiccollegesonline.org
Jesuit Colleges	http://www.ajcunet.edu
Colleges That Change Lives	http://www.ctcl.com
Safety & Security	http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool/
Newspapers	
Majors	http://www.mymajors.com
Fine Arts	http://www.portfolioday.net
Liberal Arts Colleges	http://www.liberalarts.org
Theatre Programs	http://collegedirectory.schooltheatre.org
Test Scores Optional	http://www.fairtest.org
U. S. News & World Report	http://www.usnews.com

Need-Based Financial Aid	
Financial Aid Information	http://www.finaid.org
FAFSA	FAFSA® Application | Federal Student Aid
FAFSA ID	StudentAid.gov/fsaid
Federal Government	http://www.studentaid.gov
Scholarships	
Fastweb	http://www.fastweb.com
Scholarships.com	http://www.scholarships.com
CollegeInvest	http://www.collegeinvest.org
Hispanic/Latino	http://www.hsf.net
Hispanic/Latino	http://www.hacu.net
Asian/Pacific Islander	Scholarships - APIA Scholars : APIA Scholars
Minority	http://www.free-4u.com/minority.htm
NASFAA	http://www.nasfaa.org
Scholarship Scams	http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0082-scholarship-and-financial-aid-scams
Sallie Mae	The Sallie Mae Smart Option Student Loan
ScholarSnapp	scholarships.collegeboard.org
Career	
O*Net	http://www.onetonline.org

Questions to ask College Reps

Based on your priorities and criteria for selecting a college rank the questions in the order that they are important to you to ensure that you get the most important questions answered.

Characteristics
___Where is the campus located?
___What is the surrounding community like? Does it support the school?
___Is the college public, private, or church affiliated?
___What is the current student enrollment?
___Does the college have a core requirement? What is it?

Academics
___What is the average class size? Largest? Smallest?
___What percent of freshmen return for the sophomore year?
___What is the average GPA of incoming freshmen?
___How are faculty advisors assigned?
___What services are available for undeclared/undecided students?
___What percent of students graduate in four years?
___Are classes taught by professors, graduate assistants, or both?
___Is there an honors program? What are the requirements?
___Do you offer study abroad programs?
___Are there opportunities for internships?
___Are there opportunities for hands on learning experiences?
___Do you partner with any local business to help students gain work experience in their field?
___Do you offer career planning and placement at graduation?

Student Life
___Where do most students come from?
___Do most students live on campus or commute? Is housing guaranteed?
___How are roommates assigned?
___What student activities (Intramural sports, clubs, student govt. etc.) are offered? What is most popular?
___Is there a Catholic Campus Ministry program on campus or nearby?
___Is there a Greek life on campus? What percent of students participate?
___What division are your athletics? What sports are offered?
___What sport has the most support from students? Is there a lot of school spirit?
___What is the male to female ratio?
___What percent of students live on campus?
___Are residence halls coed or single sex?
___What do most students do on the weekend?
___Do most of the students stay on campus over the weekend, or do they go home?
___Are freshmen allowed to have cars on campus?
___What kind of support do you offer to students with disabilities?
___Do your students have access to health care? How does it work?
___What percentage of the student body are from out of state verses in-state?

Admission
___What standardized tests are required?
___What scores are acceptable?
___Is a certain GPA required?
___How important are extracurricular activities?

___Do you require an essay?
___Do you require supplemental essays?
___Is there any early action or decision plan?
___On what basis are applicants accepted?
___What percent of applicants are accepted?
___Are personal interviews required?
___Are letters of recommendation required?
___Do certain majors have special admission requirements?
___What is the application deadline?
___Are you test optional?
___If you are a test optional school in regard to admissions are you also test optional with regard to scholarships?

Cost/Financial Aid
___What are the costs for tuition? Room and board? Other fees?
___What percent of students receive need-based financial aid?
___What percent receive academic scholarships?
___What would a typical freshman's financial aid package be?
___What percent of financial need do you meet?
___What financial aid applications are required? What are your deadlines?
___When are award letters received?
___Is there a tuition payment plan?
___Are campus jobs available to those who do not receive work study?
___How competitive are on campus jobs, both work study and non-work study?

The Campus Visit

The single best way to learn about a college is to visit their campus. Much can be learned from a campus tour, attending a couple classes, and talking to current students and faculty. The more colleges you visit the easier it will be to compare and contrast. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your college visit.

- Start visiting schools during your sophomore year.
- Visits can typically be scheduled by calling the admissions office or on the college's admission website.
- Go while school is in session. This will let you attend classes and experience what campus feels like with everyone on campus. Take note of the atmosphere and culture you see.
- Your campus tour will likely be led by a current student. This is your chance to get answers from a student perspective, take advantage.
- When available sit in on a class in your program and ask to meet with the head of the department or a professor.
- If you play a sport ask to meet with the coach and see that practice facility.
- Visit the library, bookstore, science labs, computer centers, the student center, visit a freshman dorm, and try to eat a meal in a campus cafeteria.
- Look at posters and advertisements around campus to get a feel for the culture and the events that they sponsor.
- Read the school newspaper.
- Find the career placement center and pick up interesting literature.
- While on campus talk to random students to get their perspective of the school. They will be the best representation of what campus life is like.

It is not necessary to visit every school in which you are interested before applying. But, before you decide to attend a particular institution it is critical that you visit.

The College Application

The application form is the initial step in applying to college. They are a large investment of time, energy, and money; make sure that your completed applications represent the best you have to offer.

What they will ask for:

- Biographical information (Full legal name, address, family background, etc.)
- Transcript and Senior Schedule
- SAT/ACT scores unless the college is test optional/test blind
- Extracurricular activities/Resume
- Work experience
- Future plans
- Academic interests
- Social security number
- Your HFHS school code (060415)
- Application fee (on average $50/ application)
- Personal statement or essay
- Letters of Recommendation from Counselor and possibly a teacher or two
- Name of your college counselor at HFHS

What you need to do:

- Take applications seriously.
- Know the deadlines for each application and meet them!
- Be honest, thorough, concise, neat, and attentive to directions.
- Complete their application. Most colleges use the Common Application. Commonapp.org
- Save all of your information and passwords.
- Request letters of recommendation at least three weeks before they are due in person and in SCOIR.
    - Only request from teachers who know you well.
    - Provide them with information about where you are applying and what needs to happen with the completed letter.
    - Thank them and keep them updated on admissions decisions.
- Request ACT/SAT scores through their websites. HF does not send test scores for students! To see if a college is test optional, please check FairTest.org
    - https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/scores/sending-scores/how-to-send
    - https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/scores/sending-your-scores.html
    - https://www.fairtest.org/

Standardized Tests

Most students have generally not approached college entrance tests with an appropriate level of seriousness and sophistication. In spite of more than half of U.S. Colleges and Universities being test-optional, these tests may remain a key factor in college admission and scholarship decisions. Failure to recognize and act on this fact can and has resulted in missed opportunities. As admission to the best colleges continues to become more selective and winning scholarships becomes more competitive, our students need to have more test savvy. You need to be aware that you are being compared to students who have taken the SAT and ACT two or three times and have been involved in extensive test preparation. You are responsible for sending test scores to colleges directly from ACT/SAT. HF does not send scores.

- **PreACT** (https://act.org/)
  - Taken Freshman and Sophomore Year
  - Registered and paid for by HFHS
  - Scores range from 1-35. The Composite is the average of the four section scores
  - PreACT scores predict how you will do on the ACT and help you identify what you need to concentrate on during your preparation for the ACT
- **PSAT** (www.collegeboard.org; www.khanacademy.org)
  - Taken Sophomore and Junior Year
  - Registered and paid for by HFHS
  - Scores range from 200-760 on each section
  - PSAT scores predict how you will do on the SAT and help you identify what you need to concentrate on during your preparation for the SAT
  - When you take the PSAT in October of your Junior year your scores enter you in the National Merit Scholarship Competition.
- **SAT** (www.collegeboard.org; www.khanacademy.org)
  - Taken 2nd semester of Junior year and 1st semester of Senior year
  - Scores range from 200-800
  - You are responsible for registration and payment
  - You will need the school code: 060415
- **ACT** (www.actstudent.org)
  - Taken 2nd semester of Junior year and 1st semester of Senior year
  - Composite scores range from 1-36 and sub-scores range from 1-18
  - You are responsible for registration and payment.
  - You will need the school code: 060415

Evidence shows that repeated testing and thorough preparation produce positive results. The test companies readily admit that students who are more familiar with the tests will have more accurate results. It is clear that students who have not spent time preparing are at a disadvantage.

Here are the recommended steps to follow before you take the PSAT & PreACT and again before you take the SAT & ACT:

- Carefully review the information provided by the test company. Take a full-length practice test.
- Take advantage of free online test preparation options. The best resources are collegeboard.org, khanacademy.org, actstudent.org, and mycoloradojourney.com.

Advanced Placement Exams

- Administered by the College Board to be taken upon completion of an AP course.
- Not typically part of the college admission process.
- Grading scale of 1-5
  - Depending on the score you receive on the exam, you may receive college credit or advanced standing.
- If you have taken an exam prior to your senior year and done well, send a copy of your score report to the colleges to which you are applying.
- HF students enrolled in AP courses are required to take the AP Exam.
- Students are responsible for paying the AP Exam fee which is currently $99. The cost for the AP Seminar and AP Research exams is $147. Payment is made to Holy Family High School which then sends payment to the College Board.

The Essay

A scintillating essay can make your application stand out from the rest of the pile on an admissions counselor's desk. Writing such an essay will take a lot of work, but the payoff is a letter of acceptance from a college you really want to attend. Plan to revise your essay a number of times. Have an English teacher and your college counselor critique it before you submit it.

What colleges are looking for:

- To get to know YOU!
- Ability
- Creativity
- Motivation
- Self-discipline
- Growth potential
- Organization
- Integrity
- Maturity
- Enthusiasm
- Do you fit in their culture
- Will you contribute to campus life through leadership, art, athletics, and service?

Typical questions include:

- Evaluate a significant experience or achievement that has special meaning to you.
- Discuss some issue of personal, local, national, or international concern and its importance to you.
- Indicate a person who has had a significant influence on you, and describe that influence.

What to write about:

- What you are passionate about!
- Class, extracurricular, or teacher at HF that has had a profound effect on you academically, personally, or spiritually. Describe the effect.
- Adversity. Show how you have overcome serious obstacles.
- Family. Source of strength, faith, fun, frustration, growth, love, etc.
- Retreat or conference that has had a real impact on you, your faith and values.
- Sibling. How you share, tease, fight, compete, love, grow, etc.
- A national issue. What is your position and why?
- Struggle or frustration to make an athletic team.
- Good and bad of a part time job. What have you learned about yourself from it?
- Volunteer experience. How did you change? How did it affect you?
- Travel experience. What did you learn about yourself or another culture?

Four elements to a good personal statement:

- Know that your story is interesting
- Relate the events to the greater human experience, a common moment that most of us have experienced
- Tell the story artfully
    - Establish why the story is important. The reader must get your idea and be able to follow your thoughts
- Write so that the reader is there with you.
    - Use quotes and be descriptive.
- https://www.commonapp.org/blog/common-app-announces-2024-2025-common-app-essay-prompts

Do not be afraid to discuss embarrassing moments or include humor. Make sure you describe your experience, analyze it, and draw conclusions about what it meant to you.

The Interview

The interview is an important facet of the information-gathering process between you and the college. In the interview, you have the opportunity to present interesting personal qualities which help the college evaluate you as an applicant. Additionally, the questions you ask in the interview will help you make a good decision about the college.
A few colleges have developed elaborate alumni networks and use them as interviewers of applicants. If you are not able to get on campus, an alumni interview may take the place of a campus interview. At the most selective colleges, check with the admissions office to determine whether or not an alumni interview is required or recommended.

How to prepare and what to expect:

- Be on time for your appointment.
- Be neat. A coat and tie or a dress is appropriate apparel.
- Be well prepared. Review the college website prior to your interview and prepare questions.
- Let your interviewer know you are applying for specific reasons. Know what the college has to offer and how you might contribute.
- Answer questions to the best of your knowledge and ability. Do not be afraid to admit you do not know something.
- Be ready to volunteer information. Know your GPA, standardized test scores, latest grades in the courses you are currently taking, and in what extracurricular activities you are involved.
- Be yourself. Do not pretend to be something or someone you are not. Be honest about your weaknesses as well as your strengths. The interviewer will likely know if you are bluffing or simply trying to make an impression.
- RELAX! Interviews are meant to be informative for everyone involved.

Questions to expect:

- What do you hope to gain from the college experience?
- Have you given any thought to why you are going to college?
- Are there skills you hope to acquire or improve?
- Which characteristics of this college are especially appealing to you?
- Have you researched the institution and found that it has elements of special interest to you?
- What do you hope to do at college outside of the classroom?
- What contributions do you hope to make to student life?
- What characteristics make you special or unique?
- How would your teachers describe you?
    - Hint: Ask a teacher or two before you interview.
- What are your concerns about the college selection process?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

Questions to ask:

- What percent of your freshmen return for the sophomore year, and why do the majority of students who leave before graduation leave?
- Does the institution live up to its promises?
- Which departments are most popular? Strongest?
- Do they have the breadth and depth of courses in your areas of special interest?
- Are there dominant departments or is there a sense of balance?
- Are research opportunities and internships available?
- How involved and interested are the students? How do various groups interact?
- What do your students tend to do immediately after graduation? (Apart from celebrate.)
- Are they getting the help they need to reach their post-graduate goals? What types of jobs are they taking? What are the professional and graduate school opportunities available to them?
- Is this college a good match for me?
- Do my academic and personal credentials fit within the range and scope of this college's student body?

Letters of Recommendation

Counselor and Teacher recommendations are required by most private and some public colleges. In addition, many scholarships require letters of recommendation. Only ask for letters if you need them.

Who should you ask?

- A teacher who knows you well both inside and outside the classroom.
- They should teach a subject in which you excel.
- They should be able to speak positively on your ability, motivation, participation, and behavior in and out of the classroom.

How to request a Letter of Recommendation:

- **Three weeks or more before the deadline** ask the teacher if they are willing to write the letter for you.
- If they agree, give them any forms they require and invite them as recommenders in SCOIR.
- Follow up with them a week before the deadline to make sure they have all of the information they need to submit the letter before the deadline.
- Send them a handwritten Thank You Card. This is not part of their job and it is good etiquette to learn for the job search process as well.

Important Reminders:

- Know your deadlines and communicate them to your recommenders!
    - It is your responsibility to turn the letters in on time, make sure you give them plenty of time to write the letter.
- Plan Ahead! October and November get very busy in the counseling center.
    - Requesting your letter early will help you meet the deadlines.

Joseph Q. Senior

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Extra-Curricular Activities

Student Council — 3 hours/week

12 - Chairman, Prom Committee
Researched venues and bands, negotiated contracts, chose theme, and planned decorations, etc.
11 - Class Representative
Planned annual Color Day and served as host of class competitions in the gym.
10 - Class Representative
Created fundraising competition for homeless. Raised $1500. Coordinated candy/flower gram fundraiser, $1200.

National Honors Society — 2 hours/week

12 - President, Peer tutor
Planned volunteer event X. Y people participated completing Z project for Q.
Assisted at school functions including open houses, plays, liturgies, etc. Raised $4000 for charities through...
11 – Member, Peer Tutor

Volunteering — 2 hours/week

12 - Claver House, food-distribution center
Sorted food and served meals
11 - St. Mary's School
Tutored inner-city elementary school students

Track — 30 hours/week, February - May

12 – Captain, Varsity Team
Set two School Records. State Champion in favorite event. Academic All-State Honorable Mention.
11 – Member, Varsity Team
All League Academic
10 – Member, JV/Varsity Team

Cross Country — 16-18 hours/week, August-November

12 - Member, Varsity Team
First Team All-Conference, Honorable Mention Academic All-State
11 - Member, Varsity Team
10 - Member, Junior Varsity Team

Spring Musical, Damn Yankees — 18 hours/week, January-April

12 - Student Director
Responsible for knowing all lines, songs, and blocking. Helped choreograph, designed stage, and designed lighting. Managed five stage hands.

Work

Panera — 10 hours/week

May 2012-Present – Cashier
Greet customers, complete transactions quickly and accurately, and prepare bakery items.

Financial Aid

With the total cost of many colleges now close to $50,000 per year, financial aid is a topic on all of our minds. Perhaps most important to keep in mind regarding financial aid is: You will not know whether or not you qualify for assistance, and you will not receive any aid, if you do not apply. There are two different types of financial assistance offered by colleges: need-based and merit-based. Need-based is more frequent.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

- Every school will require that you submit your FAFSA Form to be considered for aid.
- Go to www.studentaid.gov to fill the form out
- You may apply beginning October 1st of senior year.
- Visit www.studentaid.gov for information on the federal financial aid programs.

Many schools will ask you to complete the CSS/Financial Aid Profile (Profile), a second form which requires a processing fee. https://cssprofile.collegeboard.org/

Both forms are submitted to processors who then calculate your expected family contribution (EFC) and forward that information to you and any schools you have designated. The FAFSA calculations are based on federally legislated methodology. The Profile calculations take additional discretionary information into account. Some schools will require that you complete their own institutional form. Pay close attention to each school's deadlines and requirements.

The Financial Aid Office at each institution will take the information provided by the form processor and put together a financial aid package which will include some combination of grant, scholarship, loan, and work study. Unfortunately, an increasing number of schools are unable to meet 100% of the demonstrated need of their applicants. That means there might be a gap between what you can afford and what the college can provide you in assistance.

Types of Financial Aid

- Grants and scholarships
  - Are free money; they do not have to repaid.
  - The Pell Grant is the largest of the federal grant programs.
    - Awards of up to $7395
    - Determined by the information in your FAFSA
  - Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
    - Federal program for students with exceptional need.
    - Awards range from $100 to $4000.
- Loans (Must be repaid)
  - Need-based:
    - Subsidized Stafford Loan
      - Federal program based on need
      - Freshmen may borrow up to $5500, the amount increases for upperclassmen
      - Interest free until 6 months after the student graduates or discontinues his/her education
      - Current Interest Rate 6.53%
      - Repayment period is up to 10 years
  - Non Need Based
    - Unsubsidized Stafford Loans
      - Federal Program
      - Your school will determine how much you can borrow based on expected costs
      - Interest accumulates while you are a student, but payment can be deferred until after graduation.
      - Current Interest Rate 6.53%

        - Parent Loans to Undergraduate Students (PLUS) and Supplemental Loans to Students (SLS)
            - Federal Program
            - The maximum PLUS loan amount you can borrow is the cost of attendance (determined by the school) minus any other financial assistance received.
            - Interest rates are tied to the 52-week T-bill rate. Current Interest rate is 7.08%.
            - Interest accumulates while you are a student, but payment can be deferred until after graduation.
            - The repayment periods are five to ten years.
- Work Study
    - The program is funded by the Federal Government and administered by individual colleges. Not all colleges participate in the Work Study Program.
    - Jobs can by On-Campus or Off-Campus.
        - If the job is On-Campus it will be for a school department or agency.
        - If the job is Off-Campus the employer will usually be a private nonprofit organization or a public agency, and the work performed must be in the public interest.
    - The average work-study job is 10-12 hours/week.
    - Check www.studentaid.gov and www.finaid.org for much more detailed information.
- Merit Based Scholarships
    - Many colleges, especially private, have available scholarship money which is not awarded on the basis of need. It rewards some outstanding quality of accomplishment demonstrated by the student.
    - Most of these scholarships are awarded based on information provided in your application and require no additional work on your part.
    - A small number of these awards can only be found by thorough research of a college's website and literature. Students should check with departments about scholarship opportunities once they have decided on a major.
    - Many of these scholarships are designated for returning students rather than new students. You should check each year you are in school.
- Many privately funded scholarships are also awarded each year. As information on these awards is received by the Counseling Department, they are posted on www.holyfamilyhs.com under Academics then Counseling.

BEWARE of individuals and firms which claim to be able to uncover hidden riches. If you are wondering about whether or not to take advantage of one of these services, contact your college counselor. There are extensive and FREE scholarship searches available on the internet. (See previously listed web pages.) You should not have to pay to get Financial Aid or to find scholarships!

NET PRICE CALCULATORS

As of October 2011, colleges are required to provide net price calculators on their websites. The calculator will allow you to enter your grades and test scores then will provide an estimate of merit-based scholarships you might receive. And, it will allow you to enter income and family information then provide you with an estimate of need-based financial aid.

SUGGESTED LETTER OF INQUIRY FOR ATHLETES

(date)

Dear Coach,

(INTRO)
My name is( ). I am a (class year) at Holy Family High School in Broomfield, CO. I have been playing (sport) for ( ) years and have been a member of the Varsity team at Holy Family for ( ) years. I play (position). I have begun doing some research into college, and your school and program are of interest to me. (Reasons the school is interesting).

(ACADEMIC)
I have a ( ) GPA. My (standardized test) scores are ( ).

(ATHLETIC)
I am (height) and (weight). This year I (scored, ran, blah, blah, blah). I was named (honors and awards). Our team record was ( ).

(CONCLUSION)
I believe I could make a contribution to your team. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me or my coach(s). My coach is (coach's name). He/She can be reached at (phone number).

A short video of me playing can be found at the following link: (insert link).

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,

(full name)
(address)
(phone number)

NCAA INITIAL-ELIGIBILITY CLEARINGHOUSE

Any student-athlete wishing to participate in college athletics at the NCAA Division I or II level must register with the NCAA Initial-Eligibility Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse determines an athlete's eligibility status. Student-athletes should register online with the Clearinghouse at the end of their sophomore year in high school. www.eligibilitycenter.org. There is a brief form to complete and a fee. Inform Mr. Wilson after you've registered, and he will upload your transcript.

The Core Courses required by the Clearinghouse for Division I colleges for students entering college in 2016 and beyond are: 4 English, 3 Math, 2 Science, 1 additional of the previous, 2 Social Science, and 4 extra courses in above areas or foreign language, philosophy, or non-doctrinal religion (World Religions only at HF.). The minimum GPA requirement in those core courses is 2.3 for Division I and 2.2 for Division II.

GLOSSARY

ACT
A college entrance exam for upperclassmen required by most colleges. Consists of English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning sections. Each section is scored on a 1 - 36 point basis. Scores from each section are averaged to give a Composite score.

AP
Advanced Placement. Tests available to students who have taken AP courses in high school. Scores are based on a 1 - 5 scale, 5 is high. A score of 3 or higher will typically result in college credit.

Application
A formal document acquired from a specific institution which must be completed by the student, signed, and submitted by a specific deadline in order to gain admission. Read carefully; a deadline may be stated to be received or to be postmarked by a specific date.

Candidate Notification Date
The date by which a college notifies a student of the admission decision.

Candidate Reply Date
The date by which a student must notify the college of their enrollment intention (May 1 at most institutions).

CEEB Code
Six digit number used to identify each high school. Holy Family's is 060415.

Class Rank
A measure of academic performance determined by grade point average as compared to other members of the entire class.

COA
Cost of Attendance. Total cost for an academic year of study including direct and indirect costs (includes transportation, etc.).

Deferral
A college may postpone its admission decision pending more information on the student or a clearer differentiation among applicants.

Early Action
An admission plan whereby a student can submit an application by a particular deadline earlier than the college's regular deadline and receive a decision much earlier also. The early action student, if accepted, is not required to enroll. Students accepted early action still have until May 1 to determine and notify the school of their enrollment status.

Early Decision
An admission plan whereby a student can submit an application to his first choice school by a particular deadline earlier than the college's regular deadline and receive a decision much earlier also. The early decision student agrees to enroll if accepted and to withdraw any applications to other colleges. As an early decision applicant a student may only apply to other colleges under their regular admission plan. Students not admitted under early decision are usually reconsidered with the regular decision applicants.

FAFSA
Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Financial aid form, required by most colleges, to be completed by the student and parent and sent to the federal government for processing. Form must be completed between January 1st and February 15th. It is used to determine EFC. www.fafsa.ed.gov

Financial Aid Package
Payment option offer to a student in the form of grants, work study, and loans.

GPA
Grade Point Average. Calculated by multiplying number grade by amount of credit in each class and dividing that by total number of credits attempted. At HF an A is 4.0 and an F is 0. A grade with a plus or minus is 0.3 in the appropriate direction, except for A+. Honors and AP courses are weighted an extra point for grades of C- or better.

PreACT
Preliminary ACT. This test is given to all freshmen and sophomores at HF.

Profile
Financial aid form used by a small number of institutions to provide information in addition to that which is provided by the FAFSA. A processing fee is charged.

PSAT/NMSQT
Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Slightly easier and shorter version of the SAT. HF students take this test as sophomores and juniors. Only as a junior is this test the NMSQT.

Rolling Admission
Colleges with this procedure make a decision on your application as soon as it is received. Notification of their decision usually takes four to six weeks.

SAI
Student Aid Index. Based on Federal Methodology, the amount of money your family can afford to contribute toward your college education for the next academic year. This amount is determined by completing the FAFSA. www.studentaid.gov

SAT
A college entrance exam for upperclassmen required by most institutions. Consists of Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing Skills sections. Each section is scored on a 200 - 800 point basis. Most colleges are not currently using the Writing Skills section as an evaluative measure as it is new to the test.

Wait List
A list of applicants that are not initially accepted or denied for admission. The colleges maintain these lists in order to ensure that they fill their freshman classes. Once they have heard from all accepted students and have spots available, they may offer admission to students still on their waiting list.

Work Study
A federal program providing on campus jobs for students who demonstrate financial need. The award amount depends on the family's financial need and on the amount of money the school has for the program. Wage rates depend on the type of job being performed, but the maximum earnings for the academic year are specified in the financial aid package.